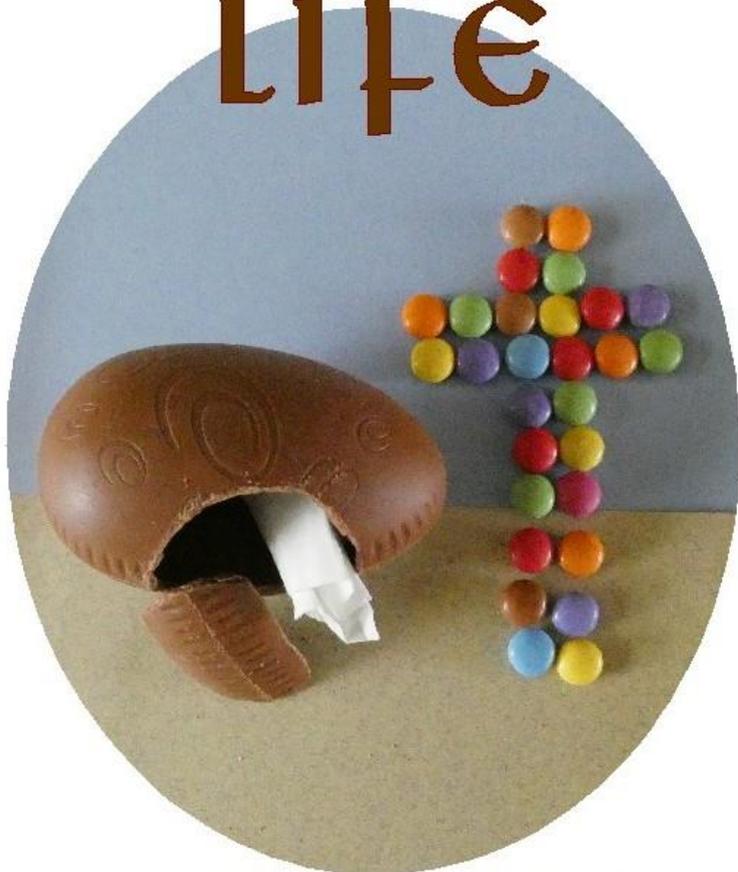


April 2023



50p

Life



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LIFE MAGAZINE EDITOR

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Articles for the May edition are due by **Sunday 16th April**

Editorial Notes

The reason for this month's Easter flavoured front cover should be obvious to most of you, but read the Rector's letter on the next page and all will be explained.

Bishop Michael is pictured on the back cover, and he is standing by the front door of the church at Walton after leading the Benefice service on March 12th, which was a delight to be a worshipper at, and you can read more about the Bishop's 2 day visit on page 8.

Some volunteers were busy in Walton churchyard planting a hedge recently, and some of them can be seen on the back page and on page 17 Sue Ripley has written an article about it.

We have a new regular article on page 14 entitled 'My Faith Journey', and we are grateful to Sonia for giving us the insight to it.

The Easter Garden at Street Parish church is beginning to look like a garden again after the ravages of winter, and I hope to have some spring flowers joining the bulbs very soon, so please do pay a visit some time. The council have given the churchyard it's first cut, and the wild area is beginning to grow. Daffodils and other spring bulbs are putting some colour in to the area. But! The crows have started nest building on the tower window sills, thus causing a mess with twigs by the tower door, so do be careful if walking around that way.

From all those involved in the production of Life Magazine, we wish you all a happy and blessed Easter. Roger.

Rector's Letter

New Life in Jesus

Dear Friends,

One of the real joys of my ministry is going into our local schools, whether for taking assemblies or collective worship as it is now known, for taking RE lessons or simply supporting and meeting with staff, students and their families, it is always a privilege to engage with new generations on matters of faith.

On one occasion recently, I was in the classroom with around fifty or so year 5's (9 & 10 year olds) with the question posed for my visit 'How significant is it for Christians to believe God intended Jesus to die?' Wow that was some question! We talked about sacrifice and the way that many parents and carers give up so much for their children which led to my telling them that God loved the world so much that he would do anything for His children. We then talked about the world in which things have gone wrong and what happens when we do things wrong. God had a plan for making things right when we do things wrong which was why he sent Jesus to die on the cross. As I read the story of the crucifixion ('The dreadful day' Storyteller Bible) you could have heard a pin drop. I was able to tell the class the end of the story up to Easter Sunday with a lot of help from them too.

One of the many questions I was asked was if Easter is all about Jesus, why do we eat chocolate eggs? Great question, to which I responded, explaining that eggs are a symbol of new life.

We have this new life that Jesus offers to every person because of what happened at Easter – the cross and the resurrection – Jesus is with us and lives in our hearts always.

As the angel said to the women “He is not here, he has risen, just as he said” (Matthew chapter 28 verse 6). This was part of God’s plan, and we can celebrate the risen Jesus not just on Easter Sunday morning but every morning!

I am thrilled that this year in addition to our two Messy Church Easter events (in Walton & in Street) that we are also hosting Elmhurst School for ‘Experience Easter’ in the Parish Church.

Please do be praying for all those who will hear the Easter message perhaps for the first time this year and also be praying for our local school communities as they continue to explore different aspects of the Christian faith.

My prayer for you is that you will know the risen Jesus in your hearts & lives this Easter & beyond.

With my love & prayers,
Ana



CONGRATULATIONS



To Ana Lawrence, our Rector, on recently celebrating a significant birthday.

To David Hatrey who also celebrated a Birthday recently.

To all the Strode students involved in the ‘Unplugged’ concert in Street Parish Church, which raised about £300 and the profit after expenses will go to Cancer Research.

To Little Stars (Mission Church) who raised £80 for the Red Nose Day appeal.

Roger.

Walton Matters

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little further, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed. "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Matthew ch 26. V's 36-39. NIV.

Saturday 4th March saw a wonderful group planting mixed hedging in our churchyard. Susan Ripley has written a full account in this magazine, but I wanted to give my thanks on behalf of us all to Sue for applying and getting this grant for us after seeing the need for shelter and food, plus to Andy Savage who ordered the plants, cared for them, prepared the ground and got everything wonderfully organised and ready. Well done and thank you to them and to the team of willing volunteers.

March 31st. Quiz night.

Hopefully you will have received this magazine in time for a little reminder to join us at Walton Church with your thinking caps on. Bring a team or come alone as we will make up teams of up to 6 people on the night. It will be £5 per head which includes refreshments.

Sunday 7th May. Kings Coronation.

Do put in your diary this date between 3-5 where we can celebrate together the Kings Coronation. Afternoon tea will be served with endless tea or coffee. We plan to show part of the ceremony and procession along with some taped music. This

was so successful for the Queens Platinum jubilee so do join us.
We promise you won't be hungry.

On a personal note, can I thank so many of you for prayers, messages of get well and lovely gifts of essential items, cards, food and flowers I received during my enforced lay-up due to covid. I felt truly supported and loved and I thank you all.

Sandra Gristock



Flower rota.

8th April. Church flower decorating.

22nd April. Brenda Stradling.

Joint Benefice Service

As you will probably know, we hold joint benefice services 4 times a year and these occur in months where there is a 5th Sunday. So that we are completely 'fair', these services rotate around our 4 churches, so that each church will host at least one joint benefice service a year. In addition to the 4 services, there is also a benefice service on the Sunday immediately following Christmas and this has generally been held in the Parish Church in Street, being one of our warmer buildings avoiding the need for some of our other churches to have to switch their heating on in the depths of winter! This year, due to Bishop Michael's visit we held another joint service in addition to the above in Walton Church to allow the Bishop to meet as many church family as possible.

In April, our benefice service will also be in Walton Church and can I strongly encourage you to join us. Whilst we have our individual churches with their unique styles it is good on occasion to meet together as a wider church family and to build new relationships as we worship and grow together. Ana Lawrence

Ordination of our new curate

As you may recall, we are looking forward to welcoming Rachel Pengelly as our new curate in our churches this Summer. Rachel will be introducing herself in future editions of Life although I know a number of you have already met her.

We have now received details of Rachel's ordination which will take place on the morning of Sunday 25th June in Wells Cathedral. Please be praying for Rachel as she prepares both for her ordination and her new ministry amongst us.

Ana Lawrence

Redeployment consultation

You may have heard the phrase 'shared local ministry' being used in various circles and this is something that you will hear a great deal more about in the coming months. We are at the early stages both in our deanery and across the Diocese of difficult conversations around clergy redeployment. The stark reality is that there is simply not enough money to sustain the current number of stipendiary, paid clergy in Bath and Wells and each deanery is being asked to undertake a consultation process based on that reality.

In the Glastonbury deanery of which we are part, we will have to reduce the number of stipendiary clergy from the current level of 6.5 to 5 within the next 4 years. As Area Dean, I am leading this consultation, which will involve deanery synod, the PCC's of each of the parishes in the deanery and others.

I and all those involved would really value your prayers for wisdom, clarity and grace in what will be tough conversations both for parishes and for current clergy.

The deanery synod will play a vital role in this consultation process and with elections for new deanery synod reps due in the coming weeks, please prayerfully consider whether you could stand and help to be part of this.

There will be more to share in the future, but in the meantime, please pray. Ana Lawrence

APCM 2023

Our Annual Parish meetings are all due to take place this month: Compton Dundon 18th April, Street 20th April, & Walton 26th April all at 7pm in church.

These annual gatherings are opportunities to give thanks for all that has been over the past year and look to what God might be doing in the coming year. It is also the occasion when new PCC members, deanery synod members and church wardens are elected.

Traditionally, these are meetings that I know many church members avoid attending – perhaps seeing it as ‘uninteresting’ or of ‘no relevance’ to them. I want to debunk any myths about APCM’s and assure you that they are both brief (45 minutes maximum), a good place to come alongside other church family and an opportunity to celebrate, reflect and dream together.

This year, I hope and pray that I will see many of you join us as we mark a moment in the life of our churches.

I am sure you, like me, are grateful for the service offered by so many in the life of our churches. What an encouragement it would be for those who serve to see others at APCM’s and hear their thanks in person.

Ana Lawrence

Love our Communities

For the past two days the Bishop of Bath and Wells has been visiting our Benefice and has spent time with various church groups, as well as a visit to Walton School to be grilled by the Year 6 Class!

Last night the three PCCs spent a most interesting evening together at the Mission Church with Bishop Michael, a Bible Study leading into discussion about the communities in which we worship. There was ample evidence of ways in which all three parishes are reaching out to those around us with Christian love. Whilst being aware of continually reassessing how we can share our faith and love, there is much to celebrate.

The community I know best is Compton Dundon, and by chatting to others we could identify ways in which we bring love from St Andrew's Church into the community. Many of these ways are small, but bring joy from the act of reaching out to show we care for one another: this could be as simple as taking a piece of cake to a neighbour who has been unable to come to the CAMEO coffee morning; giving a lift to enable someone to visit their husband in hospital; weeding a garden because someone else has hurt their back; taking a friend's clock to the monthly Repair Café to be fixed; visiting a villager who has just moved into a care home...and these are only examples that I have heard about during the course of last week so no doubt there are many more.

Our recent cream tea on a Saturday afternoon was an absolute joy. Around 45 teas were served but no one made a tally of how many put jam or cream on first!

Well done to the home bakers for producing delicious scones and the generous donations received have boosted our church funds and were much appreciated, thank you.

Love in our community in action.

'My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.'

(John 15, v 12)

Pat King

Benefice Walks



Easter Monday,

April 10th at 4 p.m. in Compton Dundon

Following our previous rather muddy walk in Compton Dundon, this time we are exploring the other side of the village and hoping for better weather leading up to Easter Monday.

Please meet at the 'Castlebrook Inn' pub car park on the main road for a walk of about 90 minutes, followed by an early evening drink on our return. Everyone welcome! Pat King.

Coronation Bank Holiday

Monday May 8th

Around the Tor

Full details of this walk, organised by Tim Hindle will be available in Life-Line, Facebook, and on the church website at a later date, and in the May edition of Life Magazine.

Summer Bank Holiday

Monday 28th August

I will be leading this walk and details will be available nearer the time. Meanwhile please note all of these walks in your diaries.

Roger Harmsworth.

How did we do? Financial update on the end of year figures?

As promised in previous editions of 'Life' we are providing a brief update on where we stand financially, following the publication of end of year 2022 financial figures from our three parishes. Please do take a more detailed look at the financial reports which will be provided at the Annual Parish Church Meetings and thank your Church Treasurer's for all the work that has gone into preparing them!

if we were to summarise where we have got to in the last year in the form of an old-fashioned School Report it might say:

'SWCD churches has made encouraging progress this year but there remains much to be done. keep it up!'

Encouraging progress this year! The good news is that income in all our churches has risen in 2022 as against 2021. This is partly due to increased giving by new and existing church family members, but we have also seen grant income, fees from weddings and funerals, room booking income and other sources of revenue rise. As a result and, for the first time for several years, we spent less than we received on ordinary expenditure. Our surpluses were not large, but it is evidence that each of our parishes have made encouraging progress with our finances.

However, that is just ordinary everyday expenditure. Each of our parishes also had other exceptional costs, mainly relating to the maintenance and repair of our buildings. When these are taken into account, unfortunately we are still running at a deficit.

At the bottom of this article you will see a table summarising the position but, as we said above, please do look at the individual audited parish accounts for the full picture.

So what about 2023?

There remains much to be done! In common with almost everyone else, our churches will continue see their costs increase with the ‘cost of living crisis’, inflation and high energy bills etc. Our buildings, old and beautiful as most of them are, will also continue to need maintenance and repairs and so one-off costs will almost certainly recur (our PCC’s are already aware of some work that will need to be done this year). It would also be great to have some surplus money that we could consider using on new mission and ministry initiatives!

Keep it up! In response, please do consider, particularly if you have not done so for some time, increasing your giving this year, in line with inflation or even above, as our costs are likely to increase at a similar rate. Maybe also consider whether you can make an additional one-off gift that we could use, in the future, for one off costs such as repairs and maintenance on our buildings.

Most importantly though please continue to pray, both that our churches would receive the money that they need and that we would use it wisely to ‘worship God, love our communities and grow in faith’.

Kevin Lawrence

On behalf of the Benefice Stewardship team

Financial summary

	Income		Ordinary Expenditure		Net income		One off expenditure		Final net income	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Street	£61,671	£79,560	£69,581	£75,914	-£7,910	£3,646	£0	£4,286	-£7,910	-£640
Walton	£14,623	£25,667	£18,592	£21,029	-£3,969	£4,638	£0	£7,835	-£3,969	-£3,197
CD	£20,428	£29,999	£24,891	£29,329	-£4,463	£670	£0	£8,000	-£4,463	-£7,330
TOTAL	£96,722	£135,226	£113,064	£126,272	£16,342	£8,954	£0	£20,121	£16,342	£11,167

My Faith Journey

My journey in faith started when I was a young teenager and was invited to Street Baptist Church by some friends. I realised that there was something different about my peers but more importantly, there was something incredibly special about the adults that were leading the groups, giving up their time to collect me, taking us on trips etc. These were like no other adults I had come across before.

After attending the evening group, I started to attend the Sunday church and joined various housegroups as the years progressed.

Gradually over the few years after leaving school I drifted away from the church but was brought back by another personal invite.

I have been involved with various aspects of church life, including leading a Sunday School group, Youth Club, Growth Group, housegroup. I have learnt so much from these groups; I find being part of a small group invaluable to my ongoing faith journey. I really value hearing other people's opinions (which sometimes challenge my own views) and can lead to great discussions.

I would just like to re-iterate the fact that I was originally brought to faith, and again brought back to church, by personal invites from the people around me. I am sure that God would have reached me somehow but I am so glad that my friends listened to His prompting and asked me along.

Sonia Beaty

Afternoon Teas in March What on earth are we doing?
Was a time of finding out about our Carbon Footprint and how we
could address it. One of the ways to calculate your Carbon
Footprint is to go to the WWF website: <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/>

Contact Sue Ripley for more information, her details can be
found on SWCD (Street, Walton and Compton Dundon) contacts
list. After the very informative talk we did a quiz relating to the
subject. While doing the quiz we had tea and cakes and talked
about all sorts of things.

Everyone is welcome to come along to Afternoon Teas in April
when Jane Tompsett will be showing us some of her
photographs of 'Dartmoor Delights'. Pam Harmsworth



swcd-churches.org.uk

Afternoon Teas

Friday 21st April

2-30pm

Mission Church Street

Everyone Welcome

'Dartmoor Delights'

Photographs from Jane Tompsett

Thy Kingdom Come

'Thy Kingdom Come' (TKC) will be running from the 18th – 28th May (Ascension Day to Pentecost). This is now a global prayer initiative and this year; we will be encouraging church family to 'pray for 5' people who are not yet Christians. This might seem a daunting prospect especially if you are not sure who you should be praying for. So, we want to suggest and indeed encourage you to pray with one or two others and make a prayer triplet or prayer partnership, whichever works best for you.

Praying together can happen in person or even online with the wonders of Zoom. You could either set up a prayer triplet with others and start praying straight away or wait until TKC and begin then, but there is something powerful and profound about being alongside one or two others lifting your prayers together to the Lord and there is also something about 'loving accountability' to one another. Jesus said, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew chapter 18 verse 20) Around 25 church members last year joined the 'prayer course', and my sense is that there is an appetite to go deeper together and to meet and pray. Over the years I have enjoyed prayer partnerships and currently meet to pray in a prayer triplet. This is such a gift and I warmly commend it to you.

If you'd like to join a prayer triplet (or partnership) and are not sure how to go about it, please do contact me and I will endeavour to put you in touch with others who are also seeking to pray in this way.

Finally, if you would prefer to pray alone (and this is of course fine) 'for 5' please be bold to do so.

Whatever you decide, it may be helpful to begin to think about who you could pray for and maybe to write down the names of the 5 you are wanting to pray for somewhere safe. You can do this on paper or keep a prayer journal or use a prayer app – there are many resources available to help us to pray, but at its simplest level we just need to 'do it' and leave the rest to God who longs to hear the prayers of his beloved children.

Ana Lawrence

Hedge Planting Walton

Around a dozen adults and children arrived in Walton churchyard on a dry cold morning at the beginning of March, others joined them later. They were there to plant a hedge along the existing fence-line between the new graveyard and the next field. They found the ground already prepared, strimmed and rotovated. At the back of a trench a line clearly indicated where each plant was to go. The bare-rooted plants with accompanying canes and plant guards were laid out on a bank of mulch. This careful preparation and the eagerness, especially of the young people, meant that the task of planting the hedge was completed within two hours. The planting done, the hedge was watered and the ground covered with the mulch of last year's grass cuttings from the adjoining area. Those involved then adjourned to the Church for welcome refreshments.

Why plant a hedge? You may recall that two years ago, as part of Wilder Churches (the joint project between the Diocese and Somerset Wildlife Trust), we surveyed the Walton graveyard. From that came a plan, in the first instance, to maintain part of the new graveyard as a meadow. Unimproved meadows are fast disappearing from our countryside; they are a reserve of local plant species and provide a habitat for other wildlife such as birds and insects. The graveyard is bordered by some trees but what was missing from the area was a hedgerow which could provide food and shelter for wildlife nearer ground level. We applied to Mendip District Council for a grant to enable us to maintain the meadow area and to plant a hedge with native species. This is part of our care for creation.

Thank you to everyone who turned up to support this venture, especially Andy who did the planning and preparation.

Sue Ripley Eco Church Group

Refreshing the Diocesan Vision

For the past seven or so years the Diocese has been 'living and telling the story' of Jesus across Bath and Wells. With a new bishop in place, now seems like a good time to ask ourselves how we are doing that, and how we want to do that in the next season of our diocesan life together.

As he has travelled around our diocese in his first months, Bishop Michael has identified four areas that might help us focus our activity in the future:

- **Valuing what we already have**
- **Sharing our faith and worshipping in new and different ways**
- **Growing in faith**
- **Sharing in ministry and leadership**

We'd like to hear, between now and the end of April, what you think about these four areas, whether they are good areas to focus on and what they look like in your context at the moment.

Valuing what we already have

Valuing and cherishing the people who are already part of the church family in our context; celebrating and using the assets we have available to us.

Sharing our faith and worshipping in new and different ways

When we share our faith and worship together in new and different ways, this often connects with people who wouldn't engage with our traditional offering. Putting in place something different offers us the scope to grow and become younger and more diverse.

Growing in faith

Developing our own faith and the faith of others.

Sharing in ministry and leadership

Sharing in ministry and models of leadership together – lay and ordained, across all ages, using the gifts, skills and passions of all so that no one person is overburdened or left out.

Under each area, the follow questions are asked:

- What does this look like in your context at the moment? Do you have stories of encouragement or challenge to tell?
- What might good, success or impact look like or feel like in relation to this area in the next 2-4 years?

The Diocese are keen to hear your views, by the end of April 2023. To let them know what you think please complete the survey below.

<https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=pmobfwCRBE20OeGHO2pcC54rjIEgtPRErIvuy2nktnIUNFVVQ1NaMkxTMEhURFIZTIJDMFQxMUpPQy4u&web=1&wdLOR=c94FB0252-DFF0-45A0-A9E9-19DECAA97267>

Contributed by Ana Lawrence

New Parish Safeguarding Officer appointed

I am delighted to welcome Jenny Martin (Parish Church) to the role of parish safeguarding officer for Street. Jenny has taken over the role from Jane Tompsett to whom I am grateful for a number of years of service in this vital position.

Our full parish safeguarding team are Steve King (Compton Dundon), Sandra Gristock (Walton) & Jenny Martin (Street). Together they work to ensure that we operate to the highest safeguarding standards ensuring all appropriate volunteers are DBS checked and trained and responding to any safeguarding issues as they arise.

Please be praying for them and supporting them in all they do.

Ana Lawrence

MANNA

The Bishop's Letter

The joy of Easter

As April begins, we mark it with the Palm Sunday procession, the welcoming of Jesus into Jerusalem amongst much jubilation and a sense of impending revolution. There were those who expected Jesus to be the next rebel leader who would rouse the local people to turn against their Roman overlords. Political populism at its height! In their enthusiasm, limbs of trees were broken to pave the way for this new hero.

However, it didn't take much for the crowd to turn around and change its tune. Those palm leaves torn from branches to throw in his path have become the palm crosses we hold today. Symbolising for us the way in which the week ends. Fronds of living trees now dried and woven to form the cruel instrument of death on which Christ suffered.

Many of our churches are now engaged with rewilding their church grounds, many are seeking to gain awards with Eco Church and are looking for new ways of reducing or capturing carbon. There would be horror at the thought of denuding our trees! In fact, parishes are discovering opportunities to partner with others to plant new trees on spare glebe land.

Sometimes though it can feel to us that the environmental crisis is too great a one to solve. Yet the message of Easter shows us that when things seem nigh on impossible it is then that we glimpse the grace of God at work. God's way of overcoming evil was not to fight a small act of resistance against a Roman invasion but rather to combat sin itself. The death of Jesus was the ultimate battle to overcome that which has separated

humanity from knowing the extent of God's love for each and every one of us.

The natural world around us is a wonderful illustration of how death is not the end. The environment can be devastated by flood, fire and human carelessness and yet new life can begin again. The joy of Easter is that the story doesn't end in death but opens a new beginning for us all through the resurrection of Christ.

May you know the life and love of Christ this Easter!

Bishop Ruth

Coming together to care for creation

It's been three years since Bath and Wells declared a climate emergency and committed to Net Zero by 2030. During that time church communities have been making changes in a host of ways, all doing their bit to care for creation and help us achieve our goals, and in November we achieved A Rocha's Bronze Eco Diocese status.

One initiative that has proved very popular with churches and their communities is the Wilder Churches initiative run in partnership with the Somerset Wildlife Trust. Over 200 people attended the online launch of Wilder Churches and since then they have attended regular sessions to share progress and

ideas. There are also regular sessions for those new to Wilder Churches and keen to learn how they can make their churchyard more biodiverse.

Pippa Rayner from the Somerset Wildlife Trust says, “Local people are best placed to really get to know and understand their local churchyard or burial ground. The Wilder Churches training has been designed to support communities in this and empower them to take positive, evidence-based, effective action for wildlife in a way that also works for their community.”

Sara Emmett, Environment Adviser for Bath and Wells says, “We have been so delighted by the positive response from so many people across the diocese to Wilder Churches, but also that so many churches are engaging with the Eco Church initiative. It’s a lot easier to become an Eco Church than many people think and together we can make small changes that combine to make a real difference.

Visit bathandwells.org.uk/environment to find out more about Wilder Churches and the Eco Church award.

News

Warm welcome for Zambian visitors

We recently welcomed Fr Bernard Phiri and Fr Emmanuel Ngoma, from the Diocese of Eastern Zambia. After attending a conference in Canterbury, they visited their respective link parishes, enjoying a full programme of parish events and school visits, as well as a visit to meet Bishop Michael and Bishop Ruth.

Commenting on his visit and the contrast between church in Zambia and Bath and Wells, Father Bernard says, "It has reinforced my view that people may like different worship styles, but we are all part of the same family pursuing the same purposes."

Find out more at bathandwells.org.uk/welcoming-visitors-from-zambia

Celebrating the Coronation

The Coronation ceremony for His Majesty King Charles III will take place on 6 May at Westminster Abbey. Plans for a special weekend of events, celebrations and activities that will include shared community lunches and activities to help inspire community spirit have been announced. Find out how you can join in and find Church of England resources for the celebration.

bathandwells.org.uk/coronation

A Crown of Thorns

‘... TWISTING TOGETHER A CROWN OF THORNS, THEY PUT IT ON HIS HEAD ...’ Matthew 27:29 NAS

Have you ever really considered the significance of the thorns that were woven into such a shameful symbol and placed on Christ's head? Throughout Scripture thorns represent the result of sin:

- In the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, He said, "... I will ... curse ... the ground ... [it] will produce thorns ..." (Genesis 3:17-18 NCV).
- Later He told Israel that unless they purged the land of their enemies, "... They will be like ... thorns in your sides ..." (Numbers 33:55 NCV).
- Solomon said, 'Evil ... lives are like paths covered with thorns ...' (Proverbs 22:5 NCV).
- Concerning untrustworthy leaders, Jesus said, "You will know these people by what they do. Grapes don't come from thorn-bushes and figs ... from thorny weeds" (Matthew 7:16 NCV).

Max Lucado writes: 'The crown of thorns Jesus wore [on Good Friday] represented all our sins. As we were caught in the brambles of envy ... anger ... shame ... discouragement ... guilt ... bitterness ... and unforgiveness, so Jesus, who knew no sin, became "... an atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 4:10 NIV). Not once did Christ use His supernatural powers for personal comfort. With a word He could have transformed the hard earth into a soft bed ... boomeranged the spit of his accusers back into their faces ... and paralysed the hand of the soldier who braided the ... thorns. But He didn't. Instead, God cancelled the record that contained the charges against us ... by nailing it to [His] cross (see Colossians 2:14 NLT), and He did it with you in mind!'

No wonder Hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote: 'See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down! Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?'

From the daily readings in 'The Word for Today'. This booklet of devotional readings is published every three months and is available free of charge through the generosity of supporters, from: UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. Tel: 0845 60 40 401. Email: ucb@ucb.co.uk

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