

Join the conversation

Church communities across Somerset are being encouraged to take part in a process of learning and praying together as part of discerning a way forward for the Church in relation to matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

There are a range of Living in Love and Faith (LLF) resources to help facilitate the conversations on a dedicated Learning Hub. They include two versions of a 5-session course for local groups - one for youths and young adults and another for general use. They are designed to facilitate open, honest, and gracious learning and discussion among churchgoers across the country.



LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

Churches have been asked to take part in the course by the end of April 2022 and to share their learnings, reflections and insights via the online hub or email. Individuals can also respond the same way. This is understood to be the most extensive undertaking of any church to hear and articulate as wide a range of voices, lived experiences and theological

understandings as possible on these issues.

The course examines the six roadblocks - prejudice, silence, ignorance, fear, hypocrisy, and power - that impair relationships, hinder our personal growth as Christians, and create barriers that stop our churches from growing into Christian communities of welcome and belonging. They draw together the Bible, theology, science, and history with powerful real-life stories.

Churches can go through the course themselves, or if they wish, utilise one of the 21 Bath and Wells facilitators. Find out more about LLF and how you can take part at bathandwells.org.uk/living-in-love-faith ■

News in brief

God calls everyone

In February, everyone is invited to join us for 'God calls: everyone, everywhere' a week of exploring the many and varied ways in which God calls us during our lives.

The week will start on Sunday, 6 February with a launch service with Bishop Ruth and from Monday to Friday there will be on demand video content featuring people across the diocese talking about their experience of calling and sharing stories of calling from the Bible. On Saturday, the week will close with online gatherings to reflect and celebrate all that the week has held ■



Ready for planting

School's Jubilee trees

Each pupil at Old Cleeve Church of England First School has been given a tree sapling to plant along the Steam Coast Trail as part of the Queen's Green Canopy marking her Platinum Jubilee. The trees, donated by the Woodland Trust, are the latest in a long line of eco projects undertaken by the school and are encouraged and led by the school's caretaker, Keith Hunt ■

Join us on our Eco journey

In the next few months, we will be following a number of the church communities in Bath and Wells, as they think about some of the environmental challenges, they face in order to reach the Church of England target to be net zero by 2030.

One of those we have talked with is St Cuthbert's Church in Wells, who are considering changing their heating system to make it more sustainable, environmentally-friendly and cheaper to run. Keep up to date with our environmental news at bathandwells.org.uk/news ■

The light of a star to guide us

By Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton

What will 2022 bring I wonder? Two years ago Covid was just a vague murmur coming from the East. How could we have known it would have such an impact or for so long?

How might this year be different? Well, there is much to look forward to. We expect to have a new diocesan bishop joining us. We will be celebrating 70 years of the Queen's reign. The World Cup is on... and we have a chance! And then there are all the other excitements of anniversaries, milestones and hopes and dreams we all have.

As we begin this new year my mind turns to those Eastern travellers long ago who saw a star in the sky, set out on an uncharted

journey which took maybe up to two years, and eventually found a King. Not the sort of king expected but One who opened up new horizons for the whole world. One who offers us love, forgiveness and a way back to God.

At this time when we are asking questions that search for deeper meaning, this seems a story which resonates. What sort of journey will you take this year? At a recent clergy pre-Advent retreat we were reminded that it is not so much us walking with God but rather God walking with us. So, no matter what twists and turns the road takes, or even if we slip from following in God's Way, He will never give up on us and will never let us walk alone.

This year, as last, we shall be

seeking to dwell on some words from scripture and allow them to permeate into our being. The following verses from that passage, seem to offer us the light of a star to guide us as we navigate our journey in the year to come.

'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 4: 4-7

May you know God's presence and grace as He walks with you into this New Year!

+ Ruth Worsley

A safe space to think, discuss, pray

Assistant Curate and Chaplain Ruth Motion shares her thoughts on the LLF course.

How did you find the course?

It was great, very challenging, but great. It really makes you think about yourself, your views and how you feel about others. It's well written and the short videos are very thought provoking. Sometimes it was really heart-breaking to find out how some had been treated by churches in the past.

Was the course information clear?

It's very well set out and presented, even if you were leading it without a facilitator. We each had little booklets so we could follow the Bible passage for the week and see the questions which we were discussing. The videos and personal stories were so moving. They really make you think.



Ruth Motion at her ordination at Wells Cathedral.

Any advice for someone considering the course?

If anyone is nervous about doing the course I would say 'don't be'. Yes it makes you think, yes you will be talking about all sorts of things that you would never normally discuss in a church context, but it's very well done. It gives you the

opportunity, in a safe space, to ask questions that you may have had for years, but didn't want to ask. The media seems to have focused on only one aspect of the course, that of homosexuality, but it's so much more.

Do you think the Church will benefit from people doing the course?

Yes, hugely. Everyone has the chance to have their opinion heard and although any future decisions made within the Church of England may not please everyone, regardless of what they are, at least everyone has had the chance to think, discuss, pray and reflect.

Read the full interview at:

bathandwells.org.uk/llf-interview

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