DIOCESE OF Bath&Wells

Living the story. Telling the story.

Week beginning 1 November 2023

Connect

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



Bishop Michael is introduced to the House of Lords

During the ceremony in the upper chamber, Bishop Michael presented his Writ of Summons to the Clerk at the Table and took the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown before being directed to his place on the Bishops' Bench. He was conducted by two supporting bishops, the Rt Revd Dr Joanne Grenfell, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford.

Speaking afterwards Bishop Michael said, "It was such an honour to be introduced to the House of Lords today. As I join in its life and debate, I'm looking forward to bringing the perspectives of Somerset to all that I will contribute. I'm deeply grateful to everyone who has enabled me to undertake this role. I look forward to doing my very best for us all."

Read more about the ceremony.

On the Sunday before he was introduced to the House of Lords, Bishop Michael preached at St Paul's Cathedral for the Barts Health NHS Trust and St Joseph's Hospice Annual Service of Remembrance. Read more about the service.





Pupil Chaplaincy Gathering

It was a joy to welcome more than 100 pupils, teachers and helpers to Taunton for the pupil chaplaincy gathering. Altogether, 93 pupil chaplains from eight schools took part in a day of worship, activities and learning.

Cheryl Govier, diocesan Assistant Director (Education and Leadership), said, "So many of our schools and churches are quietly training, empowering and equipping pupil chaplains in schools across our diocese. So it was an absolute joy to bring so many pupil chaplains together for a day to encourage them in their roles and show them that they are a part of something bigger." Find out more about the pupil chaplains and what they got up to on the day.



Wells Cathedral welcomes Jamaican High Commissioner for Black History Month

Last week, Jamaica's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom paid a special visit to Wells Cathedral. His Excellency Alexander Williams visited the cathedral at the invitation of Somerset African Caribbean Network, as part of the county's Black History Month celebrations.

Speaking after the visit Sharon Brien, a member of the diocesan Lament to Action Group said, "Meeting His Excellency, was an incredibly special moment for me. As a Black British woman, I felt an enormous sense of pride, excitement and connection to a history that is both deeply personal and part of our shared heritage. To have the opportunity to speak with him here in Wells was something I will always treasure."

The High Commissioner met with the cathedral's Racial Justice Advisory Group to discuss their work on the Living Liberty project. Funded by The Church of England to develop education, inclusion and historical reflection, the project acknowledges historic links to transatlantic slavery, alongside a commitment to racial justice and inclusive history.

Find out more about the visit.



The national Church of England website is being transformed. Developed following extensive consultation with users, the new site will relaunch in its new form at the beginning of November.

The new website will bring into one place all the resources for parishes that are currently held across three websites: ChurchOfEngland.org, ParishResources.org and

AChurchNearYou.com/ResourceHub. Much of the content has been rewritten to be clearer, more accessible and up to date.

Improved organisation of Safeguarding information
The Safeguarding e-manual will be renamed the Safeguarding Gateway, where you will continue to find Codes of Practice, guidance and resources.

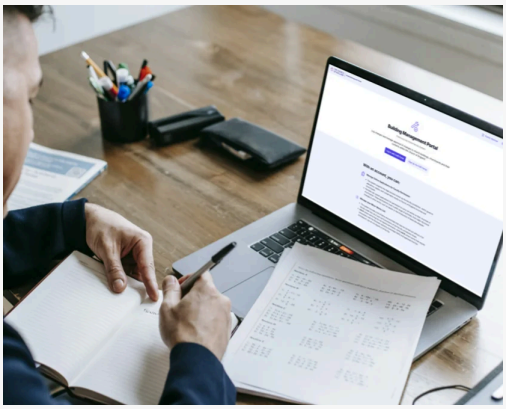
Current links will be redirected
After 'go live', you will be automatically forwarded to the relevant page if you use an existing link or bookmark, with no need for further clicks.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme



The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme saved historic churches from paying 20% VAT on repair costs, but was shut down in February after 25 years. The Places of Worship Renewal Fund which has since been introduced means churches have to apply for funding instead of reclaiming VAT on eligible works. The National Churches Trust is encouraging churches to write to their local MP to let the Government know the consequences of these changes for your church and to persuade it to make Listed churches exempt from VAT on repairs. The Trust has a template letter which you can use. It suggests you use your own words as personalised letters can make a big difference.

New Building Management Portal



The Building Management Portal is the Church of England's new national digital platform for managing applications relating to church buildings, their contents and churchyards.

The new Portal replaced the Online Faculty System at the start of October. The BMP manages List A, List B, and Faculty applications, providing a clearer route for preparing, submitting, reviewing, and managing applications. The legal process has not changed.

Access to the BMP is through the Church of England Portal. On-demand guides are being embedded in the Portal to help users get to grips with the new system and its key features.



His Majesty The King to inaugurate 12th General Synod of the Church of England

His Majesty The King will inaugurate the newly elected General Synod of the Church of England at a ceremony in London on Tuesday 17 November. His Majesty will attend a service at Westminster Abbey before addressing the inauguration ceremony in the Synod chamber.

487 members, including the newly elected members from Bath and Wells, will serve on the new Synod for its five-year term. Following the inauguration, Synod will hold a short group of sessions which will include an update on safeguarding and discussions on the challenges of maintaining church buildings; funding the church's mission and clergy wellbeing.

Photo credit: Geoff Crawford



People news

This month we welcomed Sarah Cornick as the new Vicar of St Cuthbert's, Wells and Wookey Hole - just one of many wonderful things happening across our diocese. Our latest people news brings together updates from across Bath and Wells.

We give thanks for the ministry of all people in our diocese and pray for God's blessing on them for all that lies ahead. You can read more in the latest people news on the diocesan website.

Safeguarding Sunday

Safeguarding Sunday takes place on the 15 November, but you can also mark it at another time.



This year's theme, 'Love Protects', which is rooted in the words of 1 Corinthians 13, reminds us that Safeguarding isn't bureaucracy, it is ministry - a Christian act of love in action.

If you're planning a service, a time for prayer or an opportunity to thank your safeguarding volunteers, we'd love to hear from you. Please do get in touch to share what your church is doing.

Email us and let us know what's happening where you are.

Email: comms@bathwells.anglican.org



How are you heating your church this winter?

Looking to find out more environmentally friendly ways to heat your church? The Environment team has shared some useful information about different heating systems on the diocesan website.

Dan Wills, diocesan Net Zero Project Lead says, "Our churches should be places where people can gather, worship and belong in comfort. How we heat them is one of the biggest choices we can make about their environmental impact, but there is no single heating system that will be right for every church."

Visit the Church Heating page to find out what your options are, the pros and cons, and where to go for advice and support.

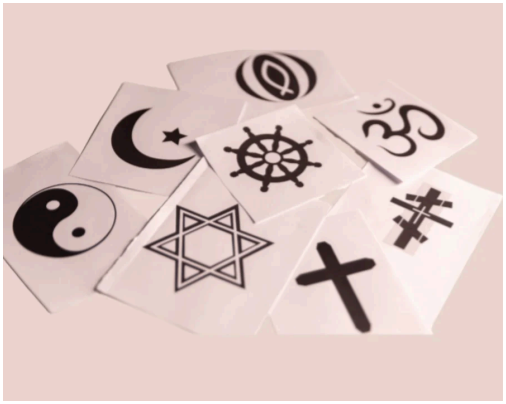
Exploring your spiritual journey

Finding peace together Interfaith event



Bookings are now open for the 2027 course which begins in January.

Exploring your Spiritual Journey with other like-minded people provides an opportunity for learning more about our own spirituality, and hearing about spiritual traditions, so that with mutual support we can be led by the Holy Spirit along the path prepared for us to fulfill God's purpose.



All are welcome to an interfaith and multicultural celebration for Interfaith Week 2026 on Tuesday 17 November, 19:00–21:30, Christ Church, Bath.

Enjoy creative arts, a choir, food and conversation. Entry is free.

For more information email: info@spiritofpeace.co.uk.



Interested in church planting?

A new Myriad Church Planting Hub offering free training and support is starting in April for 2027 for Avon and Somerset hosted at All Saints Weston, Bath.

An online information evening Wednesday 4 November 19:30. More details and a Zoom link is available online.

In Brief

- Save the date! 'Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth', Saturday 27 February 2027, 14:00 – 18:00, Wells Cathedral. An invitation to join with others from across this diocese to make music together in worship. There will be workshops, worship, food & fellowship. More information to follow.
- Living in a clergy house with solar power, check out our Solar Housing Guide on our Clergy Housing page, and other useful information for clergy housing occupants.
- A reminder that the November issues of Manna and the Prayer Calendar are available now to download from our website.

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



Dementia friendly carol service

Tuesday 8 December 2026
14:00 – 15:00
St John's Church, Peasedown St John

Everyone is welcome to join the dementia friendly traditional carol service. If you would like more information please contact Jane Street jane.street@stjsgroup.church



Digital resources for Advent and Christmas

This year's national church Advent and Christmas theme, The Gift of Christmas, focuses on the first and greatest Christmas gift of all: the gift of God being born as one of us in Jesus Christ.

Find out about all the resources at cofe.io/ChristmasResources. This page is updated regularly with new tools and resources as they become available.



Bringing school leaders together

For the first time, representatives from all six of Bath and Wells secondary schools and all three of its middle schools came together in



Service to the Community

Congratulations to St Mary's Church, Bridgwater which received the Somerset Council Chair's award for



Care for the hidden

An art exhibition at St Peter's Church, Weston-super-Mare put the issue of modern slavery in the spotlight as Hidden Voices Bridgwater and the church community of

Wells for a day of networking and collaboration. The nine schools are among our diocese's 180 Church of England schools and face demands that often differ from those of primary schools.

Head teachers, RE leads, chaplains and leads for Christian distinctiveness from school across the diocese took part in sessions covering everything from SIAMS inspection preparation, Religious Studies and school development.

Speaking after the event, Cheryl Govier, Assistant Director (Education and Leadership) said, "It was a joy to hear the buzz in the room and a desire to work together and learn from one another. Our middle and secondary school leaders face unique challenges as Church of England schools. For school leaders to be able to spend time away from their schools, to be present at these events and to take the time to meet and be with other requires a significant investment." Read more about the day.

'Service to the Community'.

Speaking after the awards Revd Suse Osmond, Vicar of St Mary's dedicated the honour to all St Mary's Church volunteers, she said, "We are so full of gratitude for our amazing church community and all our wonderful volunteers who serve our town so beautifully. This award goes out to all of you!"

A spokesperson for Bridgwater Town Council which put St Mary's forward for the award said, "It was our pleasure to nominate St Mary's in recognition of the invaluable support they provide to people across Bridgwater. Well deserved."

Commenting on the awards, Somerset Council Chair, Cllr Mike Best, said, "We are fortunate to have so many people in Somerset who work hard on behalf of others in their town, parish or city. Every recipient has made a real difference to their communities and the awards ceremony is a small way of saying thank you."

St Peter's marked Anti-Slavery Day.

Anti-Slavery Day is an opportunity for us all to consider what we can do to eliminate modern slavery in our communities.

Featuring work created by different artists, the exhibition inside St Peter's used the art to spark conversations about modern slavery and help visitors recognise the signs.

Hidden Voices Bridgwater works to raise awareness of modern slavery. Its focus is on helping people understand that slavery is not simply something from the past, but a problem within communities today.

Members of the team were on hand throughout the exhibition to speak with visitors and share information. Alongside the artwork, those conversations helped raise awareness and shed light on the reality faced by millions of people today.

Diocese of Bath and Wells

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