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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩

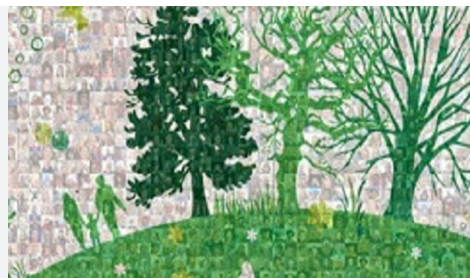
January 2023

New year, new you?

That's a question that's often asked in the new year and for this year's Everyday Faith event, which takes place from 29 January to 4 February, we will be looking at how we can energise and encourage you and others on your faith journey.

The week will begin with an online launch service on 29 January at 15:00, to which everyone is welcome. Daily videos and resources will be shared throughout the week, which will close with in person gatherings held in each of our three archdeaconries on 4 February at the Blue School Wells (10:00 to 11:30), Taunton Academy (10:00 to 11:30) and Wellsway School, Keynsham (14:00 to 15:30).

Cheryl Govier, one of the team drawn from across Bath and Wells which has organised the Everyday Faith event activities for 2023, says, "Sometimes being a Christian is hard work, we feel stuck in a rut, nothing changes, and we may even feel like we go backwards on our faith journey. At other times, it feels like our relationship with God grows and



develops and we learn more about who He is and draw closer to Him. Our Everyday Faith event activities are designed to help people explore what faith growth means and looks like, affirming and encouraging them along the way."

Throughout the week six themes will be explored: growth; rhythms; others; word; together and hope. In addition to the daily videos and supporting intergenerational resources, there are resources for small groups, youth groups and schools as well as theological reflections on each of the themes. You can find out more about our Everyday Faith event and register to receive the videos and attend the events at bathandwells.org.uk/everyday-faith-event ■

News in brief

Eco award for Bath & Wells

The Diocese of Bath and Wells has received a bronze Eco Diocese award for its commitment to caring for creation. The award reflects the work undertaken by churches in all parts of the diocese to help take better care of God's world.

Bath and Wells Climate Justice & Environment Adviser, Sara Emmett said, "The Eco Diocese Award means that we have demonstrated our commitment and progress towards Creation Care and Net Zero Carbon as a diocese. In order to progress to a silver award we need to have 30% of churches with an award, 10% of which are silver, so this is our biggest challenge and one which we need everyone to commit to working towards." ■

New patron of Somerset Day

Bishop Michael has become a patron of Somerset Day, which is celebrated each year on the second Saturday in May.

Commenting on becoming a Patron, Bishop Michael said "I'm thrilled to be here in Somerset and to be able to see and celebrate so many different aspects of our life together.



A unique gift of thanks from Ukrainian guest

A Ukrainian guest staying in Somerton who regularly attends St Michael's church with her hosts has used her artistic talents to present the church with a unique gift, an icon of St Michael who is also the patron saint of Kyiv. She produced the painting to say thank you to all those who have helped her, and her six-year-old daughter, settle in Somerset ■

Somerset Day is a brilliant way for us to give thanks for so much that's good in our county. I'm very much looking forward to supporting its work".

Bishop Michael will be patron alongside existing Somerset Day Patrons, including Bishop Ruth and Michael Eavis ■

Looking out for Jesus

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

In January, our churches enter the season of Epiphany which my dictionary defines as 'a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization'. I wonder what your epiphanies have been? When have you seen things for the first time? Experienced the penny dropping? Understood things in a new way?

In our churches, the readings for the Sundays of January are all about moments that revealed who Jesus is. The arrival of the wise men showed that Jesus is for everyone, not just the people of Israel. Jesus's baptism revealed his relationship with his Father and the Holy Spirit. The production at Cana of enough top-quality red plonk to take several baths in made clear the abundance of God's love for us. The end of the Epiphany season, the feast of Candlemas (actually 2 February), marks the moment when Jesus was seen as 'God's salvation for all peoples' (Luke 2: 31).

The challenge with epiphanies is whether we're looking out for them. If our eyes are wide shut, we don't see an awful lot. Sometimes we

need to stand in a different place to spot things we haven't perceived before. So the question I'd like to ask you as our new year begins is 'Where and when are you looking out for the Jesus who has been revealed to us?'

A practical step you might take to help you on your way is to sign up to be part of the 'Everyday Faith' events that will be happening around our diocese from 29 January until 4 February. The aim of these events is to help us look at our faith afresh and see things anew from some different perspectives.

I'm going to be taking part in the Everyday Faith events and they're going to be great. As we enter a new year, why not come and join me? After all, an invitation to an epiphany isn't something that comes your way every day!

A very Happy New Year to you all,
Bishop Michael ■



Inspiring faith

Mark Felstead, who attends St James' Church, Preston Plucknett, talks about his faith and helping set up the 2023 Everyday Faith event.



Mark Felstead, one of the organisers of the Everyday Faith event.

What have been your faith influences?

My Sunday School teachers put their talents and personal faith into teaching us about Jesus and developing a good knowledge of Bible stories. They helped me understand that Jesus wasn't just someone to know stories about, but a living Saviour for us to have a relationship with. The Christian Union at university was a great community that kept us growing in faith throughout the week. My personal journey wouldn't have been the same without the support and influence of those communities.

How do you sustain your faith?

Being a member of a local church has always been essential for me, including meeting as a small group in the week as well as Sunday worship. I

personally respond to the liturgy of the Anglican tradition, so it's a real help to me to meet with others for Morning Prayer on Mondays and Saturdays. I also greatly value my Christian friends from other denominations and the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss the Bible and to pray together.

What has help you grow in faith?

When I retired from teaching four years ago I read all of Pete Greig's books on prayer. They had a great impact on me and led to me setting up a local network of praying friends across denominational boundaries. We have over 100 people signed up to our Facebook prayer group.

What are you looking forward to about the Everyday Faith event?

I am excited by the possibility that many of us will grow in our care for the growth of others. I am praying that everyone will take away something from the week that will not only help them in their personal journey of faith and trust in God, but will inspire them to help others in their faith journey too. Read more: bathwells.anglican.org/manna-inspiring-faith

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