

Week ending 20 September 2025

## Connect

The bulletin for clergy, lay leaders and all who are the Church in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.



### 2,500 Somerset school children come together in worship

On Monday, 15 September, over 2,500 primary and middle school children, plus school staff, from 20 schools across Somerset took part in the first of what will be a regular opportunity to join together online in worship throughout the academic year.

Bishop Michael joined the online worship, lighting the candle to mark the start of the service, before answering some questions about what it means to be the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

Ed Gregory, Director of Education says, "More than 35,000 children attend Church of England primary schools across Bath and Wells. We were delighted with the number of schools who joined us for today's 'trial' session – from Bath to Exmoor, Bridgwater to Yeovil, from Axbridge, North Curry and Taunton. We can't wait for our next one in December, which we will be opening up to even more schools."

[Read more](#) about the Collective Worship and the plans to undertake others in the future.



## Welcoming new school leaders

15 new school leaders were welcomed into the Diocese of Bath and Wells Education family on Tuesday, 16 September. The leaders have all taken up posts in schools from across our diocese in the last 12 months.

After joining members of our diocesan education team for an induction session at Flourish House, led by Ed Gregory, Director of Education for the diocese, the group enjoyed a cream tea before heading over to Wells Cathedral for Evensong, including a warm welcome and prayers.

After Evensong the leaders were invited to join Bishop Michael for a reception at the Bishop's Palace where they were presented with youth Bibles.



## Churches invited to pray together for peace in the Middle East

Christians are being called to be part of prayer and public witness for peace in the Holy Land, on World Peace Day, Sunday September 21. The ecumenical initiative is supported by the Church of England as part of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and is timed to coincide with the UN's International Day of Peace.

The Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, Dr Hosam Naoum, has written a prayer, available for use in churches this prayer together with other resources is available from the [Churches Together](#) website.

# Safeguarding Sunday

On Sunday 16 November 2025 and over the following weeks, there is an opportunity to come together to reflect on your church's safeguarding journey, and highlight all the good work that is being done to make churches across our diocese safe for everyone.

This year, Thirtyone:eight's Safeguarding Sunday is centred on the theme 'Action speaks louder!' It's a celebration of the commitment churches have shown. It also encourages us all to continue striving to make an even greater impact on vulnerable people in our communities.

A Safeguarding Sunday guide and resources to help you plan and run your service are available to download from the [Thirtyone:eight website](#).



## Chaplaincy Gathering – Celebrating Difference and Finding Hope

This year's Chaplaincy Gathering will take place at St Mary's Bridgwater on Tuesday, 14 October. Christian chaplains from across our diocese, as well as those with an interest in chaplaincy, are invited to join the day which will be the first led by Richard Kelley, who joined as Chaplaincy Adviser in April.

Richard says, "There will be lots for people to get their teeth into during the day, but also time for people to make connections and be inspired. It will be a day led by chaplains, for chaplains, but others who have an interest in chaplaincy will also get something from the day – including curates, clergy and anyone who's interested in chaplaincy."

"There will be three key speakers at the gathering, all of whom are chaplains in our diocese. They are Ewan Huffman and team (Hinkley Point), Anne Fulton (St Margaret's Hospice), and Katy Garner (Bath Spa University). We also have a great collection of eight different workshops for people to get their teeth into."

If you are interested in attending the day, which runs from 09:30 to 15:30 and costs £15 (including refreshments and lunch), please [register using the online form](#).

## Earthed in Mission: Resourcing Rural Churches.

Saturday 31 January 2026, Doynton.

Organised by Bristol Diocese and just across the diocesan border, this day conference is for anyone in rural churches.

Four speakers and rural mission organisations are gathering to consider the unique opportunities and challenges facing the rural church today. Don't miss this day of inspiring stories and practical wisdom from rural practitioners across the UK. Share and receive wisdom, hope and practical ideas at the start of the new year. [Please book](#).

Download the poster from the [Events Calendar on the diocesan website](#).

## New Worshipping Communities

As we seek to become a mixed ecology of church there are opportunities to learn and support to be found. Are you starting something new or do you want to?

[Find out how Greenhouse](#) supports those seeking to move forward in contextual mission. To find out if Greenhouse is right for you and your team please [fill in this online form](#).

## Beyond the Walls webinar

This monthly Webinar is run by Bath and Wells, Exeter, Bristol, Truro in partnership. On 14 October the webinar Sports Ministry, Play Sports, Talk Life will be with Natalie Burfitt who works in the field of enabling pioneers. Find out more about this webinar, book a place and find out about other webinars planned for later in the year [online](#).

## The Mission Shaped Podcast

This podcast is part inspiration, part field guide. There are honest conversations with real voices, gritty questions, and God-sized hope for creating new Christian communities. [Listen to the latest episode now](#) and catch up with the series online.

## Marking 1700 years since the Council of Nicaea

This year marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (325 AD). To commemorate this significant milestone in the life of the Church, Wells Cathedral will welcome the Revd Professor David Fergusson OBE as the guest speaker and preacher at the Cathedral's Dedication Festival on Wednesday 15 October 2025.

He will deliver a lecture on The Contemporary Relevance of the Council of Nicaea at 16:30. If you would like to attend please email [office@wellscathedral.org.uk](mailto:office@wellscathedral.org.uk). Spaces are limited. The theme of David's sermon at 18:00 Dedication Festival Eucharist will focus on how Nicaea influences the continuing role of a national church. All are warmly invited to attend the service.

## Sarum College short courses partnership

This autumn, the Diocese of Bath and Wells are piloting a partnership scheme with Sarum College. Sarum College has set aside a small number of places at a reduced cost to the diocese on specific short courses. There are still a few places available.

Places will be offered free of charge to eligible participants as part of the Equipping for Ministry programme. You are asked to book with Sarum College using the link to their booking form on the course information page. You are advised to book early to avoid disappointment.

- [Multi-parish benefice ministry - Weds 24 September 10am-4pm](#)
- [Time for a prayer 'MOT'? - Tues 30 September 10am-4pm](#)
- [Worship through the lens of autism - Thurs 9 October 1pm-4pm online](#)
- [Evangelism in times of climate and nature crisis - Weds 5 November 10am-4pm](#)
- [Flourishing in ministry series - Thurs 6, 13, 20 November 7.30pm-9pm online](#)
- [Touching God: Dementia and the bodies of Christ - Weds 26 November 10am-4pm](#)

For further information please contact [Ronnie Crossman](#), Ministry Training and Support Team Leader, [Sophie Moore](#), Resources and Programme Support.

### In Brief

- On Saturday, a number of climate protestors locked themselves in at the top of Bath Abbey tower to protest against climate change and to seek a meeting with Bishop Michael. Bishop Michael [read more](#).
- Treasures of [St Catherine's Drayton](#) 25 & 26 October will be opened by Tim Schroder from the V&A museum.

If you have news to share, tag us on your social media channel or [email the Communications team](#).

## Holiday Club Highlights

This summer churches right across Bath and Wells have been supporting families with holiday clubs. Here are the highlights from just two of the many that have taken place.



At Combe St Nicholas, up to 20 children and 14 parents joined in, supported by an amazing team of volunteers who created such a warm, welcoming space.

While the Wheathill Benefice in Glastonbury Deanery held their Holiday Club, in partnership with Keinton Mandeville Methodist Chapel. The children explored the Scripture Union's Wonder Zone with science, crafts, stories, snacks, and games. Thank you to everyone who made these and all the holiday clubs possible.

## Journeying in fellowship

Bishop Michael and his wife Lizzie joined Somerset's former Lord-Lieutenant Annie Maw for part of her fundraising walk for Wells Almshouse Charity and Humanity & Inclusion (a charity working with disabled and vulnerable people in situations of conflict & disaster, specifically Ukraine at the moment) in war-torn Ukraine.

Meanwhile, people from all parts of the Churches of Chew Valley South joined Revd Katrina Dykes for a Benefice Walk. Starting bright and early at St Margaret's, Hinton Blewett, they set out on a 14 mile journey, visiting each of the seven churches.

### Life to the Max

Last weekend, 28 young people from clergy families across our region gathered at the Mendip Activity Centre near Churchill for the annual Life to the Max residential. The young people aged 11 to 17 came together from across the dioceses of Bath and Wells and Bristol for a weekend of fun and outdoor activities including axe throwing, rifle shooting and climbing. As well as plenty of free time to relax and get to know one another, the young people tried their hand at Archery Active (think bows and arrows with foam 'marshmallows' on the end!) and took part in a game of Cluedo that ran throughout the weekend.

### Heritage Open Days

St James's Church in Taunton was just one of many of the churches across Bath and Wells to open its doors to visitors as part of Heritage Open Days.

Visitors climbed the church tower which was rebuilt 150 years ago. From the top they could enjoy the views across Taunton and see the newly gilded weathervane, Tom. One climber in her 80s was over the moon to have made it to the top and seen the bells in action.

For anyone not able to climb the tower there was a virtual tower tour and a video camera on the bells.

Inside the church there were flower displays celebrating what happens

### 82 years of service

When 94-year-old Roy Jukes first began playing the organ in church, the Second World War was still underway, man had not yet landed on the moon, and Queen Elizabeth II was a young woman. Roy himself was just 12 years old. He didn't know then that more than 80 years later he would still be playing.

It was a chance conversation with the Churchwarden at St Nicholas' Church in Portishead where Roy still plays the organ, that prompted him to reflect on the fact that this year marks 82 years since he first started playing the organ in church.

Roy's modesty shines through as he quietly

Asked what they thought of the weekend, one young person said, "It's one of the best things I do all year!" and another added "It's been a really fun place to make friends and do awesome activities. And for me personally, I went deeper spiritually with God."

Life to the Max is now in its 22nd year. [Read more](#) about it and the adventures everyone enjoyed.

in St James's in 2025, as well as historical 'characters' sharing the history of the building and transformation of the church from the 12th century to the present day and of course there was cake for everyone.

St James's and many other churches will be open again this weekend, [check out the website](#) for detail of churches taking part near you.

looks back over 8 decades to something that has not only brought him great joy, but also brought immense pleasure to all those who have had the privilege of hearing him play, "It's my gift. If I was fortunate enough to be given it, then I've always used it for the Church."

[Read more about Roy's church organ journey.](#)

## Diocese of Bath and Wells

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