



Shining light, bringing hope

Annual Review 2020



Foreword

What a year it has been... In January, we had barely heard of coronavirus. In December, Christmas plans were curtailed due to further lockdowns. It has been a year of continual adaption as more of us have discovered online worship, new ways of being Church, and increased opportunities for serving our communities.

I have been amazed at the resilience of those who have served so faithfully on our frontlines, in schools, hospitals, and care homes. And in the ways in which so many of our older members have adapted to new technology and accepted so willingly the changes thrust upon them. Our priests and lay ministers have also given themselves tirelessly to encouraging their communities and supporting them through uncertainty and anxiety.

Since the summer we have missed the presence of Bishop Peter as he has been treated for leukaemia and continues his recovery. His isolation during this time has mirrored something of that experienced by others, shielding from the virus or

feeling the loneliness of being unable to meet with friends and feel the warming embrace of family.

As a country we have rediscovered the value of relationship and been able to reassess our priorities. As a diocese we have been doing so too. Appreciating the presence of God when others are absent and knowing His faithfulness and the hope of His grace even when so much around us feels unclear.

As you read these stories of resilience and the way in which the Church across Bath and Wells has adapted to the unexpected, may they warm your heart and give you glimpses of God's love for His world.

Thank you for all you do to support ministry and mission in this diocese. It is through your support that the ministry on display in these pages is able to happen and, by happening, change lives.

+ *Ruth Tantor*

+Ruth



CREDIT: Rob Coombe





In Wookey, they brought deckchairs for a Sunday service in the sunshine.



This year 17 new deacons were ordained at four intimate services in the Lady Chapel of Wells Cathedral. New priests were priested in small services in churches around the county, whilst new Readers were licenced at two socially distanced services at the Bishop's Palace. The services were filmed by the diocesan communications team and Jerry Curd from Hungry Earth productions, and streamed to large audiences, some tuning in from around the world.

Adapting to a virtual world

The amazing creativity and adaptability of Christian communities was tested to the limit in 2020. But from small congregations to large, church communities rose to the challenge and found new ways to worship together and still maintain a visible presence in their communities. To quote Tina Hodgett, the Evangelism and Pioneer Team Leader for the diocese and leader of the Pioneer Project, coronavirus has made "pioneers of us all".

In the few weeks before lockdown hit in March, the 40 questions Lent campaign kicked off. Fortunately, planned as a virtual social media campaign, each day people around the diocese, from 4 year olds to 99 year olds, grappled on camera with one of the thought provoking questions. Later in the year, the questions were still in use among staff at the Royal United Hospital in Bath.

As church buildings closed, smaller parishes like St Mary's Berrow and St Bridget's Bream took their services online, trying out new

technology for the first time. By the end of the year, hundreds of churches in Bath and Wells, were streaming live and recorded services, prayer meetings, reflections, and more.

In Wellington Revd Tim Treanor, launched a daily podcast, while in Wembdon near Bridgwater the simple idea of a Zoom coffee morning kept people in touch with each other.

New worshippers joined online, with some reporting new viewers from as far afield as New Zealand and Korea. The daily video prayer launched at the beginning of lockdown reached more than 566,000 people on Twitter and Facebook in 11 months since the first lockdown. St Michael's Without in Bath reported a ten per cent increase in their congregation.

Sometimes it was the simplest of gestures that brought joy; Revd Philip Hawthorn, from Bath propped his ladder against the fence, and with guitar in hand delivered a morning assembly over the fence to the children of key workers in St Stephen's school next door.

The Go Team's Inspire Evenings moved online and new technology such as the Lec Deck app reached out to new audiences.

Church communities didn't just seek to replicate services online, but also searched out new opportunities and new people. The carpark and field were packed for a drive-in Harvest service at Beacon Trinity Parish where they were joined by Oakhill Methodist Chapel, while many turned to the telephone to minister to the communities and provide regular worship.

In Hayward Village, near Weston super Mare an outdoor moving service, saw the church community and villagers alike 'visiting' different parts of the service along a specially created route.

And as Christmas beckoned, traditions such as the Living Nativity, led by Canon Rob Walrond and Rev Tobie Osmond were filmed, with scripts and costumes made available so that groups or families could recreate their own journey to Bethlehem, making new connections with children across Somerset's schools and church communities.

"The way we offer spiritual care has changed so much over the last year; we have been responding constantly to the acute spiritual and emotional needs of patients and staff.



Our visits have become really crucial to our patients, as currently there is no visiting. Therefore chaplains are the only people they can talk to all day. We have been able to hold patients' hands, through our PPE. They might not be able to feel our skin but we sit with them to listen, talk to them and support them to do FaceTime or just sit in silence.

After this is over, many people will need deep psychological care, for the impact this has had on lives."

Narinder Tegally, Lead Chaplain, Spiritual Care. RUH



A resilient church: meeting need in our communities

During 2020, church communities continued to support their own wider communities and also worked with other faith groups and organisations to reach out to those in need.

Churches have long been involved in running or supporting food banks, which have been needed more than ever this year. The Quantock Foodbank saw the numbers of users increase four-fold during lockdown; over the summer half term alone they delivered 164 bags of supplies to families.

In Bath, Rose Cottage Hub helped coordinate supplies and deliveries working with the central foodbank, local police and government appointed drivers to reach hungry households. In Weston super Mare the foodbank provided toys and games for families to help out during

the school holidays, in an appeal backed by Bishop Peter.

Throughout the year the number of people needing help grew steadily, but donations also increased, allowing the Quantock Foodbank in partnership with the Churches together to buy an advent calendar for all first school pupils in the Watchet and Williton area.

School staff demonstrated extraordinary resilience as they were called on to open up for vulnerable and key worker families, as well as teach pupils remotely. More than 150 church schools stayed open during the Easter holidays to support key workers families. And when the headteacher of Thurlebear CofE Primary school in Taunton asked for volunteers to work weekends to open up for NHS staff, 20 staff stepped forward.

The school stayed open at weekends for just one family, to enable a parent to carry out essential work.

Others joined the national effort to provide PPE, with St Michael's Without giving over their church building to volunteers making equipment.

The Church was also on hand to support those isolated in their workplaces unable to return home during the pandemic, through the work of Reverend Jeremy Hellier, Port Chaplain for Mission to Seafarers at Royal Portbury and Avonmouth Docks near Bristol and others. In Hinkley Point C Revd Ewen Huffman set up weekly 'drop-in' sessions and 'virtual' faith gatherings for the huge number of workers who stayed on site working throughout lockdown.

A Chaplaincy phonline with a 70 strong team of volunteers set up by Faith Communities Major Emergencies Team for Avon and Somerset, included clergy, pastoral support workers and chaplains. The Police Chief Avon of Avon and Somerset said: "I am immensely grateful to the team who stand by ready to listen."

The pandemic made church communities think in new ways, take risks and push the boundaries of what is possible. Ministry has adapted, and the profile of chaplaincy in particular has soared as in workplaces, schools, hospitals and care homes chaplains connected with more people than ever to provide a listening ear and spiritual support.

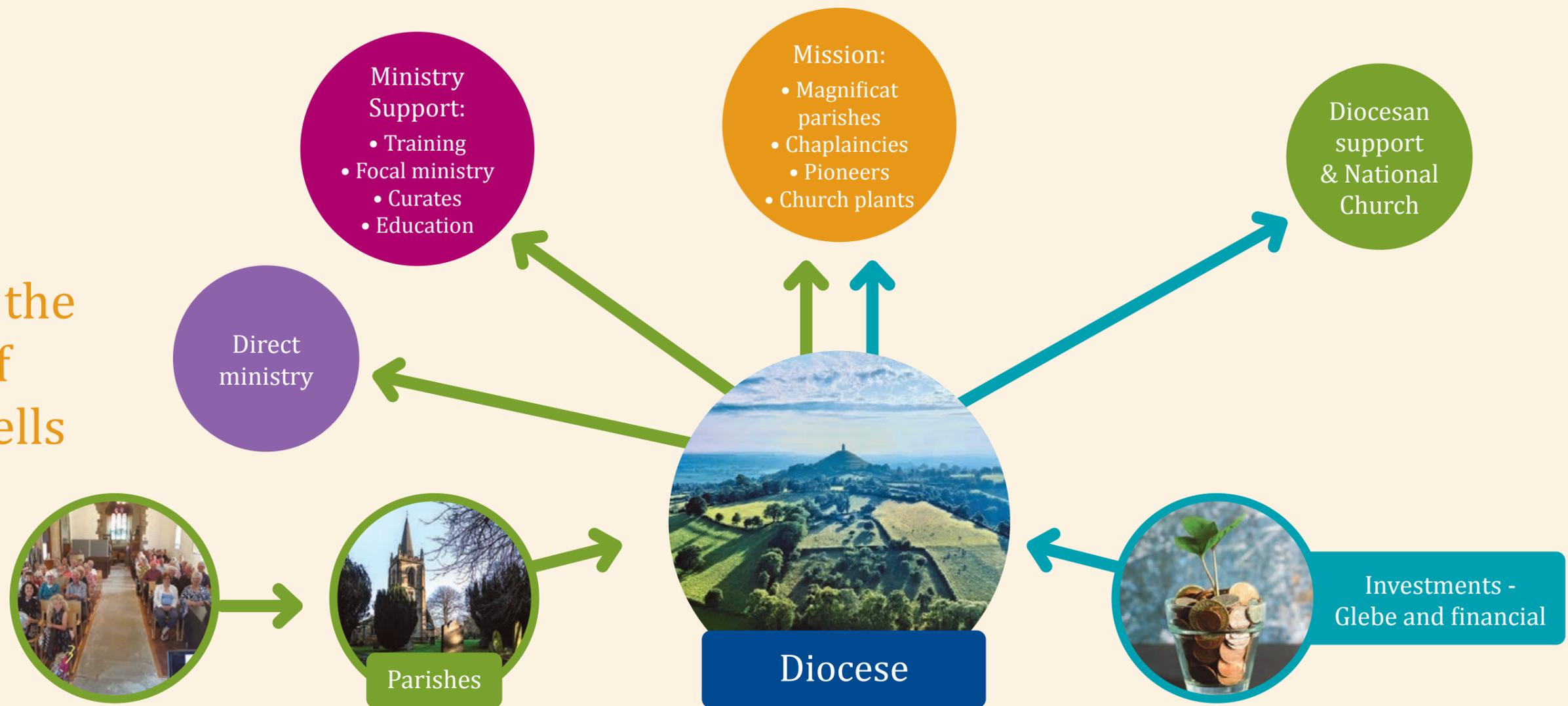


United with our brothers and sisters in Zambia

An appeal by Bath and Wells raised much needed funds for people in Eastern Zambia left without homes, crops and food supplies after floods devastated the region. The money raised provided supplies for families who no longer had crops to harvest. We also remember the people of Zambia in our prayers as they too are coping with the pandemic with far fewer resources.

Finance

A funding vision for the Diocese of Bath & Wells



Meeting the challenge

By Matthew Pinnock, head of finance and operations

The last year has been a huge challenge for everyone from a financial point of view. PCCs have been unable to host village events, hold services and weddings have been postponed. This has meant that income has been affected for everyone across the diocese. For some, the Diocesan Discretionary Parish Share Support Scheme has been required to ensure that PCCs remain operational. The work undertaken by all PCCs at this testing time has been hugely appreciated.

The Diocesan Board of Finance has had to dig deep into unrestricted reserves to support all PCCs, particularly those most in need including our Magnificat parishes. The DBF remains committed to providing resources to PCCs to support the mission across the diocese.

Parish share receipts are down by over £1million from 2019, however the DBF has continued to invest in its mission priorities, including new curates and pioneers, drawing down money to do so from reserves.

The Common Fund continues to be spent solely on support for mission across the diocese, primarily meeting the costs of stipends and housing, but also paying training costs for both lay, clergy, curates and new incumbents. The generosity of all those who contribute to the Common Fund helps to continue to provide mission for all, from the youngest in toddler groups and our schools to the oldest in supported living for the elderly.

With the impact of Covid-19 rolling into 2021 and the continued aim that the burden

of the pandemic is shared equally across us all, the DBF will need to continue to use reserves, but these are finite and cannot continue for ever.

A review of all services provided by the diocese is underway to ensure what is provided meets the needs of parishes and communities, post the current pandemic. We remain committed to engaging with people across Somerset, living and telling the story of Jesus, and this will always be the highest priority in all budget setting.



“Let us look forward
with hope to the
opportunities ahead,
trusting in Jesus’
promise that He will
build His church”

Ian Theodoreson,
chair of the DBF



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