



Sharing God's love. Responding and serving.

Annual Review 2022



DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living the story. Telling the story.



Foreword

Bishops know their people and their people know them' is the phrase from the service where I became a bishop that has stuck with me most. In the year since I became the Bishop of Bath & Wells, it has been my privilege to live out these words among you.

The journey of getting to know the people and places of our diocese started well before my welcome. As many of you will remember, in the February before my appointment, my wife, Lizzie, and I walked 60 miles across Somerset. We enjoyed wonderful countryside, driving rain

and a lot of mud. Much more importantly we met and spoke to lots of people. Since moving to Somerset the journey has continued as I've travelled to all corners of our diocese to meet Christians who are living their faith and having an impact in the communities of our county.

A memorable day for me happened when my appointment was announced. This included a tour of Somerset when I saw at first hand some of the wonderful things that happen in our churches, places of work and in our schools. During last summer's Lambeth Conference I had the opportunity to get to know the bishops of our link dioceses in Zambia. Later in the year

I had the pleasure of visiting and getting to know each of our deaneries. A highlight of the last twelve months was my installation, when people from across the diocese gathered from far and wide, each taking home a tree sapling to plant in the places from which they'd come.

Whilst it has been a delight to come here, the last year has by no means been one of plain sailing. We have faced a cost-of-living crisis, the ongoing consequences of the war in Ukraine and mourned the death of Queen Elizabeth. This review is a wonderful reflection of the many different ways in which our churches have witnessed to and connected with our neighbourhoods; serving the vulnerable, providing refuge to the defenceless and offering solace to the grieving.

As I look back on 2022, I must take the opportunity to thank Bishop Ruth for all her care of the diocese during the year. Just a few

of Ruth's activities included visiting schools and colleges, attending Platinum Jubilee celebrations, ordaining our new priests and deacons and licensing Readers and chaplains. Ruth has welcomed me and my family to this place and has walked alongside me as my friend and colleague as I've become the new Bishop of Bath and Wells.

The stories in this review are a wonderful reflection of the life of our diocese. As we face all that the future will hold, I'm looking forward to getting to know you better and to your knowing me as we live and tell Jesus's story together.

+ Michael Barr & Wells.

Bishop Michael

Respond and serve

2022 was a tumultuous year, one in which we continued to experience Covid 19 restrictions, witnessed the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the cost-of-living crisis and the death of Her Majesty the Queen. Throughout the difficult times and beyond churches served and supported their communities, found new and innovative ways to come alongside them and work with other organisations to provide help for those in need.

In February people across the diocese responded with love, prayer, and welcome to those fleeing the war in Ukraine; offering financial support, as well as holding services and prayer vigils. Like many others, St Mary's Church in Bridgwater became a donation point for the collection of essential items. In Frome, Revd Clive Fairclough, Chaplain at Frome Livestock Market, worked with the National Farmers Union to find space for local charities to store items to be sent to Ukraine.

As the conflict continued, people opened their homes and invited those forced to flee the war to become part of their family and their community. Jess McManus, Churchwarden of Christchurch in Clevedon, and her family learnt Ukrainian in preparation for the arrival of their guests. Axbridge Deanery was just one of those which pooled resources and skills to provide wraparound care for refugees and the then Countess of Wessex made a special visit to St Andrew's Church in Wiveliscombe to thank everyone who provides care to the refugees who have settled in the town.

“
Jess McManus, Churchwarden of Christchurch in Clevedon
Understanding what I would want if I were in that situation, how could I not offer that to another family?
”

As the cost-of-living crisis began to bite, many churches across the diocese reached out with the offer a warm space and food to those struggling to pay their bills. Supported by funds set aside from the national church grant, church families in Somerset provided welcoming places for those in need.

Churches worked with partner organisations, charities, community groups and other churches.

St Peter's Church community in Yeovil, offered a warm place for people to meet, low cost affordable meals, and emotional support. Through the winter around 250 people attended each week. They also supplied between 90 and 100 healthy meals every week to those in need. →





“
 Brenda Pyle, Churchwarden
 at The Blessed Virgin Mary
 Church Ashill
 ...rather than just being
 seen as church people,
 we are taking church
 out to the people.
 ”



In Ashill a warm space set up in the village hall saw six people attend in the first week, 18 the following week, over time more than 27 regulars were coming along. It not only provided comfort for those in need through donations it also raised money for the local foodbank.

It was a traditional cream tea welcome for Albert Chama, Bishop Derek Kamukwamba, his wife Evelyn, Bishop Robert Mumbi and his wife Joy as they joined members of the Zambia companion link in the diocese and those interested in forging one to celebrate more than 40 years of friendship. The next day the bishops visited and worshiped in companion link parishes.

In the summer of 2022 celebrations, big and small took place to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's platinum Jubilee and give thanks for

her 70 years of service. Later in the year churches were once again at the heart of their community as the nation mourned the death of Queen Elizabeth. Clergy offered pastoral care to those grieving, churches provided opportunities to light candles, pray quietly, sign books of condolence or leave floral tributes. Services of commemoration were held at every church in the diocese.

Sharing God's love

In Bath and Wells we encourage and celebrate the partnership between our 181 church schools and our parishes. Our Education team supports those who work with children and young people to ensure that our church schools are inclusive, sustainable and provide the highest quality education, enabling individuals and communities to flourish.

St Margaret's Primary School in Tintinhull, is one of the many schools that are a wonderful example how our schools are living and telling the story of Jesus in their community. It received a Gold Award from the Woodland Trust for planting more than 30 trees, each with a plaque remembering a person or group in the community. The pupils have also helped create an outside garden space for the school and community to enjoy.

After learning that many families were struggling financially St Mary's Church, Bridgwater set up an after-school meal and craft club called 'Grub's Up'. Many families now come each week to enjoy a warm meal and spend time with friends. At the end of one session four children and two adults asked if they could be baptised.

This year the diocese reached out to Somerset County Council following the planned closure of Misterton school to find an innovative educational use for the building. The Education team worked closely with the council to support the development of a specialist centre where vulnerable children will be able to re-engage with education.

“
Revd Suse Osmond
We're really starting to see the fruit of some of the seeds we've sowed going into schools every week and doing collective worship, developing relationships and journeying with people.
”

In 2022 many church schools in Bath and Wells enjoyed holding services and celebrations in the church building for the first time since Covid lockdown restrictions were lifted. Pupils and teachers from every year group at St Paul's Church of England VC Junior School in Shepton Mallet celebrated Easter with a service at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church. Whilst St Bartholomew's Church of England First School in Crewkerne spent a day studying the four themes of the diocesan Lent campaign; welcome, hospitality, inclusion and generosity. And pupils from the Kings of Wessex Academy were once again able to climb the tower of St. Andrew's Church in Cheddar on Ascension Day and singing the Ascension Hymn.





Releasing the gifts of all

“

Revd David Runcorn

Be teachers and explorers of the faith, with and for others. Enthuse and inspire... out loud and out there....

”

In 2022 new priests were ordained at Bath Abbey and Taunton Minster. After each service Bishop Ruth led the congregation outside to celebrate and sing in the sunshine surrounded by Saturday shoppers. Later in the year Bishop Michael led a service for Jon and Imogen Ball who were ordained into the priesthood at All Saints Church, Trull, where they are both serving their curacy.

In Shepton Mallet a collaborative community arts project, called The Gleaning, was co-curated by Pioneer Minister, Revd Gill Sakakini, as part of Somerset Art Week. The series of events and reflections together with an exhibition involved communities who are often on the margins.

At Michaelmas Wells Cathedral was filled for the ordination of deacons and in October friends, colleagues and parish supporters joined seven new readers who were licensed and nine who were welcomed into the diocese on Readers' Day and in Quantock Towers benefice nine Lay Worship Assistants were licensed.

And art brought the Birchfield community together in Yeovil as Farhad Chermahini, Pioneer Minister, together with Yeovil Art Space produced a creative day based around the theme of memory. It was an opportunity for people to reconnect with one another following the restrictions of the Covid pandemic.





In August, weekly youth work sessions at the skatepark with Youth Pioneer in Chard, Tom Tame, to build relationships with young people in their own contexts resulted in the Chard Scoot and Skate Jam. It raised money to repair the park. Tom said, "The hope is that this will lead to new opportunities at the skate park for the community in Chard and it will be a chance to explore faith together in fresh and exciting ways."

Chaplaincy in Bath and Wells continued to flourish in 2022 with new chaplaincies commissioned in all walks of life throughout the diocese. A team of chaplains began

serving staff and users at Taunton Magistrates Courts. There are now teams of pupil chaplains at primary schools in Wellington, Wiveliscombe and Cotford St Lukes. Timi Booy, who was commissioned as Chaplain to Backwell Church of England Junior School, was joined at her licensing by a group of year 5 pupil chaplains who promised, with God's help, to notice and care, listen and to stand up for what's right. In Salford Mary Dolman became Bath and Wells first chaplain to a golf club. Meanwhile Ewen Huffman, Lead Chaplain at Hinkley Point C, Europe's largest building site, now runs a team of seven part-time voluntary chaplains.

Gathering together in Wells Cathedral for the Celebration of Lay Ministries to recognise, affirm and encourage all that people generously give.





“
 Sue Carpenter, St James' Church
 The church community
 has become more aware
 of the value of our church
 grounds and what lives
 and grows within it.
 ”

Caring for creation

In 2020 Bath and Wells declared a climate emergency and committed to become Net Zero by 2030. In 2022 Bath and Wells made positive steps towards that goal and in November achieved A Rocha's Bronze Eco Diocese status. The award is an acknowledgement of the whole diocese's commitment to creation care and reflects our determination to take better care of God's world. By the end of 2022 8 churches had gained a silver Eco Church awards including Wells Cathedral and Flourish House, and 36 churches achieved a bronze award. Many more are on target to achieve an award in 2023.

Wilder Churches, the joint initiative between Bath and Wells and Somerset Wildlife Trust, went from strength to strength in 2022. Wilder Churches brings parishes and communities together to learn more about the biodiversity in their churchyards and how they can manage them with wildlife in mind. Hundreds attended the regular free online training sessions and get-togethers. They learnt about establishing new habitats and how to preserve those already present.

St James' Taunton is just one of the many churches in Bath and Wells working towards an Eco Church award. The churchyard is being monitored by local experts including the Somerset Botany

“
 Sara Emmett, Climate Justice
 & Environment Advisor
 Together we can make
 small changes that
 combine to make
 a real difference.
 ”

Group, the local council advises on mowing and young people from St James children's groups have created a bug hotel. This year members of Children's Church, with the help of Y6 leavers from St James School, harvested the wildflower yellow rattle from the churchyard. The seeds were then sorted by members of the Home Group ready for replanting. A recent survey of St James' revealed there are more than 120 species of wildflowers, trees and ferns in the churchyard.



Empowering everyone to live and tell the story of Jesus

At the start of 2022 people from across the diocese came together to collectively renew their confidence in their faith and discipleship as part of the 'God Calls Everyone, Everywhere' Archdeaconry Days. Hundreds joined in throughout the week and explored together the many and varied ways in which God calls us during our lives.

More than 300 people took part in an online service led by Bishop Ruth, and videos featuring people from all corners of Bath and Wells sharing their stories of calling were watched hundreds of times. The Calling, a podcast devised and hosted by young people, was downloaded more than 500 times.

As Covid restrictions were lifted we began to consider the impact of the pandemic on our young people. A Week of Prayer for Children and Young People coordinated by the Go Team brought church communities, households, schools and diocesan staff together each day for a week to pray for young people, their families, schools and colleges. A specially created Prayer Guide provided themes and prayer prompts, and prayer videos were shared on social media.

In the first of its kind in Bath and Wells Revd Rich Miles was licensed as a Missional Priest for Youth and Young Adults to work across the whole of Bath and Wells with the aim of supporting the church's vision of growing the church younger and more diverse.

In the autumn of 2022 Lucy Moore, Head of the Church of England's Growing Faith Foundation,

“
Lucy Moore, Head of the Church of England's Growing Faith Foundation
Imagine what the country could be like if the Church became the go-to movement for children and young people who want to serve God, serve their community and discover their whole purpose in life together with people of all ages!
”

was in Bath and Wells for a series of inspirational talks on God's vision for parishes that long to welcome children and young people. Lucy spoke to people in Taunton Minster and to a large group in Flourish House, Wells discussing and sharing with them ideas about putting children, young people and families at the heart of ministry and mission in Bath and Wells.

It was inspiration online at a series of events run by the Go Team at Easter, in the spring and autumn, as they were joined by those working with children and young people to share ideas and resources. And after a three-year gap, 'Life to the Max', and 'Family Max', Bath and Wells outdoor activities for young people from clergy families, returned. 22 young people joined a weekend of fun at the Mendip Outdoor Activity Centre. Whilst families with younger children enjoyed a day's fun in the sun.



Bishop Michael licensed the Revd Rich Miles as a Missional Priest for Youth and Young Adults





A safer church for all

As a diocese we continue to be committed to ensuring all people can worship and undertake their faith journey safely.

Throughout the year our experienced team of safeguarding professionals focused on developing and shaping the team and resources to provide comprehensive support to parishes so our network of Parish Safeguarding Officers can be equipped with the tools and support required to help them feel confident in their roles.

During the year Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) Forums were introduced and targeted training for PSOs was introduced. The diocese was accepted to take part in a pilot scheme for new Safeguarding Hubs specifically designed to help with safer recruitment. It helps parishes create job descriptions and provides a tool for assessing the Disclosure and Barring

Service (DBS) and training requirements for volunteer roles. Extensive work was undertaken to comprehensively update the safeguarding section of the diocesan website ensuring it is easy to use and information is easily accessible.

Two part time safeguarding trainers were appointed and as a result the team was able to improve delivery of the safeguarding leadership training, with more than 700 people undertaking the training in 2022. That number is on track to be more than 1,000 in the year ahead. The team also completed more than 1,319 DBS checks for parishes ensuring they can fill much needed roles within their church community in a safe and timely manner.

Safeguarding Sunday was celebrated by many parishes throughout the diocese offering an opportunity to thank the many volunteer Parish Safeguarding Officers for their continued hard work and commitment.



Thank you

For all that you do to live and tell the story of Jesus where you are.
The life of our diocese is enriched by your generosity, in all its forms.

The full financial accounts of the Diocesan Board of Finance will be available
in July at bathandwells.org.uk/accounts or from Companies House.

www.bathandwells.org.uk

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