

# A privilege to be involved

The Revd Dr Ian Mills, Rector, Chew Valley West Benefice, reflects on the significance of life events, and shares how these sacred moments offer space for faith and connection.



Revd Ian Mills, Rector, Chew Valley Benefice

## Why are life events so important?

Because they involve people choosing to come to the church or include the church in some way in these moments of great joy, great sorrow, and vulnerability.

## What does it mean to you when someone chooses the church?

It is a privileged to be involved. It means the church still holds a place in people's hearts. I also think everyone has some level of spiritual curiosity. These occasions let them explore that safely, without pressure.

## Why do people seek God's presence at these times?

These occasions often give people an opportunity to push at the door a little bit, it gives them an excuse to open a conversation and to explore their faith-curiosity a little bit more.

## How does the Church ensure things like weddings are more than just a ceremony taking place in a church building?

I always ask couples why they've chosen to marry in church, and we discuss their different journeys together. One couple who lived and worked in Glasgow didn't have a local link but wanted to marry in one of our churches. To do that, they needed to worship here for six months. They still have a connection with us.

## Why are life events such an important part of the church's ministry?

It's important that we frame these events in a way that will involve people and will give them a sense of the occasion, while at the same time, not being so unfamiliar that they feel they can never be part of it again. These special life events should feel familiar enough that people can connect, but also beautiful enough that they're drawn into the mystery of God.

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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩

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## Here in times of sorrow and of joy

As we head into the time that is often referred to as 'wedding season', it is an opportunity to reflect on how people often turn to the Church at significant moments in their lives. Whether they are times of celebration or sorrow, people look to the Church to bless, and witness, and to offer prayer, hope and meaning at weddings, baptisms and funerals.

Several years ago a couple approached Revd Martin Little, Vicar of St John the Evangelist Church in Highbridge, to ask about a baptism. Martin says when he chatted to the couple, he discovered their request wasn't as straightforward as other baptisms he'd been asked to do,

He said, "A local couple who are very young, just still in their teens, approached me and they wanted to have their little boy baptised. When I probed a bit more, I discovered they were part of a show called Teen Mom UK, on MTV and they asked if they could film the whole process.



Baptism welcomes people into the Christian faith and the family of God.

"After I agreed we talked about baptism for their little boy, and what that means. The father hadn't been baptised, so we baptised him as well in the service, which was lovely. I still see the couple in Highbridge, and they have come to Christingle and nativity services. They've now had another little boy and so we did it all again a few months ago."

Martin says of these life events, "We're delighted when people ask about the church and services. It really helps us to connect with the wider community. If you do one of these services well often people will come back, and they'll tell their friends."

# News in brief

## A thank you from Bishop Ruth

Bishop Ruth has sent a message of thanks to the Diocese of Bath and Wells for the wonderful farewell she received and for all the cards and gifts she was sent. In her letter Bishop Ruth said, "I will be holding you in my prayers in the coming months and ask that you do the same for me."

"Never forget that you are 'God's chosen ones, holy and beloved' and keep on living and telling the story of Jesus!"



## Giving thanks on Sea Sunday

Ninety five per cent of all we buy is transported by sea. Each July on Sea Sunday we remember and pray for all the men and women who work at sea to keep our world moving. At Royal Portbury Dock near Bristol, chaplains from the Mission to Seafarers visit ships in port each

## Walking St Cuthbert's way

Revd Gill Sakakini Pioneer Priest in the arts in Shepton Mallet, has been following in the footsteps of St Cuthbert by walking the 62-mile St Cuthberts Way. Gill walked the pilgrim trail on her way to take up an Artist Residency at the St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island. During her residency Gill will incorporate art made by pupils at St Cuthbert's Junior School in Wells and St Aldhelm's School, in Douling.



week offering practical support and a listening ear. Revd Lucy Blows one of the chaplains at Royal Portbury, says, "Sea Sunday is a reminder to give thanks and pray for all those who work long hours away from their families, to bring us the goods we need." Sea Sunday takes place on 13 July 2025.

Find out more on these and other stories at [bathandwells.org.uk/news](https://bathandwells.org.uk/news)

# Christ beside us

By Toby Wright, Dean of Wells

One of the great gifts of the Church, and to the Church, is the way in which we are invited to share in the significant life events of our communities. As we share in baptisms, confirmations and weddings, there is a great opportunity for us to be a part of people's real lives in real ways.

A key moment in the Christian journey is the moment of Baptism. John Chrysostom in the 4th said, 'When we immerse our head in water, just as if in a grave, the old man is buried, and having sunk down, is entirely hidden once for all; that, when we emerge, a new man arise again and raise up the new.' For Christians baptism is important as it puts us in the place of Christ and we start a new way of life. We become part of Christ's body.

Titus 3.5 describes baptism as 'the laver of regeneration'; it is an antitype of the Exodus (as we see in 1 Cor 10.1-2). It is us being born again from above (John 3.5). Above all, Baptism is the giving of the Spirit - which is the principle of the Christian Life.

It is our entire life, and indeed death, which are united in the death and resurrection of Christ. In Baptism we are united to God by adoption, having access to the divine life. And in Baptism we find ways of sustaining ourselves on the journey of life.

As Lancelot Andrewes put it, 'By Him taught all our life long that we know not, put in mind of what we forget, stirred up in what we are dull, helped in our prayers, relieved in our infirmities, comforted in our heaviness'.

Toby Wright  
Dean of Wells

