



Annual Review 2024



DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living and telling the story of Jesus

Contents

02	Introduction
04	Our vision and strategy
06	It starts with prayer
07	Growing faith
10	New worshipping communities
12	Transforming communities
14	Valuing and cherishing
16	Well supported
18	2024 at a glance

Introduction

In today's society we are often encouraged to look forward, but there is a benefit to be found in looking back. Looking back and reflecting on 2024 in its entirety I find myself filled with joy. While there were, of course, many challenges to be faced during the year, what stands out to me when looking back is the myriad of joyful encounters that I was privileged to attend. Encounters during visits

to churches, chaplaincy settings and schools, and when hosting visitors to Wells, either at the Bishop's Palace or at Flourish House. Last year I set the challenge for each benefice to grow by one adult and one child (net) and, in all my encounters, I not only saw evidence of people being church in many different ways, but also working towards that goal in their own unique way.



I have been told by some that it is not a very ambitious challenge, but it is more challenging that it looks when you consider that every year we see people move away, and others go on to glory. If we witness an increase in every benefice's congregation across Bath and Wells with one more adult and one more child, that will mean an additional 346 people will come to know what it means to come to know and love our Lord, Jesus Christ, as we do.

Quite naturally, there are others who feel that goal is too ambitious and are truly daunted by the prospect of trying to achieve net growth. To them my message is simple, you are not alone.

I see people coming together to support one another in a host of different ways. In formal structures, such as deaneries, because of common ground - as evidenced by the Magnificat Parishes

Group and Rural Forum - or as a result of similar roles, such as our emerging parish administrators network. I have also seen our diocesan support services come alongside people and use their specialist skills to help in a host of different ways. Of course, as Christians, we must also draw strength and support from prayer, and it was wonderful to see that brought vividly to life in so many places during our diocesan Wave of Prayer back in September. I know that Archbishop Justin was swept up and energised by that wave when we visited people and places around Bath and Wells who were taking part, as was I.

If we want to continue to grow our church and transform our communities then prayer must be our starting point. It is only with God's grace that we can succeed.

Bishop Michael





Living out our vision

‘In response to God’s immense love for us, we seek to be God’s people, living and telling the story of Jesus.’

This has been the diocesan vision and focus for many years now, and it is something that we want to continue.

In living out this vision, we want to grow our churches and transform our communities - not as two separate things, but as two sides of the same coin. But how do we do that? I believe we achieve this by being prayerful, authentic, courageous, joyful, generous and diverse.

We know we have big challenges to face, but we can and should do this with joy, transmitting the joy of who we are and what we believe. We need to be generous of our time, our intent, our concerns, our prayers. We need to be diverse and meet the needs of every age, every social background, every ethnicity. We need to begin with what we have and

not worry about what we lack. We need to be a safer church, and for people to know we are a safer church. If we do this alongside each other, and support one another, I know we will grow the Kingdom here in Bath and Wells.

Early in 2024 I shared with you four areas of focus that I felt would help us grow our churches and transform our communities. You may have seen some evidence of that focus in 2024 but, as the year progressed, it became clear to us that while these areas speak well to our aim of growing the church, they don’t speak out clearly as to how we plan to transform our communities. We have, therefore, added transforming communities as a standalone area of focus.

All our work in these areas is underpinned by the

Our five areas of focus

1. Growing and deepening in faith
2. Developing new and existing worshipping communities
3. Sharing in ministry and leadership
4. Transforming communities
5. Valuing, cherishing and developing the people and resources we already have

Go to pages 7 to 15 for more about these areas of focus, and for stories from across our diocese which illustrate what is already taking place.

Anglican Communion Five Marks of Mission.
We also recognise the need to simplify, where possible, administration, structures and process so that more of our time and energy can focus on what is important.
This document expands the aspirations of our five areas of focus, shares some stories from across the diocese that highlight activity

already taking place to achieve those aspirations, and outlines some of the support available to help achieve your local activity. I hope you find it informative and inspiring as you continue to live and tell the story of Jesus where you are.

Bishop Michael

The Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

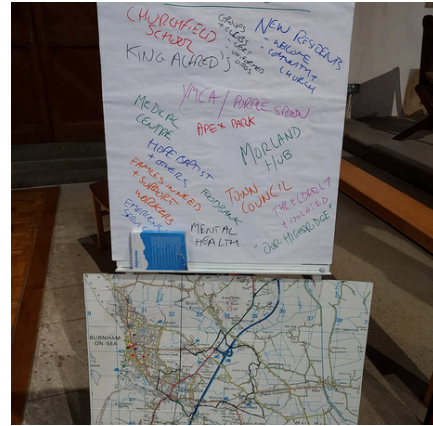
It starts with prayer

For 24 hours in September a wave of prayer spread across the diocese, as people came together to pray for the growth of church and the transformation of communities. Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, joined us for a number of our parish events.



Youth event - St Michael's Without, Bath

On Friday, 6 September, more than 170 people from across the diocese came to pray with and for young people. Bishop Michael took part in a question and answer session about the meaning and power of prayer, and Archbishop Justin gave his personal perspective on prayer.



Prayer walks

A number of churches organised prayer walks for the diocesan day of prayer, including at St John the Evangelist, Highbridge and Chew Valley South Benefice, and the churches of Porlock.

Loving God

You alone bring growth to your Church and transformation to our communities.

We give thanks for the ways in which you are already at work in our lives and world.

As we look to the future, send your Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions, and grace in living and telling your story.

Help our churches to grow in commitment to you, in numbers and diversity, and in partnership with our local communities in all that gives life,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



"Prayer is the moment in which we recognise that whoever we are, and whatever we are like, we are reached out to by God. And we look into His eyes and know that we are loved."

Justin Welby





Praying for our rural communities

Members of the rural community came together to pray at Sedgemoor Auction Centre, Bridgwater, adding their prayers to the bunting decorating the market ring.



A focus on schools and colleges

Local children and members of Kingshill Church School set up meaningful and imaginative prayer stations on a range of topics.



A place for quiet contemplation

After reflecting on environmental stewardship and climate change, Archbishop Justin planted a vine in the Giant's Garden at St Mary's, Frome, where the former vicarage is being converted into a new Christian community, complete with prayer shed.

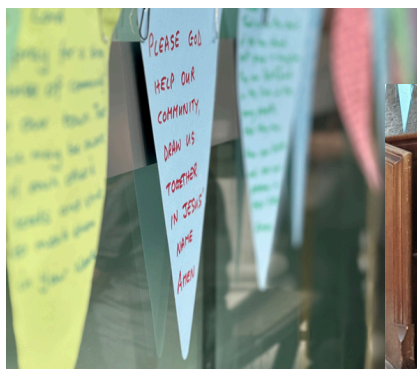


Praying for our communities

St Francis, Bridgwater set up prayer stations focused on the work of the church in the local community, including the food bank, work of Street Pastors, chaplaincy at Hinkley Point C, and issues such as modern slavery and county lines.

"What a time of encouragement, joy and delight it has been in all that we've shared. It has been great to share in prayer with so many people around our diocese of Bath and Wells. A wonderful 24 hours!"

Bishop Michael



Prayer bunting bonanza

Prayer bunting was on display in churches across Bath and Wells, including in St Giles Church, Bradford-on-Tone.

Join the wave...

The diocesan prayer calendar unites us in prayer. Issued monthly, you can find it, along with other prayer resources to nourish your prayer life, at bathandwells.org.uk/prayer



Growing faith

‘Across Bath and Wells there is a culture of flourishing discipleship, where people take responsibility for developing their faith and supporting others in exploring and growing their faith. People of all ages are confident to explore and encounter, choose to commit, live out, grow and share their faith.’



From curiosity to commitment

An Alpha Course and Lay Worship Leaders training in Midsomer Norton Deanery offered people the chance to explore and deepen their faith. The Alpha Course welcomed 25 people; at the end, 24 had made a personal decision to invite Jesus into their lives. The Lay Worship Leaders course brought together 13 people from churches across the deanery.

Nourishing faith through fellowship

People of all ages gathered to eat, talk, and laugh together at the Growing Faith Foundation Big Lunch in Nailsea. Members of the local church, schools, children and young people from the Backwell Junior School Learning Hub joined members of the Bath and Wells Everyday Faith and Education teams. It was an opportunity to inspire, encourage and celebrate all those helping children and young people to grow in faith.



Public commitment to journey with Christ

More than 120 people from every corner of the diocese gathered at the Diocesan Confirmation service at Wells Cathedral to affirm their faith. Supported by their family, friends and members of their church community, each stepped deeper into their faith and shared their commitment to God.



“God is definitely active.
We just have to work out
where He is and join Him.”
Revd Ian Rousell
The Waterside Benefice



Sharing faith in the marketplace

On Ash Wednesday, Bishop Michael held a service in the centre of Wells to meet people where they are. The service took place in the Wednesday market, as people gathered to shop, meet friends or have a coffee. Many stopped to join in the prayer; others received ashes.



Empowering young disciples

At Taunton Minster, pupil chaplains from schools across the diocese came together for a special day of sharing, reflection, and encouragement. Pupil chaplains in Bath and Wells are growing in number. These young leaders are deepening their faith by leading worship and offering pastoral care, and are supported with resources and guidance from their schools, the diocesan Education and Go teams, and the chaplaincy team.



Stepping deeper into faith

Tony, Robert and David were baptised at St Mary's in Bridgwater. Continuing their journey with Jesus, all three were later confirmed at Wells Cathedral.



Exploring spirituality

Driven by a desire to deepen their faith and journey more closely with God, people from across our diocese came together to take part in the Exploring Your Spirituality course.

Want to grow in faith?

Find out what training and other opportunities are available to support you as you grow in faith. Visit bathandwells.org.uk/events-and-training

New worshipping communities

“My prayer is to see God’s kingdom here at the heart of the housing development.”
Revd Jon Ball
Orchard Grove Church

‘A more varied and numerous range of Christian worshipping communities exist across our diocese, led by and reaching a wider diversity of people. They offer safe churches for all to encounter, worship and serve God.’



Faith grows in new ground

Orchard Grove Church was started in a school on a new housing development of 2,000 homes near Trull. What began in 2024 with just 15 adults and two children, has now more than doubled. The church also runs a pop-up ‘coffee bike’ to meet and connect with residents. Led by Imogen and Jon Ball who were supported by the Growing Faith team, Orchard Grove is rooted in prayer and shaped by its neighbourhood.

A life shaped by prayer

A new Christian community at St Mary’s Church, Frome is preparing to welcome its first residents. Four adults will commit to a shared rhythm of prayer and a common rule of life and will live in Mary’s House, the former vicarage. Pioneers Andrew and Elizabeth Alden and Revd Liz Dudley have helped establish Mary’s House. Martha Oster is one of the new trustees. “It is a community for the spiritually curious, exploring what Christian wisdom might teach us about how to live more fully in an uncertain world.”



Andrew Alden and Martha Oster



Worship for all generations

St Peter’s, Weston-super-Mare, brings generations together through ‘Intentionally Intergenerational’ worship. With accessible, engaging services for all ages, the community has grown. It’s about changing culture so that people of all stages encounter God together, joyfully reshaping what church can look and feel like.

In May, people from across the diocese gathered to talk about intentionally intergenerational worship. Supported by the Go Team, they discussed how it’s growing and developing across our diocese.



Foundations of faith

In Haywood Village, Weston-super-Mare, plans for a permanent base for the Village Church were launched in 2024. The church, which currently meets at the Academy School, plans to establish their own building and develop a community hub for the village. From small beginnings, Village Church has grown into a thriving community through initiatives like the Take 5 pop-up café and Tea and Toast Church. Each has played a pivotal role in fostering connections and building a sense of belonging.

“God has done amazing things at Haywood Village so far. It is exciting to see how He will build his church.”

Revd Fiona Mayne
Haywood Village



“We have learned so much about being united in our love for Jesus and most of all about the power of prayer.”

Revd Jane Sutton
Rector, Westonzoyland with Chedzoy



Kindness rocks

The church communities of Westonzoyland and Chedzoy had been praying for God’s guidance on how to connect with young families when they were inspired to recreate the Kindness Rocks project. Painted pebbles with messages of hope were placed around the village, sparking community interest and leading to a craft event that welcomed dozens of children and parents. From here, who knows what God will grow?



Growing together in faith

Bubble Church has begun in Trendlewood. The Sunday service is designed especially for babies, toddlers and their families. With action songs, Bible stories, puppets and simple activities, it creates a joyful and engaging space for little ones to begin exploring faith and helps teach them about God’s love. It is about small steps that have led to something meaningful. And it’s only just begun.

Growing with Greenhouse

Four teams continue on a missional journey, sharing in the Greenhouse learning community, exploring how to do church differently. Each team is in a different context, and journeying at different speeds, all mutually appreciated and encouraged. Two new worshipping communities continue to grow and others continue to reflect, learn and refocus.



Want to know more about Greenhouse or growing Christian worshipping communities?

Contact Richard Priestley, diocesan Mixed Ecology Adviser.

Email: richard.priestley@bathwells.anglican.org or visit bathandwells.org.uk/mixed-ecology

“If God is with you then [Church] will grow and that’s exactly what happened at St Francis.”
Gerald Swayne

Transforming communities

‘We not only respond to the needs of our communities, coming alongside them as they seek to address those needs, we also play our part in addressing the root causes of the challenges our communities face.’



Credit: British Ironwork Centre

Standing together

In April, the Knife Angel, a 27 foot high sculpture made from 100,000 knives and blades, stood in the centre of Taunton. Taunton Minster worked with local schools, community groups and businesses to support an anti violence campaign. Inside the Minster, an angel wings art project for children was on display, together with a large canvas created by local artists, a space for education and time for reflection. A closing vigil offered a time for prayer and reflection for the whole town.

At the heart of the community

More than 300 children, parents and carers enjoyed a summer trip to Crealey Adventure Park organised by the Holiday Club at St Francis Church Bridgwater. The church’s Holiday Club, which has been running for more than 25 years, was set up in response to community need and supports families who have limited means. With the help of grants and donations from the church community, the club offered families the opportunity to take their children on a trip they might otherwise not be able to afford.



Faith in familiar places

More than 300 people came together at Cutcombe Cattle Market on Exmoor for ‘Singing in the Ring’, a Christmas carol service bringing worship into the heart of the farming community. Organised by Revd David Weir, together with the Exmoor Hill Farming Network and the Farming Community Network, the service had readings from local farmers and a message from Bishop Michael who preached at the service. It offered a moment of shared celebration in a setting familiar and meaningful to those who farm on Exmoor.



“If the church can’t be in the community, there isn’t really any point.”

Andy Jarrett
Market Chaplain



Spiritual strength on site

A second full-time chaplain was licensed to serve and support the 12,000 strong workforce at Hinkley Point C construction site in Bridgwater. He joins a chaplaincy team that includes six dedicated volunteer Associate Chaplains working on site.

Together for young people

The Diocese of Bath and Wells and Diocesan Board of Education worked with Somerset Council to give new purpose to the former Misterton School site. The building, retained by the diocese, continues its commitment to education in Misterton by working with the council to offer a home for a new Therapeutic Education Centre, providing specialist support for young people with additional and SEND needs.



Walking alongside

Established behind Portishead Medical Centre, Willow Community Garden created by Revd Lindsay Smith is a place people can come together to find support and deepen their connection with God, nature and each other. The garden also supports social prescribing by the local health centre - providing a space where people can improve their mental and physical health through time spent in nature, social connection and hands on activity.



"This is a way of stepping outside the church building and being present in the heart of the community, and offering something that speaks to real needs."

Revd Lindsay Smith
Portishead Benefice



Caring for communities and the environment

In April, the Quantock Foodbank launched its fully electric van to help deliver food to local communities and reach those who are not able to travel. The van has zero-emissions and solar panels to power its fridge and lights.

Looking for support to help you strengthen your church's connection to your community?

Contact the diocesan Mission team.

Email: mission@bathwells.anglican.org

Valuing and cherishing

‘We notice and make use of all that God has already given us, and is wanting to give us so that we can joyfully join in with God’s mission. High levels of mutual trust and respect between all within our diocese and beyond.’



A weekend of celebrations

Surrounded by family, friends and the people who have supported them on their journey, 10 new deacons and 13 priests were ordained in 2024. An ordination service was held at Wells Cathedral in June and at St Michael’s Galmington in October. Our ordinands come from all walks of life, from teaching, aircraft engineering, and children’s work.

“Readers speak into the life of the Church from the contexts in which God has placed them in the world.”
Bishop Michael

Giving thanks for Readers

Readers’ Day in Bath and Wells brought together nearly 100 Readers from across the diocese. They spent a morning studying Corinthians and the body of Christ and considering the role of a Reader in the life of the Church and in their communities. Robin Lodge was thanked for his ministry as he stood down as Archdeaconry Warden of Readers. Later that day they renewed their promises in the Readers’ Day Eucharist at Wells Cathedral, and Bishop Michael licensed three new Readers.



The gifts of all

More than 170 people gathered at St Paul’s Church in Weston super Mare to give thanks for all who serve in lay ministry in Bath and Wells. This special event highlighted the diverse ways in which lay people contribute to the church and their community, from Parish Safeguarding Officers to those who have completed courses in pioneering or spirituality.



Thank you!

Throughout the summer, PCC secretaries, treasurers and their families enjoyed an evening at the Bishop's Palace with Bishop Michael to thank them for giving their time, skills and care - often behind the scenes - to make a difference to the parishes and people they serve. In September, Bishop Michael welcomed new education leaders from across the diocese at a service at Wells Cathedral and to the palace.

Serving with dedication

Churchwardens' Days brought together people from across the diocese for a day of encouragement, training and fellowship. The sessions featured discussions, question and answer sessions, and shared resources such as the Churchwardens' Handbook. It was also an opportunity to meet and share insights with others serving in the same role in other parts of the diocese.



"I thought the day was very good - rooted in mission, informative, relevant, and fun! I would recommend it and would definitely attend again."

Sarah Messenger
Churchwarden, Tone Deanery



Honoured by the King

Philip Andrews and Revd Jenny Jeffery were recipients of 'Maundy Money' from His Majesty the King, in recognition of their work to support their communities. Philip has raised more than £40,000 for Mpongwe Hospital in Zambia and serves on his local PCC. Revd Jenny Jeffery was on the Diocesan Board of Education, and became one of the very first formally recognised chaplains to a large state primary school.

A day for administrators

Parish administrators took part in their first dedicated training and support day in Wells. They had a chance to get to know one another, share tips and ideas, and learn about the support available.



Cherishing creation

Around 60 churches took part in our Wilder Churches gatherings, run in partnership with the Somerset Wildlife Trust. By the end of the year, we had 64 churches with Eco Church awards, with one silver and six bronze awards attained in 2024. Over 60% of churches completed the Environment Footprint Tool (EFT) which will help in our efforts to reach Net Zero by 2030.

Got a story to share?

If you have a story about someone you value in your church or community that you would like to share with the wider diocese, email: comms@bathwells.anglican.org

"I felt it [Deanery Review] was a helpful way for Diocesan advisers to engage with the reality on the ground, and for all of us to become aware of parishes which aren't linked in."

David Keen
Area Dean, Yeovil

Well supported

Growing our churches and transforming our communities is not just a goal for those in our churches, it is a shared goal for all of us who are the Diocese of Bath and Wells, including in Support Services.

In 2024 we have been thinking really hard about what our diocesan teams do for you and taken the opportunity to reflect on the priorities shared by Bishop Michael. While we don't have a blank sheet of paper to work from, as there are legal and practical aspects to some roles within the team that have to remain consistent, we want to ensure we offer support that you say we need.

In these challenging times, we are continuing to evolve to ensure we meet your needs, not only as effectively as possible but as cost-efficiently as possible.

Simplification

A priority of all our teams is to work to make diocesan processes as easy as possible for the clergy and church officers. We want to ensure, as far as we are able, that anyone with a role in the church finds that the processes that need to be followed, or the boxes that need to be ticked, can be done as simply and straightforwardly as possible.

That may be by introducing new systems, improving existing processes, or working with the national church to influence change.



Staff from Support Services and the Bishop's Office

Support

After a successful trial in Yeovil, Deanery Reviews are now taking place annually for every deanery across the diocese. These Reviews allow people from across each deanery to come together, with members of Support Services to get an in depth understanding of the needs of the parishes in that deanery. Using data already collected either by the national church or ourselves to start our conversations, the reviews are helping us to improve our understanding of the needs of our parishes so we can ensure that everyone who needs support receives it.

We have received some positive feedback on this process, which marks a complete change to the way that Support Services engages with deaneries.

It is not all about making big changes, however, even simple changes are making a difference, such as our Giving and Funding team's appointment booking system for parishes to ensure timely access to support.



Safeguarding Dashboards are designed to help parishes manage their safeguarding quickly and effectively.



Mark Lidster, Church Buildings Adviser



Jonathan Philpott, Local Giving and Funding Adviser

Staffing

We welcomed some new faces to Support Services in 2024, including a new Church Buildings Adviser, Mark Lidster; Jonathan Philpott, who took on a part time role as Local Giving and Funding Adviser for Bath and Wells archdeaconries. Already familiar to many in the diocese, with Mark previously being on the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and Jonathan being a priest in Berrow and Brean, they wasted no time in getting out and about in the diocese and sharing their valuable skills. At the end of 2024, time-limited additional support was provided to the DAC through the appointment of Joanne Finneran as DAC Officer support. Joanne works with DAC Secretary, Jacqui Carreira-White, who joined us in 2023. Together they are working to improve response times from the DAC on requests for support on work on the fabric or furnishings of their church or churchyards.



Joanne Finneran, DAC Officer

Our Education team restructured in 2024 following the retirement of three schools advisers. The smaller team is now working differently to reflect diocesan priorities and changes in the landscape of education, children and young people across our diocese. Our three main areas focus on church



Bishop Michael and Director of Education Ed Gregory (left) with Pauline Dodds, David Williams, Karen Sancto on their retirement.

school education and leadership, partnerships for school flourishing, and supporting churches with children, youth and family's ministry through our Go Team Advisers, and young adults through the Missional Priest for Youth and Young Adults.

I will be continuing to get out and about across the diocese as much as possible, and hearing more about how we can continue to support you into the future.



Jenny Hollingsworth
Diocesan Secretary

Some useful contacts

Jenny Hollingsworth

Diocesan Secretary

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Jacqui Carreira-White

DAC Secretary

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Email: jacqui.carreira-white@bathwells.anglican.org

Natalie Wainwright

Lead Giving and Funding Adviser

Tel: 01749 685109

Email: natalie.wainwright@bathwells.anglican.org

Flourish House reception

Tel: 01749 670777

Email: reception@bathwells.anglican.org

Find all the latest contact details and a downloadable key contacts list at bathandwells.org.uk/contact-us

2024 at a glance

Credit: Beata Cosgrove
Photography 2024

Jan

Launch of Lay Ministry Pathway, a new flexible approach for training.

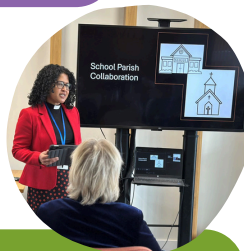


Feb

Queen attends service of celebration at Bath Abbey.

Cesca Priestley appointed Growing Faith Adviser with a focus on 'Raising Youth Voice'.

Common Fund consultation begins, led by Adrian Youings, Archdeacon of Bath.



Mar

'He is Risen!' Easter celebrated across Bath and Wells.

Over 140 school leaders and parish partners came together to explore 'creating welcoming communities.'

Apr

"It's been a privilege to encounter the remarkable mission work of the diocese here." Bishop Michael on his two-week visit to Zambia.



Diocesan RE Conference welcomes 60 educators from schools across the diocese.



May

30th anniversary of ordination of women to the priesthood.



2,073 pupils from 81 church pupils attend Moving Up Day services.



Celebration of Lay Ministries at St Paul's Weston-super-Mare.



Jun

Toby Wright installed as Dean of Wells in Wells Cathedral.

Adrian Youings steps down as Archdeacon of Bath.





Christmas celebrated across Bath and Wells - in our churches, schools and homes.

Dec



Bishop Michael filmed his Christmas message at St Paul's Primary, Shepton Mallet.



More than 120 confirmed at Wells Cathedral.

Nov



Elizabeth Renshaw-Ames appointed new Chair of the DBF.

First Benefice Share requests issued using new Common Fund methodology.

Oct

People from all corners of the diocese attended the Rural Forum to share ideas and support each other.

Charlie Peer becomes Archdeacon of Bath.



Sep

Life to the Max, the weekend away for young people from clergy families, celebrated its 21st anniversary with 28 young people

People across the diocese join in our Wave of Prayer.



Bath and Wells led the south west delivery of the Growing Faith Strategic Leaders Programme, with 30 people from five dioceses attending.

Aug



Safeguarding Dashboards become a requirement for all parishes.

Bath and Wells joins new national network of worshipping communities in schools.

Jul

Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Ian Theodoreson steps down. We mourned his loss later in 2024.



Find out more about all these events and other news from the around our diocese at bathandwells.org.uk/news

