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Seeds of hope

The start of a new year brings with it a sense of possibility. It’s often a time to take stock of where we’ve been and think about where we are heading. While the challenges of the past year may still linger, the beginning of a new year offers us an opportunity to look forward with hope and optimism.

Hope isn’t always about certainty; it’s about belief that things are possible. Like seeds carefully planted in spring, hope starts small, but with nurturing, it can grow and flourish. Revd Debbi Turley, Vicar of St Peter’s Church, Taunton said, “The outpouring of love from the community was great after I discovered vandals had smashed and damaged windows at the church leaving us facing a large bill for repairs.

“In the hope of raising funds towards the repair costs, I decided to set up an online fundraising page. I thought it would just get a few donations, but within hours, there was an overwhelming response from the local community. We even had people from as far away as America who contributed to the fund. Before long we had raised the exact amount we needed to repair the window.”

“This could have been a sad story, but it turned into a good news story. It brought the community together.”

Hope for the new year doesn’t always require grand resolutions or sweeping changes. Instead, it can come from small steps. It is about progress, however modest, being possible. As the new year begins, may we all look ahead with a renewed hope, a hope which is rooted in God’s love for us all.

News in Brief

**New Deputy Lieutenants appointed**

The Revd Prebendary Narinder Tegally, Lead Chaplain at the Royal United Hospitals Bath and Interfaith Adviser for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, and Caroline Boddington, Senior Non-Executive Chapter Member of Wells Cathedral, have been named as two of five new Deputy Lieutenants appointed to support the Lord-Lieutenant, His Majesty’s personal representative in Somerset.

Appointment to the office of Deputy Lieutenant is in recognition of distinguished service to the community, country, or county. Every Deputy Lieutenant undertakes to assist the Lord-Lieutenant in performing any duties that may be required, including representing the Lord-Lieutenant at formal functions, award ceremonies, and citizenship ceremonies, or attending Remembrance Day services.

**More than 120 people are confirmed**

Wells Cathedral was filled with joy and celebration as more than 120 people from across the diocese were confirmed. The candidates, from a diverse range of ages and backgrounds, were joined by a large congregation of family members, friends, and church community supporters. Confirmation is a special service in which a person affirms the promises made on their behalf at baptism. Bishop Michael said, “It has been extraordinary to be in Wells Cathedral to confirm so many people, each of them here because their Christian journey has brought them to a new place, of commitment, of love of God and a willingness to serve God in the world and we have just been so proud of everyone that we have been with today.”

**‘Space’ by Luxmuralis comes to Wells Cathedral**

From 28 January – Saturday 1 February 2025, ‘Space’ a spectacular immersive journey will be at Wells Cathedral. The artwork, which allows visitors to walk through and explore the space of Wells Cathedral in a new light, invites them to look out into space and think about what humans have achieved in our place in the world.

The son-et-lumière artwork encourages reflection on humanity’s place in the universe as vibrant light is projected around the Cathedral, transforming its interior and turning the walls and ceilings into a stunning cosmic display.

Bringing hope

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

“A leader” said Napoleon Bonaparte, “is a dealer in hope.” At the start of 2025, this is a tough challenge for leaders everywhere! Conflicts continue around the world. The climate emergency is ongoing. At the polls, voters in many countries express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. As we look around us, can hope mean anything more than mere wishful thinking? As we look on all the challenges that exist, have we anything more to say than “I hope that that somehow, somewhere, something will turn up”.

More than ever, the Christian understanding of hope is what we need. Christian hope is broader, deeper, stronger altogether than any ‘wishful thinking’. In scripture, hope is not just a vague desire that something good in the future will somehow happen. Rather, the Biblical understanding of hope is of a confident expectation and desire that good in the future will come. It’s an assurance based in our pre-existing experience of God’s goodness, God’s love, the faithfulness that he has already shown towards us.

Scripture also contains the idea that while hope is something which comes primarily from God, it is also something in which human beings have a part to play, a contribution to make. The letter to the Hebrews says this: “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized.” (Hebrews 6:10-11)

God graciously calls us to join in bringing hope into the world. Our work, our love, our diligence matter. The contribution we make is important in bringing into being the future that God wants for us. At the start of this new year, we are called to take the lead: to be signs, symbols, dealers in the hope for which our world longs today.

Hope Rising

More than ten years ago members of All Saints Church, Trull began praying about reaching out to a new housing development due to be built near them. In 2024 that church had grown to be 30 adults and seven children. Revd Jon Ball tells us about the [Orchard Grove Church](https://ccx.org.uk/content/orchard-grove/) and the hope it brings.

**What inspired the creation of a new worshiping community in Orchard Grove, and how does it reflect hope for the future?**

A new housing development of 2000 homes is planned for Orchard Grove. There are currently about 350 homes. The leadership in Trull had been praying about how to serve the people moving in.

When my wife Imogen and I began our curacy in Trull we started discerning and praying about how we could be involved in this.  In 2023, a weekly prayer gathering began, leading to the launch of Orchard Grove Church a year later with 15 adults and two children, by November 2024 this had grown.

**How does the mission in Orchard Grove offer hope to those who feel disconnected in new housing developments?**

New housing is notorious for not having good connections or a good community feel, but our hope for Orchard Grove is that it's nothing like that, that it's a thriving community with this new church at the heart of it and part of the fabric of it, offering hope to the community. That hope is ultimately in living and telling the story of Jesus  here. And people being drawn into that life with him and finding the living hope that he offers.

**What role does perseverance play in building hope for others?**

It’s definitely been a step of faith, and it still is. How things are going to be provided for in the medium and long term are still being worked out. But we've seen God provide every step of the way. And he continues to provide. Ours is a story of long-term hope. For anyone else with an exciting idea of how to engage where they are, it is about perseverance and holding on to hope all the way through.

**How can the story of Orchard Grove inspire hope for others attempting to create change in their communities?**

I think two words when I think about this, they are patience and proactivity. We need to keep taking steps of faith and waiting for God to open doors, which is sometimes hard. But he is our hope and we’ve seen him give those green lights throughout this journey. I think others would see that too, as they step out with faith and hope into the future.

**How do you start to build that community of hope in a new development like Orchard Grove?**

We’re always going to be disappointed if we have that expectation of a house giving us the perfect home, so we want to be part of creating home for people who are moving here so they have a sense of belonging. Ultimately our hope is that they come to the church and feel they belong in faith. We have a vision for a few years’ time for what this community will look like, and it is a hopeful one. One where we know our neighbours, where we look out for each other. That hope is from within the church, but we also hope that blessing spreads out into the community around us as well. It's a hope that Orchard Grove will look different from what people might expect from a new housing development.