

Week ending 31 January 2026

Connect

The bulletin for clergy, lay leaders and all who are the Church in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.



Bishop Sarah Mullally confirmed Archbishop of Canterbury

This week Bishop Sarah Mullally officially became the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury. She is the first woman to hold the office in its 1,400-year history.

The legal responsibilities of the role were formally handed over to her at the Confirmation of Election service at St Paul's Cathedral. Bishop Michael, who attended the service, shared his joy and sent congratulations on behalf of everyone in Bath and Wells. He said, "It is a huge joy to see Sarah take on this role and to see her bring her many gifts, skills and abilities to the work of being our Archbishop.

"Please do join with me in praying for Sarah, asking God to give her all the grace, wisdom and courage that she will need to fulfil the responsibilities to which she has been called.

"On behalf of the people of Somerset, I look forward to cheering Sarah on as she takes this new step and opens this next chapter in our lives together."

[Read more about the confirmation.](#)
[Confirmation of Election: The Charge](#)

Photo: Graham Westley Lacdao



Welcoming the new Bishop of Taunton

We are looking forward to two wonderful celebrations for our new Suffragan Bishop, The Ven Dr Fiona Gibson.

Fiona's Consecration takes place on Friday 6 February 2026, at 11:00 in Southwark Cathedral. If you would like to attend, please reserve a place online using [the Eventbrite booking page.](#)

The consecration service is when Fiona becomes a bishop. During the service, other bishops lay their hands on her head as a sign that they are passing on their authority. Fiona makes promises to serve faithfully and follow the Church's teachings.

Following her Consecration, we will welcome her to Bath and Wells officially on Sunday 8 February at 15:00 in Wells Cathedral. Everyone is welcome to attend. The installation marks the beginning of Fiona's ministry in our diocese.

We ask for your prayers for Fiona and her family as she prepares for her Consecration and Installation.



Deadline reminders

Thank you to everyone who has already submitted your 2025 information for the forms below and to those who are currently working through them.

A reminder of the deadlines for 2026.

More information and guidance, as well as who to contact in Support Services should you require more help, is [available on the diocesan website](#).

- 2025 Year-end Accounts – submit within 28 days of Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)
- 2025 Return of Parish Finance – Deadline 28 June 2026
- 2025 Energy Footprint Tool – Deadline 30 June 2026



New Places of Worship Renewal Fund announced by government

On 22 January 2026, the government confirmed the end of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. This provides grants to cover VAT costs incurred during repairs to listed buildings in use as places of worship up to a cap of £25,000 per place of worship. The scheme will be replaced by a £92 million four-year-fund called [the Places of Worship Renewal Fund](#).

The Church of England's Director for Cathedral and Church buildings, Emily Gee (pictured above, centre, giving evidence in the House of Commons) welcomed the news but expressed concern about the end of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. [Read the full statement from Emily on the Church of England website](#).



Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent

The Church of England's theme for Lent 2026 is Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent. This year's resources have at their heart the theme of a 'rhythm of life' – habits and patterns which help us grow as disciples of Christ day by day, especially as we prepare to celebrate the great mystery of God's saving love at Easter.

[Find out more about Draw Near](#) and the resources on offer.



People across our diocese have been sharing their stories of prayer. In Ham Hill Benefice they came together to hold a Day of Prayer for a new Rector. In Goathurst Prayer Stations have been set up in the church inviting the wider community to come and explore different ways of praying. At St John's, Frome the church has linked up with a charity and are focusing their prayers on Christians who are being persecuted. [Read more about the wonderful things taking place.](#)

Meanwhile, the Prayer Boxes have been out and about in our three archdeaconries. Below are just a few of the photos that have been shared. If you would like to know more about the Prayer Boxes, or how to book one you can [find out everything you need to know on the diocesan website.](#)

If you would like to share your own stories or photos, please email the [Communications team.](#)



Praying through Lent



A collection of simple daily ideas to help you pray through Lent has been put together by the Go Team. Each week focuses on one of the six petitions of the Lord's Prayer and from Monday to Saturday there's a daily Bible reading and prayer prompt to take with you through the day. The resource can be used by churches, schools, families and individuals as part of our Diocesan Year of Prayer.

Download the resource from the Bath and Wells website: [Praying through Lent](#) and for more info and ideas for Lent and Easter [contact a member of the Go Team](#).

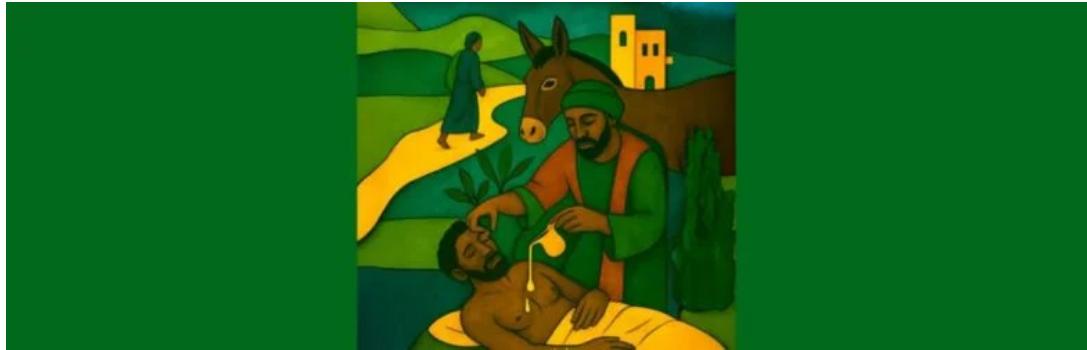


A golden celebration

On Sunday 25 January, Bishop Michael joined a packed congregation at St Michael and All Angels church in Flax Bourton to celebrate their fantastic achievement in being the first church in our diocese to be awarded the A Rocha Gold Eco Church Award.

The service, led by Revd James Harris, brought everyone together in prayer and song. Bishop Michael presented the award and blessed two golden hornet crab apple trees that are going to be planted in the churchyard and the local school. Adrienne Hughes, Eco Church Lead said, 'It's so fantastic to be here celebrating our gold award! I've led the team and the team are amazing, but we couldn't have done it without the community'.

[Read the full story here](#), and for a video montage from the service and more information about how you can get involved, please look at our [Facebook page](#). Remember to find out how you can get involved in [Eco Church on the Environment section of our website](#).



Racial Justice Sunday 8 February 2026

The theme for this year's Racial Justice Sunday is Love Your Neighbour. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) has produced a series of resources on this theme which can be used in churches.

Richard Reddie, Director of Justice and Inclusion, CTBI says, "These resources explore what it really means to love our neighbour ... and discuss how the Bible provides a blueprint for a world where everyone belongs; where everyone is loved, valued and affirmed for who they are, and not what they look like or have to offer. And one in which our identity is ultimately to be found in Christ, as brothers and sisters of one 'race': the human race."

All the resources can be downloaded [from the CTBI website](#).



A Celebration of Demonstration

From next week, a new exhibition opens in the Cathedral Cloisters. A Celebration of Demonstration runs from 3 February to 1 March 2026 and explores Black Lives Matter protests in London and Somerset during the covid 19 pandemic. The photography exhibition is brought to us by Wayne Campbell, visual activist, award-winning designer, filmmaker and photographer, and also features work by Somerset-based photographers Jason Bryant and Len Copland.

Find out more [on the Wells Cathedral website](#).



New beginnings in Christ

At the beginning of the year there were celebrations at Holy Trinity Church in Frome as a group of seven people were baptised. Revd Ian Snares, Vicar, Holy Trinity Frome says, "It was a fantastic moment for everyone, as the whole group made up of people from all different walks of life, were united in wanting to continue their journey of faith."

[Read the full story here.](#)



Pathway to Lay Pastoral Assistant

Part 1 - 12 February
Part 2 - 19 March
Both dates: 10:00 – 16:00
Flourish House, Wells.

If you and your incumbent are discerning your potential call to Lay Pastoral ministry then take this opportunity to attend a two day equipping course run by the diocesan training team.



Peaceable Living One day programme

Saturday 21 March 2026
10:00 -16:00
St Mary's Church, East Chinnock

St Mary's and the Diocese Peacebuilding Network are thrilled to welcome speakers [Jo Berry CBE international peace builder](#) and [Simon Keyes](#) Bath and Wells Diocesan Adviser on Peacebuilding, to this year's 'Peaceable living' programme.
The day also includes interactive

Whilst the course may be available in your local deanery, it will not be run again by the diocese until next year. You can apply online following a discussion with your incumbent. [More information is available on the diocesan website.](#)

sessions on listening skilfully and engaging constructively. For tickets and more details contact Alex Swarbrick alexclaire.es@gmail.com



More support for digital giving

New Digital Giving Adviser Abi Davies is here to help you explore contactless giving in your Church communities, whether you have lots of mobile signal or none at all. If you want to find out a little bit more about how your church can start to give via contactless or have questions about contactless giving, Abi would love to hear from you. Email: abi.davies@bathwells.anglican.org



Contactless giving in a poor signal area

The rural church of St George in Dunster has found a solution to the problem of a poor mobile signal which has prevented them installing a contactless device in the church. They've started to use the CollectTin device with Stripe reader which can be used offline without the need for a strong mobile signal. [Find out about the device](#) and how it's already proving to be a success.

Sharing time with our brothers and sisters in Zambia

As part of his curacy training, Revd Edward Day is spending time in Zambia. Edward, who is Wells Cathedral Curate, is on a six-week placement at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Lusaka.

During his placement, he is serving within the Cathedral community, travelling to visit more remote rural communities, and experiencing the Bath and Wells Zambia link first-hand. He will return at the end of February.

In the video below Edward has shared with us a reflections of his time so far in Zambia. He is also posting regular updates which [you can follow on Substack](#).



An opportunity to visit Zambia

[Christians Aware](#) is arranging a Visit to Zambia 23 July - 7 August 2026. The visit to Zambia is at the invitation of Bishop Dennis Milanzi, Bishop of Eastern Zambia, based in Chipata.

Christians Aware an international and ecumenical movement. Its main aim is to develop multi-cultural understanding and friendship, locally, nationally and internationally, in a spirit of sharing. The international visits are pilgrimages rather than holidays.

If you would like to find out more please email Eliam.christiansaware@outlook.com The deadline to confirm a booking is 1 March 2026.

In Brief

- Simply Pray at St James Taunton. Offering a time of contemplative prayer through guided meditation, there is a special series for Lent. 'Prodigal' runs for five weeks from 26 February. For full details see: stjamestaunton.org
- Wild Beasts and Angels: a book of poetry by Mark Andrew Smith, a Priest in Bath and Wells, and Chaplain to King's College, Taunton. Each poem in the book is a prayer. The book is suitable for personal devotion or for reflection in groups. Contact Mark at masmith@kings-taunton.co.uk for more information.
- [Ripple Effect](#) has created ready to use resources to help congregations pray, reflect, and act alongside families in rural Kenya facing the climate crisis.
- Churchwarden's wall calendar is available from Churchwarden's Publications Ltd. Email enquiries@churchwardenbooks.co.uk for more information.
- National Network of Pastoral Musicians Conference July 24-26, 2026 Northampton. Workshops will explore various musical styles including Iona Community Worship and Life, and Supporting the Worshipping Community in music. More information from: jburrige@me.com

If you have news to share, tag us on your social media channel or [email the Communications team](#).



Threads Through the Bible

From 28 January to 1 March, 'Threads Through the Bible' is coming to Bath. Hosted across three Bath city churches, this exhibition by textile artist Jacqui Parkinson, features three monumental series - 'Threads Through Creation', 'Threads Through the Cross' and 'Threads Through Revelation' - this is one of the largest textile artworks ever created by a single artist.

Ten years in the making and composed of more than 25 million stitches across 44 panels, this extraordinary display celebrates both artistic devotion and the timeless message of the Bible. A map will be available from all 3 churches to help direct visitors wishing to explore all the sequences. [Find out more.](#)



Beautiful banners

If you visit St James Church in Taunton, you will be fortunate to see the first in a series of banners created by a group of church members. The stunning banners based on the theme of 'Fruits of the Spirit' as listed in the New Testament (Galations 5:20) are the inspiration



Family bell ringing award

In Taunton, three members of the same family, Angela Henderson, Jackie Henderson and Harry Thorne-Henderson have just achieved something very impressive – they've all been awarded the Association of Ringing Teachers' (ART) highest



The journey to Net Zero

St Mary's Church, West Harptree is taking a major step towards becoming a net zero church, thanks to the support of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and the Diocese of Bath and Wells. St Mary's has been awarded a Green

of artist Pat Preater. Pat says, "I was quite overwhelmed to see the new banner raised to its position as I watched after seeing it on the kitchen table for so long! The words will always bring to mind the promises of God."

Meanwhile a beautiful new banner has gone on display in Bawdrip Church. The banner, which was made and donated by Lorna, who lives in the village, is based on Jeremiah 3:1 - I have loved you with an everlasting love. Lorna says her aim is to, "make the church look like it's a living church, which it is, despite it being a cold building." [Read all about the banners](#), the people who made them and their inspiration.

level of achievement for students. Angela, Jackie and Harry all started ringing in 2017 after attending an open tower day at Taunton Minster. Jackie says, "We have had some lovely experiences ringing at different churches throughout the diocese and beyond. Harry was only 12 years old when we went with the Associations Young Ringers to Liverpool cathedral. The cathedral is one of the tallest cathedrals in England and houses the heaviest ring of bells in the world. Harry helped ring the tenor, the heaviest bell in the peal." [Find out more](#) about the family's award and their bellringing experiences.

Business Grant by the Authority and a Quick Wins Grant from Bath and Wells. Together, these grants will enable the church to decommission its old oil-fired heating system and replace it with infra-red heating panels. The new heating system will help support St Mary's ongoing commitment to take better care of God's earth. Reflecting on the changes, Elaine Avery, St Mary's PCC secretary says, "This is the most effective single step we can take towards becoming a net zero church and we are proud to be playing our part in the Church of England's target to become net zero by 2030".



Sharing The Lord's Prayer

This week Revd John Hanson, Preston Plucknett shares his prayer with us.



Diocese of Bath and Wells

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