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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells  September 2023

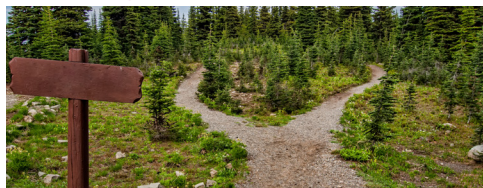
A lifelong journey

As Christians we're not called to attend church, we're called to follow Christ, to be His disciples. But how do we respond to that call? And how is your relationship with Christ?

Cheryl Govier, Growing Faith Adviser for Bath and Wells says, "As Christians, we are all on a journey and it is really important that we grow as Christians as we journey with God. As with any journey, and any relationship, sometimes it can feel that things are going really well, while sometimes it can feel static or even as if it's going backwards."

With so many demands on our time, in church and outside church, our discipleship can be a bit neglected, but we can all learn to make time to reflect on our faith as we live out our daily lives. In the last few years people from across Bath and Wells have gathered together at our Everyday Faith events to do just that - and we have also gathered to celebrate with those marking personal landmarks in their journeys with Christ, both lay and ordained.

David Ball of the Gold Project,



one of the discipleship resources we signpost in Bath and Wells to support discipleship, attended the Celebration of Lay Ministries in June, he says, "We want to encourage all Christians, not just those on the path to theological college, to become life-long learners and to encourage people in their discipleship. Discipleship doesn't stop when you become a Christian, it keeps going your whole life. Many people worry that they aren't equipped to engage with the Bible, but we all can. Yes, it may raise difficult questions, but we shouldn't be afraid of addressing them, especially as we aren't doing so alone."

"Most importantly, we should not be afraid of being educated in our faith."

Find out more about growing in your faith at: bathandwells.org.uk/lifelong-journey ■

News in brief

Young Christians gather

Young people from churches across Bath and Wells and beyond attended the Satellites Christian festival at the Bath and West Showground, near Shepton Mallet, in August.

The aim of the festival is to break young people free from the idea that faith is limited to specific moments or places. Youth Worker Emily Hatton, Christ Church Clevedon, says, "Being at Satellites has been so fun! Despite all the rain and soggy tents, it's been so beautiful to watch our young people connecting with God in worship.

"I'm already so excited to see how they'll take all they've learnt back into their daily lives. Such a joy!"

Find out how you get a free place at next year's event: bathandwells.org.uk/satellites ■

New website shares Abbey history

With almost 1,500 memorials, Bath Abbey probably has more commemorative wall tablets and gravestones than any other church in England. Spanning the 16th to the 20th centuries, the life stories they tell are a fascinating part of the Abbey's rich history.

Serving communities

Churches across Bath and Wells offered opportunities for fun, faith and food during the school summer holidays. St Paul's Weston ran a Treasure Island-themed weekend of fun and faith and offered two course meals for families, twice a week at their Little Kings gatherings, with the help of Waitrose supermarket, while St Mary's in Bridgwater fed families every Tuesday at their Grub's Up family drop in with the help of Morrisons ■



Find more stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

The new memorial website is the result of eight years of research by Bath Abbey's archive team of staff and volunteers which was carried out as part of the Footprint Project, funded largely by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Find out more at bathabbeymemorials.org.uk ■

Learn from the Master

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

When you hear the word 'disciple', what comes into your mind? A learner?

A follower? A super Christian? Someone kitted out in Biblical dress complete with robe, sandals, tea towel head covering and beard?

The New Testament's word for disciple doesn't quite match any of these descriptions. It's much closer to the word we'd use in English for 'apprentice'.

Back in history, and still today, to be an apprentice meant spending time in the presence of a master in order to learn a craft – maybe carpentry, or blacksmithing, baking or butchery. You'd start out doing the simple stuff – sweeping floors or sharpening tools. Then gradually you'd acquire more and more skills until you learnt to work confidently with materials producing beautiful things, products of utility and worth. Apprentices often learnt their craft while living alongside their masters, becoming members of their trade through time spent together at work and rest and play.

Jesus was often called 'the

carpenter's son' – apprenticed to his worldly father Joseph, growing in skill at the plane and the lathe. He was also the apprentice of his heavenly father. The Gospels speak of Jesus withdrawing to spend time with God in order to know God's mind, hear God's voice, grow in God's ways.

Apprenticeship was and is a story of growth, development, discovery and change. It's the journey that Jesus invites us to take with him too – of baby steps and toddler stumbles, of emerging skill and increasing understanding.

Churches near you are offering opportunities to apprentice yourself to Jesus this autumn - from practical action that gets you involved in Jesus's service to the world, to learning and discussion that comes with courses such as Alpha, Exploring Christianity or Pilgrim.

Why not sign yourself up and learn from the Master?

Bishop Michael



Encouraged in faith

Dr Marjay Pallant, All Saints, Trull talks about growing as a Christian thanks to her membership of Small Groups.



Marjay Pallant, who attends one All Saints church's Growth Groups.

What's your experience of Small Groups?

As a student I was dipping into church on Sunday with friends. They invited me to join their Small Group meeting and I found I was learning more in that group. As my faith matured I started paying attention on Sundays a bit more, but have continued to attend Small Groups ever since.

What's your current Small Group like?

We meet for dinner every Wednesday then have a bit of worship, Bible study and prayer. Normally 10 young adults attend. I feel we enjoy a greater sense of community as you see people for more than just a 'Hi!' after a Sunday service. The time and continuity allows for a bit more of an in-depth relationship and ongoing prayer.

What do you like about meeting like this?

I enjoy having something in the week to encourage me in my faith - and to have time with God with other people. If you can only do Sundays, I think it is fine as well, but personally I find it really beneficial to do more.

Does it help you grow in faith?

Absolutely. The ongoing prayer helps, as does the Bible study session. You don't tend to discuss a sermon very much after a Sunday, but we try and do a study based on the sermon series, so we basically cover it twice which I think is really good. And you get to grow as an individual as well.

Any advice for someone thinking about joining or starting a Small Group?

Just do it! And don't be discouraged if you join one and you don't get on with it, try another group. Keep an open mind and remember that you are not just there to receive but to give as well. If you want to start a group, speak to your leadership at church about how to proceed.

Find out more: bathandwells.org.uk/encouraged-in-faith

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