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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩ November 2024

Faith, friendship and mutual understanding

For nearly half a century parishes in Bath and Wells have walked together in friendship, prayer and mutual understanding with parishes in Zambia. The Zambia Bath and Wells link was founded in 1978 by Bishops Jack Cunningham and John Bickersteth, who had a vision and a friendship and out of that friendship the link has grown. Friendships formed in the early days of the link have deepened and flourished, new friendships have helped foster a deeper understanding between our two nations. The link allows us to experience different cultures and the different ways that people worship and pray.

Jenny Humphreys, Hon Lay Canon of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Lusaka, Zambia, and Diocesan World Mission Adviser & Zambia Link Co-ordinator 1998 to 2016 was recently in Zambia. During her time there she reflected on the history of the link and shared her thoughts about its future. "When I was first involved in 1998 the link was celebrating its 20th anniversary, it will be its 50th in 2028! Our relationships with one another and



Bishop Michael visited Zambia earlier this year.

our shared faith are the bedrock on which the link is built. They are the firm foundations on which can build the link's future.

"Since I first became involved in 1998, communication has evolved from airmail to WhatsApp, but maintaining relationships remains a constant and careful task and new areas of collaboration, such as addressing climate change, the ordination of women in Zambia, and mission enthusiasm, continue to emerge.

"Whatever challenges lie ahead, global partnerships like ours are invaluable, we have so much still to learn from one another."

Find out more at
bathandwells.org.uk/Zambia

News in brief

Celebrating nature

St. Andrew's Church in Chew Magna hosted a weekend-long festival celebrating the beauty and biodiversity of the Chew Valley area. The area is known for its rich ecological diversity and migrating birds. The event centred around a wildlife photography competition that attracted close to 500 entries. The competition showcased the valley's natural wonders and helped encourage a deeper sense of stewardship for the environment.



Hitting the right notes

17 pupils from St Mary's Church of England School in Writhlington visited Bath Abbey to learn more about 'Stardust', a space-themed music concert organised by the Bath-based charity Voices for Life, which will be performed at the Abbey in January. The children will form part of a 200-strong schools' choir which will perform the specially written musical in January, accompanied by a 30-piece orchestra, conductor and narrator.



600th anniversary celebrated

Wells Cathedral celebrated the 600th anniversary of the death of Bishop Nicholas Bubwith, who helped found the cathedral's famous Chained Library, once the largest library of its kind in Northern Europe. Bishop Bubwith served as Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1407

to 1424. The library, founded with his bequest, holds a collection of ancient texts, some of which were seized from monasteries dissolved under Henry VIII. It is one of the few surviving examples of a medieval library where books were once chained to desks to prevent theft.

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

A different perspective

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

Do you think a fish knows that it's swimming in water? I've been reflecting on this question not because it's some kind of Buddhist koan – the type of questioning that asks, 'What's the sound of one hand clapping?' Rather it's because I've been reflecting recently on questions of culture and world view. Do I see the world purely from the perspective of being who I am? (A 55-year-old white Englishman who grew up in a small village in the 1970s.) If that's the case, is what I see an accurate representation of the whole of reality? Might other perspectives be possible? If I could see the world through the eyes of others, might my vision be richer, wider, deeper? Like a fish that suddenly realizes that seeing can happen not only through water, but through air as well?

Seeing things from the perspective of others was something that Jesus did. An example of this happens when Jesus heals a centurion's servant in Luke's Gospel (Luke 7: 1-10). The centurion comes from a background and culture that's entirely different to that in which Jesus grew up. Yet Jesus is blown away by the insight that the centurion has about who Jesus himself is. This leads Jesus to exclaim 'I tell you, not even in Israel

have I found such faith!'

The Diocese of Bath and Wells has a link with the five Anglican dioceses of Zambia. There's much to be celebrated in the friendship that we share: the joy and vitality of the Zambian Church, the opportunities our link offers to help some of the world's poorest communities. But for me, the greatest gift we gain is the opportunity our link offers to stand in the shoes of others and to see the world, our faith, and the whole of reality from a different perspective.

A wise person once said to me 'It takes the whole world to know Christ'. Our link with Zambia enables us to see more of the Jesus we share than we could ever hope to experience otherwise.

Bishop Michael



Looking to the future

Rachel Shaw, Zambia Link Coordinator in Keynsham Parish, which has a link with Chipata South in Eastern Zambia, tells us how their link is looking to the future.



St Peter's, Chipungo Village

What initiatives are planned as part of the link?

Next year Susan a head teacher and Febby a class teacher, will spend one week at St John's and one week at Two Rivers CofE Schools in Keynsham. We hope their visit will help cement deeper connections and strengthen our relationships.

How do you feel the link enriches the spiritual life of both communities?

It makes us look outwards because we often concentrate on our own problems, then we look out and see Zambia and it gives us a sense of perspective and makes us more aware of the wider world.

How do you think the link has helped influenced the faith journey of your parish?

When I ask our Zambian friends what they most value they say,

'It's great that we pray for each other'. There is a real sense of common faith, of common joy.

What do you feel will help sustain the link in the future?

The link is very much based on relationships. The sense of honouring that relationship and the commitment to the people, has kept us moving forward.

What impact has the link had on parishes here and in Zambia?

Being part of the link changes our preconceptions. We've learned about climate change, we understand it better as we've seen the impact on people in Zambia. When it's people you know, you care more.

Has being part of the link helped deepen your faith?

When I first went to Zambia, I realised how foundational faith is to the lives of the people there and that helped boost my faith.

Find out more about our school links with Zambia at bathandwells.org.uk/school-links