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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☪ March 2026

Considering our faith in a deeper way

Lent invites us to create a space and prepare our hearts for Easter. Across the church communities of Bath and Wells, people will be marking Lent in different ways, each is an invitation to journey more intentionally with God. At St James' Church, Taunton, the journey is a five-week quiet time of reflection. The Lent course, 'Prodigal – finding hope in a story of redemption', offers an introduction to meditative prayer. Using the well-known Gospel story through Henri Nouwen's book 'Return of the Prodigal' and the famous painting by Rembrandt of the same name, the course will encourage people to look afresh at their own lives, recognising that at different times we may find ourselves reflected in each of the characters and will look through the memory of brokenness to the hope of healing

Lyn Jones, who helped set up 'Simply Pray' at St James with Felicity Miles, says this has grown naturally out of the contemplative prayer gatherings which run throughout the year and are open to anyone who would like to join. Lyn says Lent offers an opportunity to consider our faith in a deeper way, "It gives us a time



to think about how Christ gave his life unconditionally for all of us. For me, it will prepare me for Holy Week as we think about the sacrifice God made for all of us, whoever we are." Felicity Miles, one of the contemplative prayer group leaders, says, "We want to offer people the opportunity to explore another way of praying, of slowing down and, in the quiet, hear the still small voice of God. Contemplative prayer is an old tradition we have lost in our busy secular world, and we hope to help others to rediscover it. Last year we followed a 'Pilgrimage' through the Psalms, and the format will be similar with discussion, guided meditation and a time of personal silent reflection.

We are hoping that this year's theme will also inspire those of any faith or none to come on the journey with us."

News in brief

A new Bishop of Taunton

We have a new Suffragan Bishop, Fiona Gibson. Family, friends, as well as colleagues old and new travelled to Southwark Cathedral, London for Bishop Fiona's Consecration. The service, led by Steven Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, is when Fiona became a bishop. Wells Cathedral was filled with people from all corners of the diocese to welcomed Bishop Fiona to Bath and Wells as the new Bishop of Taunton. Her installation ended with a rapturous round of applause.



Seven are baptised

There were celebrations at Holy Trinity Church in Frome as a group of seven people were baptised. Revd Ian Snares, Vicar, Holy Trinity Frome said, "It was a fantastic moment for everyone, as the whole group made up of people from all different walks of life, were united

Praying through Lent

A collection of simple daily ideas to help you pray through Lent has been put together by the Go Team. Each week focuses on one of the six petitions of the Lord's Prayer and from Monday to Saturday there's a daily Bible reading and prayer prompt to take with you through the day.

The resource can be used by churches, schools, families and individuals as part of our Diocesan Year of Prayer.



in wanting to continue their journey of faith. Jesus is transforming lives as he brings hope to our fearful and hurting world.

Scott Latham was one of the seven, he said, "When I emerged from the water, I felt like a new creation."

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

Draw near this Lent

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

The Church of England's theme for Lent 2026 is 'Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent'. It's a very different way of thinking about the season. Often, we identify Lent as a time for prayer and fasting when we 'give things up'. More recently many have decided to adopt an opposite approach – of 'taking something up for Lent'. 'Draw near' has a much wider remit. Each week, it invites us to explore a different aspect of Christian discipleship – worshipping together, praying, exploring the Bible, sharing communion, offering service and sharing the good news with others.

The 'Draw Near' approach fits well with how Lent began. During the Church's earliest days, those wishing to become Christians were known as 'catechumens', people who were learning to live as disciples of Jesus. Preparation was intensive. It took place particularly in the 40 days before new Christians were baptised on the Saturday night before Easter Sunday. Our season of Lent comes from this ancient practice.

When the Church began, it didn't have the trappings we're used to seeing around us such as buildings, hymn books, pews, or paid ministers. Church wasn't an institution. It was known as 'the Way'. Christians met

in each other's homes and sought to work out how to follow Jesus in their every day lives. This wasn't so much about head knowledge, believing a particular set of doctrines. It was about the habits and practices that Christians constantly cultivated to help them draw nearer to God who is with us, in us, around us and beside us every moment of every day. 'Draw Near' comes out of this heritage. It's an invitation to make Lent a journey that brings us closer to God.

I invite you to make use of 'Draw Near' this Lent. It includes materials for adults, for families and for children, resources for schools and encouragement for churches. More information can be found at www.cofeio/DrawNear. As we approach Lent, let's draw near and join each other on the journey to God that is the Way.

Bishop Michael



Safeguarding creation

Rev'd Lindsay Smith from St Peter's Church, Portishead shares how her church community will be using the Plenty Lent course to deepen their understanding of creation care.



Understanding the fifth Mark of Mission: "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth"

Why did you decide to focus on in the environment during Lent?

We chose the Plenty Lent course because it helps us embed this calling to care for creation in all that we do. It will challenge us and that can only be a good thing, as it raises awareness and encourages deeper reflection.

What will you be doing?

We will be thinking about creation care in all that we do, and considering how, as a church and as individuals, we can advocate for a fair and green economy. It will also encourage us that we can make a difference to the world we live in.

How does Lent help you do this?

It offers an opportunity to deepen our relationship with God, study the Bible, and reflect on our own journey.

Doing the Plenty course will affirm the parish's eco actions and help us gain a deeper understanding of why we all need to care for God's creation.

How will people be joining in?

We're offering a mix of in person meetings and online sessions, and our Home Groups will follow the course too. Prayer will remain at the heart of everything we do. We trust that the Holy Spirit will deepen the bonds we share, drawing us closer to one another and to the places God is calling us.

How will the Lent course help you focus on the environment?

We will set time aside during Lent to take a deeper look at ourselves and the way we live, reflecting on all the big ethical questions. The course will help us explore these questions through a green lens.

Do you hope this will last beyond Lent?

Our hope is that this becomes part of who we are, not just something we do for forty days.

Find the Plenty Lent course
www.joyinenough.org/resources/plenty

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