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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩

March 2022

You're welcome

While Lent is traditionally a time people associate with giving up things this year, with our 'Knowing You, Knowing Me, Knowing God' activities, we are encouraging people to consider how they can better know and understand others, themselves and God, through focusing on offering and receiving welcome, hospitality, inclusion and generosity.

Throughout Lent we will be sharing stories from people from diverse backgrounds across Bath and Wells so we can learn more about the people who live here and reflect how knowing more about



others affects our actions.

Tony Cook, who leads our Everyday Faith and Growing Faith team says, "During the Covid pandemic we all had to withdraw into our own four walls and although things have started to return to 'normal' we want to encourage people, and particularly people of God, to renew and extend their welcome beyond

not only their own four walls, but the four walls of the church. It is also a challenge to go out into our communities to receive the hospitality of other groups and individuals as Jesus did.

"We hope the reflections and stories featured in 'Knowing You, Knowing Me, Knowing God' will help us all consider how we can contribute to becoming a more diverse church – one more representative of the populations we seek to serve."

Find out more about 'Knowing You, Knowing Me, Knowing God' at www.bathandwells.org.uk/Lent-22 and get involved in the conversations on our social media channels ■

News in brief

Working together for children

Nicky King from St Peter and St Paul's Wincanton has become the Diocesan Ambassador for the Children's Society. It is a voluntary role working with Jess Meale, Community Relationships Manager for the South-West. Nicky will work with Jess to identify areas in Bath and Wells that the Children's Society can work in and help build relationships with supporters or potential supporters across the area. This includes giving talks to interested groups ■



Nicky King



Moon for Taunton Minster

March will be a busy month for St Mary Magdalene's, Taunton. Not only will it be designated a Minster by Bishop Ruth at a service on Sunday, 13 March from the 18 – 31 March it will be hosting Luke Jerram's Museum of the Moon. Funded by Somerset West and Taunton Council, they said hosting the installation would 'inspire both locals and visitors.' Last year the exhibition drew crowds at both Bath Abbey and Wells Cathedral ■

100s explore God's call

Hundreds of people took part in our week of 'God Calls... everyone, everywhere' in February. At the opening service, on Accession Day, Bishop Ruth said, "Our calling won't necessarily be regal and royal like the Queen's, but each of us has sensed something of that call of God, that's why we are here, and this week is an opportunity to consider further where that call takes us."

Throughout the week people heard from people with range of experience of God's call and joined together online at the end of the week to celebrate and reflect ■

The promise of new life

By Trevor Willmott, Honorary Assistant Bishop, Bath & Wells

"Lord, when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you?" For any would be follower of Jesus, the teaching in Matthew 25 is surely some of the most challenging in the whole of the New Testament. What sort of disciples are we called to be? Will the world recognise Christ in us both in our words and in our actions?

Faced with persecution, with the temptation to instant popularity and self-aggrandisement, Jesus remains true to himself and to his call to be a servant leader. This, he says, is what is required of anyone who would follow me: "to love the Lord your God and your neighbour

as yourself".

While we may talk a great deal about being a welcoming Church, the reality is much harder to achieve. To welcome is not to want the stranger to become just like us. It's about valuing the gifts they bring and about being willing to be changed ourselves by the new life coming among us. It begins, as Jesus began, by seeking to serve the stranger's needs and, to do that, we first have to listen.

Some of the harshest of Jesus' words were directed to the religious people of his day, too occupied with their own agendas, their own self-righteousness, to notice the stranger in their midst. It is only when we are prepared to leave the security

of our own home, "launching out into the deep", going onto the other's territory, can we begin to feel just how strange and at times threatening the community of faith can be to the outsider.

Lent, with its invitation to de-clutter our busy lives, brings also the promise of new life. Let's use this God-given time to pray that our hearts and the life of our communities may be opened such that we can truly welcome the stranger as a sister or brother in Christ.

With my blessing
+Trevor



A place of acceptance

Oosman Tegally, who worships at Christ Church, Bath shares his thoughts on welcome and generosity.

What does welcome mean to you? Acceptance. I have gone into some places in the past and the faces tell whether you are accepted or if you are not and if you are received well then that to me is welcome. I have visited many places, many churches, and the moment I came into Christ Church I thought, yes this is the place I'd like to worship and be part of.

Have you experienced feeling unwelcome?

Oh yes, there have been times when comments have been made because of my ethnicity. It's what



Oosman Tegally

they perceive, what they see, they're not looking inside to see what kind of a person you are, and I have been very hurt about that and I have never been back again. It's sad really because someone who could have been part of that community, cannot be when that happens.

How can we make people feel more included and less like an outsider?

We have to accept the person as they are, no matter what. It is accepting them for what they are, who they are and be accepting from both sides. Inclusivity means anybody - LGBT, disabled, learning difficulties and more.

How can we be more generous?

Generosity is being there for somebody who needs you, it doesn't matter in what form. It comes from the heart and it's what you feel capable of doing, not necessarily finances, it can be in many different ways, moral support, being there, a listening ear.

Read more stories of welcome at bathandwells.org.uk/news

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