

Week beginning 13 July, 2026

Connect

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

A weekend of celebrations



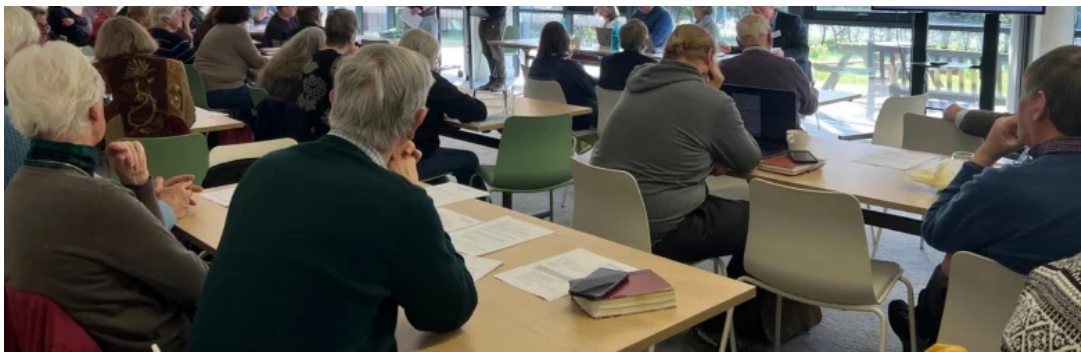
People from across the diocese and many from further afield, gathered in celebration and thanksgiving as 18 people were ordained in Bath and Wells. Six people were ordained deacon at Wells Cathedral. Family, friends and supporters filled the cathedral to worship and rejoice with our new ordinands.

On Saturday, 11 new priests were ordained in two services, in Keynsham, led by Bishop Michael, and in Taunton, Bishop Fiona led her first ordination service.

There were also celebrations in Weston super Mare as Revd Kevin Coaker was ordained priest by the Bishop of Oswestry.

We give thanks for priests and deacons and pray for them, their families and all who have supported them as they begin their new ministries among us.

[Read more about the day.](#)



Diocesan Synod: July 2026

Diocesan Synod and the Annual General Meeting of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) took place at Flourish House on Wednesday, 8 July. With this session of Diocesan Synod also including the Annual General Meeting of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), after sharing some of the joys he has seen across the diocese in recent months, including around our Year of Focus on Prayer and the 7,800 children who joined Bishop Fiona at this week's online collective worship, Bishop Michael reflected on our continuing financial challenges. Drawing on the story of David and Goliath, he said,

"When confronted with such a terrifying, seemingly invincible giant, the response of the people must have been to consider their situation hopeless. How could they take on such a man, such a challenge? Bigger than any of them could contemplate dealing with. When Goliath mocks his opponents, the Bible says:

'When Saul and all Israel heard the words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid'.

When we look at the size of our diocesan deficit, we may well feel the same.

Except of course that there was one person who saw things very differently – David."

The meeting then closed in prayer. The prayers Bishop Fiona shared with Diocesan Synod are now available for you to download and use where you are as a resource for prayer and reflection on finances and generosity. [Read more and download resources.](#)



Bishop Fiona joins this term's online collective worship

More than 7,800 children, staff and one Ofsted inspector joined Bishop Fiona and the diocesan Education team at this term's online collective worship. This is the fourth online collective worship the Education team has offered to our schools, and the first attended by Bishop Fiona.

The theme of the worship, as this academic year comes to a close, was pilgrimage. The children of St John's Church of England Primary School, Keynsham shared a story of the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35) after which Bishop Fiona shared her reflections on the Bible story.

Referencing her favourite picture book, *Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen, Bishop Fiona said, "All of you will be starting new things next year, maybe a new class with a new teacher. We're all moving forwards in our lives all the time, not backwards, and that can be exciting and scary all at the same time. I hope, and all of us in the Diocese of Bath and Wells hope, that you will always remember that you never go on your pilgrimage through life alone.

Cheryl Govier, Deputy Director for Education, said, "What an absolute joy and privilege to be able to offer this to our schools... and how brilliant that they are turning up en masse every time." [Read more](#) about the collective worship.



One family, four baptisms

Four teenagers from the same family were baptised together at St Nicholas Church, Radstock. For Revd Ian Rousell, Rector of St Nicholas, the moment was a reminder of what can happen when people are simply invited to explore their faith and trust God with the rest. "It's not rocket science, just invite people to come along and God will do what he does."

On Pentecost Sunday, with their family, friends and their church community by their side, Alanis, Farley, Mylee and Chesney took this special step on their journey of faith. Speaking afterwards, Alanis said, 'We've always got on really well together and it just meant a lot to me that they were part of my journey as much as I was with them.'

For everyone it was a wonderful day of celebration, witness and joy. [Read more about their story.](#)

Taizé Young Adult Pilgrimage 2026 (ages 18-35)

We have a couple of spaces available on our 18-26 July trip. Join us for a week of worship, prayer, community, reflection and meeting thousands of young adults from across the world. (Departing by coach from Wells)

If you've been thinking about coming, now's your chance! [Find out more or to book one of the final places](#)



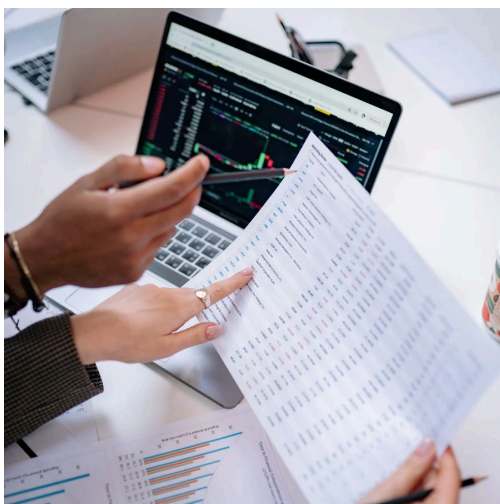


£1.4m of National Lottery Heritage funding for St Dubricius Church spire

St Dubricius Church, Porlock has been awarded more than £1.4 million from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore its iconic oak-shingled spire and safeguard the building for future generations. The award supports Porlock InSpired, a £1.7 million project that will not only repair the Grade I listed church's historic structure but also deliver a three-year programme of intergenerational activities designed to bring the whole community together.

St Dubricius Church's most distinctive feature is a rare truncated spire made entirely of timber and clad in oak shingles - believed to be the only one of its kind in the country. It is now in urgent need of repair. This project will repair the internal timber structure of the spire and fit new oak shingles to the whole of the exterior, re-slate sections of the church roof and conserve the historic reredos behind the altar. As part of the work, new solar panels and a modern heating system will be installed. [Find out more about the award and the work that will take place.](#)

Introducing the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS)



We are holding two Zoom sessions for those who would like to discover more about PGS - what it is, how it works and how this very flexible scheme can benefit your church.

Join us on:

Wednesday 22 July 16:00-17:00: [Please register to attend](#) this meeting.

Or Tuesday 8 September 12.30-13.30: [Please register to attend](#) this meeting.

Alternatively, if you would like to know more about PGS and want to discuss how it could work where you are, please email Kate Mayo, Local Giving Adviser, at

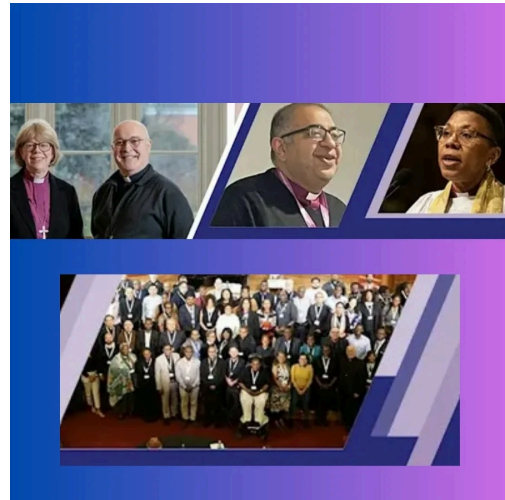
pgsregistrations@bathwells.anglican.org or book a call with Kate using [this link](#)

GMH/UKME Clergy, Ordinands, and Lay Ministers Gathering

The next GMH/UKME Clergy, Ordinands and Lay Ministers Gathering takes place on Tuesday, 8 September 2026.

The gathering will include contributions from Archbishop Sarah, Archbishop Stephen, and the co-lead Bishops for Racial Justice, Bishop Rosemarie and Bishop Arun.

[Please register to attend via Eventbrite](#) by Friday 31 July.



The latest episode of our environment podcast, Low Carbon Higher Power, is out now.

In this episode, we're joined by Paul Gilligan from Pure Leapfrog to talk about community energy, how churches and communities can work together, and our Diocesan Community Energy project funded by the South West Net Zero Hub.

Our project has received £40,000 to explore how church buildings, schools and land could support community energy across Bath and Wells.

Watch the video below or [listen to the podcast online](#). You can also catch up with all our short clips on our social media pages and on the [Bath and Wells YouTube channel](#).

You can find out more about the project - and how to get involved in community energy on our [Community Energy webpage](#).



Coat of Hopes

Since COP26 the Coat of Hopes has been making short pilgrimages around the country, drawing attention to the climate crisis.

The coat has been made, worn and walked by many hundreds of people on its journey so far. It carries people's hopes for the places they live, sewn into the blanket patches of which it is made.

It recently made its way from Bath to Porlock, stopping off in Somerton, Middlezoy, Bridgwater, Storgursey, and Watchet.

It encourages us all to consider our shared responsibility in protecting God's earth.

Guidance for PCCs: Independent inquiry into grooming gangs

The national Church of England has been contacted by the [Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs](#) that has been set up to investigate the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by grooming gangs across England and Wales. The inquiry has instructed Church bodies, including dioceses and parishes, to place an immediate hold on all relevant documents, records, data and material that may be relevant to the inquiry. Such evidence should not be destroyed, altered, deleted or concealed, in case it is needed.

In the case of parishes, this evidence could include case files or letters relating to concerns about engagement with young people, use of church buildings/halls for youth activities, or how we may have responded to young people who disclosed abuse. If you have material that you think may be relevant, but you are not sure, please do [check with one of the safeguarding team](#). The inquiry is expected to last for the next three years.

For your information, [a copy of the formal prohibition letter can be found on our website's Legal Guidance page](#). Parishes are not required to circulate this letter further or to respond to the inquiry secretary directly.



Martyn's Law webinars

The Church of England and Community Security Trust (CST) are running a number of sessions on the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, otherwise known as Martyn's Law. The sessions will be tailored specifically to places of worship.

This webinar is aimed at anyone connected to a place of worship, who wishes to learn more. If you would like to attend this event, please [complete the online registration form](#) to attend one of the sessions, which take place on 29 July 2026, 8 September 2026 and 1 October 2026.



Prayer

The Prayer Boxes have been out and about again this month. This time, the church community in Weston-super-Mare shared their photos with us. They used the box as inspiration to explore prayer with pupils from Christ Church CofE Primary School.

By the end of their day focusing on prayer, seven classes and their staff had visited the church, including children of other faiths. More than 200 heart prayers covered the wall and nearly 100 prayers hung on the prayer tree.

The children prayed for different countries in the world, lit candles as they prayed for people who need God's help, prayed with play dough and pebbles, thanked God for making them special and unique, made pipe-cleaner figures of the people they were praying for, and prayed around the Lord's Prayer circle.

And a young member of their church community was one of those who shared a prayer with us as part of our Week of Prayer for Children and Young People.



If you would like to use the Prayer Box in your deanery, please contact your Archdeaconry Assistant.

- Bath Archdeaconry - email: tamsyn.richardson-aiken@bathwells.anglican.org
- Wells Archdeaconry - email: stephanie.smith@bathwells.anglican.org
- Taunton Archdeaconry - email: alison.cruickshank@bathwells.anglican.org

Taunton Team Chaplaincy



Bishop Fiona joined church leaders from Taunton for the service of welcome and commissioning for Heather Culshaw, who has been appointed Lead Chaplain of Taunton Team Chaplaincy. Heather, who was previously Night Chaplain at Hinkley Point C, has a wealth of experience of being alongside people in busy, pressured and unpredictable places. She takes over from Adrian Prior-Sankey who has retired after serving for more than ten years. The service also gave thanks for all Adrian has given and for his ministry which has been woven through the life of Taunton for more than a decade.

Congratulations

To Revd Dr Rob James who is to be the next Principal of Sarum College. Rob, formerly Canon Chancellor at Wells Cathedral, was until recently Associate Professor and Director of Anglican Studies and Formation at the Vancouver School of Theology. He was also an Archdeacon, and an interim Priest-in-Charge in Vancouver. [Read more](#) about Rob's new appointment. *Image: Sarum College*



DAC Conference

Last week we welcomed colleagues from dioceses across the region to Bath for the South West Regional DAC Conference, 'Seeking the Good of the City'. Together the teams explored how churches and church buildings can serve, and are serving, their communities with imagination and care.

St Michael's Without and Bath Abbey kindly hosted the conference, welcoming colleagues for a day of conversation and shared learning.

Archbishops' Council Impact Report



This interactive report is packed full of stories and testimonies from parishes around the country who are all working together to proclaim the good news of Jesus in each generation.

The Archbishops' Council is a charity, set up in law to co-ordinate, promote, aid and further the work and mission of the Church of England.

It does this by providing national support to the Church in dioceses and locally, working closely with the House of Bishops and other bodies of the Church.

The work and impact of the Archbishops' Council is highlighted in the latest report (2025), which is [now available to read online](#).



Have your say

Whether you connect with the content in Connect, marvel at the stories in Manna, seek out the stories on our website or social media, or feel our diocesan communications could be improved, we want to hear from you.

Over the summer we would be grateful if you would take a few minutes [to complete our survey](#) about diocesan communications so we can shape our communications to your needs.



BBC award nomination for church volunteer

Congratulations to Tony O'Mara, from St Mary's Church, Bridgwater, who has been nominated for a BBC award for his volunteering work. Tony, who once found help and support for himself at the church, is now supporting others facing similar difficulties.

Tony, moved to Bridgwater while in recovery following decades of substance abuse and homelessness. He was invited to join one of the wellbeing drop-in sessions run at St Mary's. The twice-weekly sessions are open to the whole community and cater specifically for people who are homeless.

Tony credits the sessions with helping him on his recovery journey and now he supports others by working as a volunteer. It's for this work that he has been recognised by BBC Radio Somerset with a place as a finalist in their Make a Difference Awards.

As well as volunteering with the group, Tony has been supported by the church to undertake courses in safeguarding



Politics is a good servant but a terrible saviour

Each year, the National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast brings MPs, Peers and church leaders together in the heart of Westminster to pray for Parliament, Government and the life of the nation.

Craig Philbrick, Vicar of St Paul's Weston super Mare, joined Dan Aldridge, MP for the town, for the Parliamentary Breakfast. He shared a reflection on his morning in Westminster.

'As someone whose first degree was in politics, it was a deeply meaningful morning. I still believe politics matters. It shapes lives, communities and futures. At its best, it can protect the vulnerable, seek justice and serve the common good.

'But Clare Williams-Sarpong put it so powerfully when she said: "Politics is a good servant but a terrible saviour."

'That line stayed with me. Because politics was never meant to carry the weight of ultimate hope. Hope has a name, and his name is Jesus.' [Read](#)



Pickle Me Walnuts - blessing the walnut harvest

Bishop Michael blessed Sharpham Park's first commercial green walnut harvest as the Somerset estate revived a local tradition once known as Pickled Walnut Day.

He joined guests at Roger Saul's organic farm on the Somerset Levels on St John the Baptist's Day, the day traditionally associated with picking green walnuts for pickling. Walnuts have been growing at Sharpham Park since 2004 and the event marked the first time the crop had been harvested commercially while still green.

After leading the blessing, Bishop Michael joined those gathered in the orchard to shake, bash and pick the green walnuts from the trees.

The harvest formed part of a wider celebration of the estate's work to make use of the whole crop and reduce waste.

Guests were shown how walnut husks can be used to make ink and fabric dye, and how walnut leaves can be used to make tea.

and food hygiene. [Read more about Tony's story.](#)

[Craig's reflection in full.](#)

In Brief

- Kingston St. Mary is hosting 'Re-wilding the Soul – How do we reconnect with the presence of God in the natural world?' The event has two sessions, each led by Paul Cudby and Alison Eve on 17 July, 19:30 and 18 July at 10.00. For more information and to book please email Margaret Way - way744@btinternet.com
- A portrait series of disabled clergy is to go on national tour. Starting at York Minster, the series of 12 portraits celebrating the life and witness of disabled, deaf and neurodivergent people who minister and work in the Church of England, will go on display at a number of sites across the country. [Find out more about the exhibition](#) and where you can see it.
- The National Churches Trust Church & Community Volunteer Awards 2026 are open for nominations! The awards are given by the National Churches Trust in partnership with Marsh Charitable Trust. Volunteers from any church or chapel can be nominated. Four winners will be chosen for this award, and each will receive £750. Nominations close on Tuesday 11 August 2026 at midnight. [Find out how you can enter.](#)
- The Hope of Nonviolence Residential Course, Ammerdown. 13 July 2026 to 15 July 2026, 10:00 - 16:00, with Carolyn Merry & Martina Hunt. For more details visit [the Ammerdown website.](#)

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

Diocese of Bath and Wells

The Diocese of Bath and Wells Flourish House, Wells
United Kingdom

Our mailing address is:

comms@bathwells.anglican.org

Copyright © 2023 Diocese of Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Finance, All rights reserved.

[Unsubscribe](#)

