



Annual Review 2025



DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living and telling the story of Jesus

Diocesan passage 2025

Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55: 1-9

Front cover: The Coker Ridge Benefice, celebrating the Creator and His creation. There is a long standing tradition that one of the summer Benefice services being celebrated in a field near the village of Pendomer.

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Introduction

I started my new year's message for 2025 with a quote from Napoleon Bonaparte who said, "A leader is a dealer in hope." I like to think that I start every new year filled with hope. It is my nature to be hopeful and positive, but I am also buoyed by my faith that allows me to have a confident expectation and desire that good in the future will come.

Early in the year, we were delighted to welcome back Bishop Ruth from Coventry where she provided much-valued support while they were without a bishop, but all too soon after her estimable skills were called upon by the Diocese of Liverpool and we said a final goodbye. While we were deeply saddened to say farewell to Ruth, later in the year it was a great delight to

announce that the Ven Fiona Gibson, the Archdeacon of Ludlow, would become the next Bishop of Taunton.

There were many challenges to be faced as we entered 2025. As citizens of the world we were concerned with global conflict and climate change. Across our country we saw fractures emerge in our society, which also faced increased costs of living. In our Church, we have been challenged on safeguarding matters, been debating the Prayers of Love and Faith, and church finances. While it may be difficult to address those challenges directly, it has been inspiring to see how we, as Bath and Wells, have risen up to respond to these challenges locally. As I look back on the year, I see that my hope was not misplaced.



There have been prayer vigils for peace and an increased number of our churches are engaging with our journey to becoming a net zero diocese. We have continued to work with our brothers and sisters of different denominations, been a church that welcomes people in all their diversity, and published our report on our Racial Justice Audit that will help guide us as we seek to listen to the rich diversity of all the people who live in our county.

In May, it was the turn of safeguarding in our diocese to be independently audited and, while there are always lessons to learn and things to improve, we received a positive report, to the credit of our safeguarding team and most of all our amazing parish safeguarding officers and others who serve in our churches.

As I visited places across the diocese I saw people living out their faith, worshipping faithfully, and serving their communities in so many ways. I've attended sunrise confirmation services, joined thousands of children and staff for our new online collective worship gatherings, visited chaplains at work at Hinkley Point, and undertaken a host of other engagements. The challenges have not disappeared in 2026 so far, but these visits and many more replenish my hope every single day. I hope the examples we have shared in this review of 2025 bring you hope as we continue to grow God's kingdom here in Somerset.

+ Michael Beasley & Wells

Michael Beasley
Bishop of Bath and Wells



Growing faith

Growing in faith is a journey of drawing closer to God and allowing our lives to be shaped by his presence. As we listen, reflect, and choose to live out what we believe we become rooted, steady and shaped by God's grace.



For the first time in Somerset, more than 6,000 pupils and staff came together for a time of shared reflection and celebration. Joining from Timberscombe on Exmoor to Combe Down in Bath, children from 47 schools in the Diocese of Bath and Wells were united in prayer and worship.



On Ash Wednesday, we gathered together in our churches, and outdoor spaces across our diocese. In the Market Square in Wells, we shared the message of God's forgiveness.



A mother and her two sons were baptised in the river that runs through the village of Rodney Stoke, near Cheddar. Each was immersed in the water - symbolising the beginning of a new life of faith and relationship with God, marking the spiritual transformation they were stepping into.

Five church schools came together to share the Easter message in song. Each filmed their own version of 'Sign Your Cross' by Nick & Becky Drake to share with family and friends, ensuring the joy of Easter was celebrated in the classroom, in the home and in church .



Confirmation is a joyful step of saying 'yes' to following Jesus. Right across our diocese, in 2025, many people chose to deepen their faith in this way. At a dawn service on Easter morning in Taunton Minster, in front of family and friends, 12 people stepped forward with confidence in God's calling.



At the diocesan Caring for Creation service we acknowledged God's gift entrusted to us to steward our planet. Our faith is visible in the actions we take and the way we care for God's earth.



At one of many Easter sunrise gatherings, on Weston super Mare sea front, people came together at dawn to celebrate the joy of Christ's Resurrection.

New worshipping communities

New worshipping communities in Bath and Wells have created space for people to encounter God in different ways and places where their faith can be explored, nurtured and lived out.



More than 100 people joined the Harvest service held by Orchard Grove Church and All Saints Church, Trull on a local farm. People of all ages came together in worship to give thanks to God for the food and resources of the earth, bringing the community together in celebration of God's provision and the gifts of creation.



"We praised God for the growth that we've seen throughout the year. Both for all that's been grown on the land and the growth of the church."
Revd Jon Ball



Our chaplains walk alongside people from every walk of life, offering support, care and a faithful presence in many different settings. In schools, workplaces, hospitals, the courts and beyond, they meet people where they are, often at significant moments in their lives, and offer compassion, encouragement and pastoral support. Revd Craig Philbrick, Vicar of St Paul's Church Weston super Mare, is volunteer Lifeboat Chaplain of Weston RNLI.

At Royal Portbury and Avonmouth Docks near Bristol, Revd Lucy Blows is part of The Mission to Seafarers chaplaincy team which provides support to seafarers arriving in port, from across the world. Many spend months at sea, far from their families and loved ones. The chaplaincy team offers a warm welcome and a listening ear, stepping aboard ships to provide pastoral care and, where needed, practical help.



In Peasedown St John three organisations teamed up to host a dementia-friendly carol service to raise awareness of dementia and create a dementia-friendly community. At Milborne Port, 'Memory Lane', a regular dementia-friendly service offers familiarity, calm, and connection for those living with dementia and the people who care for them.

The Haywood Village Church youth group, Weston-super-Mare shared the Christmas story as breaking news. Acted by local children and filmed by former students at Weston College and the University of the West of England (UWE) the film was shown at a special screening. The team also featured in their own news item on BBC local news.



"It's about asking, 'What's needed here?' and listening to what the community says in return."
Revd Rona Stuart-Bourne
Priest in Charge,
Milbourne Port

Sharing in ministry and leadership

Recognising that God calls each of us to serve together, offering our different gifts as one body, and sharing in the life and mission of His church.



“Please pray for them, and yourself, as you are challenged to consider what gifts and opportunities he has given you, and how you will use them to build His Kingdom.”

Bishop Michael

It was a weekend of joy and celebration as 10 priests and 12 deacons were ordained at Wells Cathedral, surrounded by family, friends, members of their church community and all the people who have supported them on their journey.



Seven new Readers were licensed and commissioned at Wells Cathedral, on the annual Readers Day, and four Readers were welcomed to our diocese from other places. The day was not only one of celebration of Reader Ministry, but also a time for all Readers in Bath and Wells to reaffirm their commitment to serve God through their ministry.

In the Young Leaders' Learning Hub, young adults are being supported and equipped to become the leaders God is calling them to be, both now and in the future, in their churches and communities. The Hub offers encouragement, and space to grow in confidence, faith and responsibility, helping young adults to recognise their gifts and to take their place in the life of the Church.



The annual Visitations are an important moment in the life of the diocese, as we gather to recognise and support our churchwardens in their ministry. We thank God for their willingness to serve, and for the gifts, care and commitment through which they sustain their churches and strengthen their communities.



Wells Cathedral was filled for the Celebration of Lay Ministries. The Theme for 2025 was 'Varieties of Gifts', recognising and giving thanks for the many and varied lay ministries in our diocese, and the many people who serve in them.



Pupil chaplaincy continues to grow as more young people commit to following the example of Jesus in helping their school and college communities to flourish through kindness, care and friendship. At Holy Trinity Church School, Yeovil 25 pupils have become chaplaincy helpers.

Transforming communities

We are called to play our part in bringing hope, compassion and the love of Christ to the places where we live and serve.

A bereavement support course at St Mary's Church, Frome offered people in their community a welcoming space to share their grief and find comfort alongside others. Led by volunteers who have experienced loss themselves, the course helped people feel supported, heard and less alone.



"Our faith encourages us to come alongside people and journey with them."

Liz Dudley
Vicar, St Mary's
Church Frome

A lambing service at St Bueno's, Culbone, on Exmoor, led by Revd Anne Gibbs, celebrated the hope and renewal symbolised by new life. It brought everyone together to give thanks for our farmers, and the rural community; for their stewardship of the land and their role in producing the food we eat.



At St John's Church in Keynsham, a community art installation of peace doves, created with the support of the whole community went on display in time for the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Card doves with handwritten messages of peace from local people filled the church, while knitted doves created by community volunteers, adorned the churchyard.

St Michael's Church, Flax Bourton, became the first church in Bath and Wells to receive a Gold Eco Church Award from the environmental charity A Rocha UK. Assessors praised their creativity and passion and the way this work threads through worship, mission and governance, as well as connecting with the wider community and bringing different generations together.



“This award celebrates how our community is living out the Gospel so that all may flourish - people, wildlife, and the planet.”

Revd James Harris
Rector of Flax Bourton

More than 150 people from all corners of the diocese attended the Rural Forum in Bagley. This year's Forum considered “Where do I fit?” The day brought together people with a wide range of experiences and backgrounds, providing an opportunity to reflect on our calling in rural areas. It also provided an opportunity to share experiences, ideas and learn from one another.



At St Peter's Community Centre in Westfield, Yeovil, the church and local community work together to provide friendship, support and advice. From an affordable food pantry, to warm spaces, youth activities, toddler and community groups the centre provides care for the community.

“It's a joy and a privilege to be the hands and feet of Jesus here.”

Revd David Keen
Vicar, St Peter's

Valuing & 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.



Stories of the challenges, faith, hope and resilience of our Magnificat parishes were shared with key decision makers in London. Claire Horton, Magnificat Advocate for Bath and Wells, was invited to Downing Street to meet government ministers, national charities, and people from different denominations from other parts of the UK engaged in similar work.



Bath and Wells commissioned a racial justice audit to listen carefully to the experiences and perspectives of people across our diocese. Undertaken by Anira Khokhar, our Racial Justice Adviser, the audit and report which followed highlighted where there are strengths to build on and also the changes we can make as together we seek to ensure that in our diocese all God's people can flourish.

"As Christians we believe that every human being is made in the image of God. That's a fundamental tenet of our belief and we believe that's true of every human life; whoever they are and wherever they have come from."

Bishop Michael



15 new school leaders who have taken up posts across Bath and Wells were welcomed into the diocesan family at the annual induction day. After their day with the Education team, they attended Evensong at Wells Cathedral and a reception with Bishop Michael at the Bishop's Palace.



In our Week of Prayer for Children and Young people we came together to pray for children at all stages of their life. From under 5s, their families and those who help them grow, through to young adults finding their independence.



The Bath and Wells Zambia link continues to be a valued expression of friendship, faith and shared learning. Through this partnership relationships continue to be formed. Together with our Zambian brothers and sisters we share encouragement, prayer and mutual support.



Gathering in prayer and worship during Holy Week, the Chrism Service brought both lay and ordained together to renew their commitment to ministry and to encourage one other in our shared calling to serve God.



Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs), were invited to join a series of evenings in Wells, to thank them for all they do to support others, and for the dedication they provide, often behind the scenes, to ensure our churches are safe places for everyone. They attended Evensongs at Wells Cathedral followed by a reception with Bishop Michael and his family at the Bishop's Palace.



Support Services

The question asked by Diocesan Secretary Jenny Hollingsworth in 2025 was “as we are charged with growing our churches and transforming our communities, how does our diocesan budget support that, both for our parishes and the Diocesan Board of Finance?”

During the summer, people from across our diocese were invited to discuss a three-year budget for the Diocesan Board of Finance. Previously, only annual budgets were agreed. Jenny Hollingsworth hosted the sessions and was joined by members from all Support Services teams who were available to answer questions.

Jenny said, “I would like to thank people for coming to the sessions, asking questions and sharing their views. Their input forms the basis of what we try and do. How we seek to minimise the costs to the Common Fund, invest for growth and support each and every one of us across our diocese.”

While the budget consultation, and its subsequent approval by Diocesan Synod, marked a key milestone for the year, members of Support Services worked throughout the year not only ensuring that the financial, governance and legal obligations were met, but also supported those in our parishes, chaplaincies and schools.

“I would like to thank people for coming to the sessions, asking questions and sharing their views. Their input forms the basis of what we try and do.”

Jenny Hollingsworth
Diocesan Secretary/CEO



Timely support

When the team at St Catherine’s, Montacute set out to refurbish their ancient clock they realised that it was a wonderful missional opportunity, but also that they needed support to help them realise their vision. They quickly got in touch with the diocesan buildings adviser, the giving and funding team and communications team to draw on their expertise and support. It was a wonderful moment for everyone involved when the restored clock was returned to its rightful place.



Church and school leaders come together

With the support and encouragement of the Education team and the Go team, churches and schools are growing stronger partnerships with schools. This year more than 140 people joined the School Leaders and Parish Partners Conference in Wells to reflect on justice, and inclusion. Through shared learning and collaboration the group thought about how together we can create welcoming communities for all.



Our first net zero clergy property

Thanks to a grant from the Church of England and the efforts of our property team, 2025 saw us make available our first net zero clergy property, Nunney Rectory in Frome.



Owain Wynne, our Diocesan Surveyor says, “Our clergy homes are some of our most important assets, providing the places from which ministry is lived out across our communities. By investing in energy efficiency and low-carbon technologies, we are improving comfort, reducing running costs and ensuring these properties remain fit for purpose for many years to come.”

Gateway to green grants

By completing their Energy Footprint Tool, and with the support of diocesan Net Zero Enabler, Dan Wills, three of our churches are receiving demonstrator grants from the Church of England, to the sum of £68,000. Nicola Johnson, the environment lead for Taunton Minster, one of the eligible churches, says of the grant, “It will make a huge difference to the work we want to do here and also means we can share what we learn so that others can also take practical steps towards net zero. If God has told us anything, it’s to look after creation.”



The Big Dream

When the churches in Frome Deanery reflected on the bishop’s challenge of growing church, they decided they wanted a shared vision and approach for 0-19s ministry. They called on the diocesan Go Team for facilitation and support.

Thanks to the shared work on ‘The Big Dream’, and a grant to help their work, the deanery has made a number of changes, including

improving communications with a Big Dream WhatsApp group, better integration of their Open the Book groups, as well as taking steps to develop gathered youth ministry. They are gathering regularly to prayer for young people in the deanery and planning a deanery-wide bulletin focused on their activities for children, young people and families.





Growing a safer church

Last year our diocese and cathedral were reviewed by independent auditors, INEQE, who are in the process of evaluating the safeguarding practice of all Church of England dioceses across the country.

In compiling the report, the auditors took into account the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) audits, Past Cases Review 2 (PCR2) outcomes, as well as evidence from surveys, focus groups, direct correspondence and interviews. The audit considered: culture, leadership and capacity; prevention; recognising, assessing and managing risk; victims and survivors,

and learning, supervision and support in making its conclusions. The auditors concluded in their report that “Bath and Wells has developed a strong and positive safeguarding culture driven by committed leadership, engaged safeguarding personnel and effective strategies that personalise safeguarding and empower local communities.”

Bishop Michael’s response to the report

“As good as it is to read the positive comments in the report, it is the recommendations that we will be paying closer attention to as we know that there is no place for complacency when it comes to safeguarding. Survivors’ response to the audit is also something we will be reviewing carefully. It is vital that we continue to listen to them as we look to improve. We are highly conscious that our good practice now and our aspirations for the future come out of a history which has often seen victims of abuse let down in the past.

“I was particularly struck that the report took into account the role our churches play in our wider communities.

Our churches are viewed as places of safety, sanctuary and support for many facing these challenges. We need to be in a position to offer appropriate support safely, considering both the needs of those we want to help but also those of our clergy, staff and volunteers. “This report is a positive step on our safeguarding journey, one which has been achieved through the hard work of the dedicated safeguarding professionals in our diocesan safeguarding team and of course our committed and caring volunteer safeguarding officers in our churches, as well as our clergy. I would like to thank everyone for all for all that they have done and continue to do to.”

“Bath and Wells has developed a strong and positive safeguarding culture driven by committed leadership, engaged safeguarding personnel and effective strategies that personalise safeguarding and empower local communities.

INEQE report - June 2025

“This report reflects the commitment to safeguarding I see every day in my team, in my colleagues, and from the clergy and the volunteer Parish Safeguarding Officers, which every church has. I would like to thank them for all that they do. The report shows that we have a sound base to further improve safeguarding in today’s Church. I know we are all passionate about achieving this.”

Ben Goodhind

Safeguarding Manager, Diocese of Bath and Wells



The audit in numbers

670

anonymous survey responses received - from victims and survivors, children and young people, as well as worshippers, clergy, volunteers and staff.

370

documents analysed during the audit.

42 engagement sessions held, with 103 people.

35

interviews with church officers (staff and volunteers), external partners, victims and survivors, and other stakeholders.

We serve over 1million people across our 493 parishes and our chaplaincies.

Our 182 church schools serve over 35,000 children and young people.

Got a safeguarding concern?

Report it at bathandwells.org.uk/report-it.

If it's an emergency call 999

Download a copy of the full report and the diocesan response at: bathandwells.org.uk/safeguarding-audit





Money matters

During 2025 our Giving and Funding team were out and about visiting churches across the diocese, as PCCs, Treasurers and Planned Giving Promoters explored new and tried and tested ways to grow a generous giving culture within their parishes.

Recognising that Benefice Share contributions account for a large proportion of parish expenditure and remain critical to the future deployment of clergy across Bath and Wells, the Finance team welcomed Maria Stubbs, Parish Finance Support Officer in 2025. Maria supports parishes in a wide range of financial matters.

Maria Stubbs
Parish Finance
Support Officer



Just under £9.8m in Benefice Share contributions were received in 2025, representing a 2% increase of contributions from parishes compared to 2024.

Matthew Pinnock, Head of Finance said, “We continue to be indebted to all who work hard to ensure the financial sustainability of their parishes, as together we seek to grow church and transform communities across our Diocese of Bath and Wells.”

Over 70 clergy attended our first Money Matters session, early in 2025. Two sessions later in the year were held for all with an interest in church finances.

Attendees learned about the range of support, tools and resources available to assist those seeking to increase giving from their congregations and wider community, from preaching and teaching, to digital giving and increasing grants and gifts.

“There was great engagement and discussion throughout the Money Matters day, and I think most people went away feeling encouraged and supported - as well as a bit surprised by the level of support that we as a Giving and Funding team can offer. What felt so positive was that people really seemed to take away the message that we really can harness what we have, rather than worry about what we don’t have.”

Revd Jonathan Philpott, Local Giving Adviser



In 2025, the Giving and Funding team continued to share the Church of England’s MINT tool, which many of our churches have already acted upon to support the growth of a generous church culture.

M is for mechanism
Have the right mechanisms for giving



80 of our churches now use easyfundraising, an increase of 21 churches from 2024.

Over 194 contactless devices are now operational in our churches.



125 of our churches now have access to Cornerstone, the free grant funding database for Church of England churches.



100+ of our churches use the Parish Giving Scheme for regular giving, an increase of over 40% compared to 2024.

N is for need
Explain clearly so people can see how important it is to give.

When Alison Horsey in West Hatch church in Seven Sowers benefice wrote her version of the benefice’s giving appeal leaflet she felt the urgency. Her church was in vacancy and low in PCC members. “I felt that a leaflet focusing only on history wouldn’t inspire people to give, so our wording was more direct than others. We asked people to imagine the church closed - locked, overgrown, no longer there for the village. The message was clear: without the village’s help, the church won’t survive. I was nervous but the response was amazing.”

20



I is for impact
Show the impact of people’s giving & tell others how it enables the church’s ministry and mission.



We want to say thank you!
We don’t receive direct funding from the national Church or the Government, but thanks to the generous gifts received in 2024, St Mary’s has been able to pay for its ministry costs and:

Help people grow in faith	Serve our community	As well as
107 services	33 after school sessions	3 baptisms
90 midweek groups	49 community events	3 weddings
41 school assemblies and Open the Book sessions	39 toddler groups	11 funerals
6 youth group sessions	52 community hub sessions	

When St Mary’s church approached the Giving and Funding team with a request for help to share the impact of the gifts they receive they were happy to help. A new ‘impact poster template’ which can be used by St Mary’s and for all other for all churches to adapt and share in their settings.

T is for trust
Trust needs to be built so that people have the confidence that the church will spend gifts wisely.

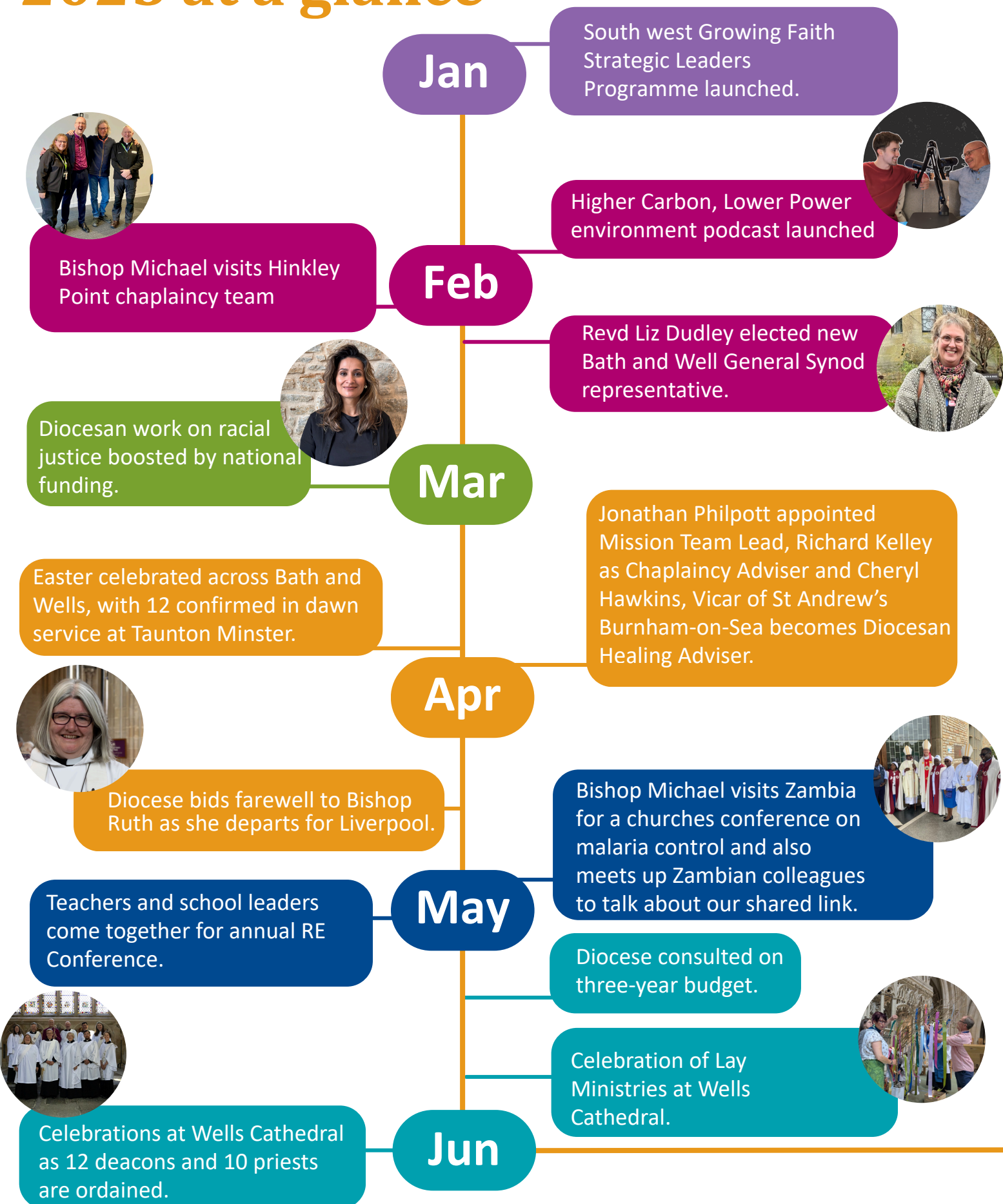
Thanking regular and one-off givers and explaining how their gifts are contributing to a fundraising target or have been used for good, is critical to building trust and encouraging repeat giving. So too, is having sound financial management policies and practices in place, from an annual budget, finance or fundraising strategy, to a legacy policy, which confirms how gifts will be used.

Dedicated digital giving advice at hand

At the end of 2025, Abi Davies joined the Giving and Funding team as Local Digital Giving Adviser, a new role to support parishes with implementing and developing their digital giving tools.



2025 at a glance





Quantock Deanery welcomes primary school children on 'Journey to Bethlehem'

Dec

Communities came together to celebrate Christmas across Bath and Wells.



Report into racial justice issues across Bath and Wells published.

Nov

Clergy and lay leaders heard from Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe OP at the Pre-Advent Retreat Day.



Downing Street announces Fiona Gibson is to be the next Bishop of Taunton.

Oct



St Michael's, Flax Bourton, becomes the first Bath and Wells church to be receive a Gold Eco Church Award.



More than 70 people gathered for the 'Intentionally Intergenerational Conference.'

Sep

Over 2,500 primary and middle school children, from 20 schools took part in the first online Collective Worship for schools.



Aug



Young adults from Bath and Wells spoke at the Church of England General Synod.

Nearly 3,000 children and staff, from 96 Church of England schools in our diocese, joined in the annual Moving Up Day celebrations in Taunton Minster, Bath Abbey and Wells Cathedral.

Jul

Safeguarding Audit results published.



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



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Living and telling the story of Jesus

www.bathandwells.org.uk