

Living and telling the story of Jesus

In response to God's immense love for us we seek to be God's people living and telling the story of Jesus. This vision for us all in Bath and Wells encourages us to live out our everyday faith; responding to Jesus' life, teaching and work and to tell his story, in word and deed.

But what does this look like where you are? That's the question that Bishop Michael, as our relatively new diocesan bishop, is asking everyone to consider.

During three Zoom sessions held earlier in the year, Bishop Michael shared his thoughts on the diocesan vision and four key areas of focus he has identified as important. He wants to hear what people think about them and



Have your say about the diocesan vision. (Photo: Jason Bryant)

encouraged everyone to play their part to help shape how we can, together, live out our vision in the future.

Julia Hill, Head of Deanery and Parish Support says, "Whether you are a member of a church congregation, are in a school, a chaplaincy or any other context, please share your views on how we

move forward together. We will be holding Zoom sessions for people to join the conversation, but we are also encouraging people to have conversations in their own setting and then share those views using a simple online form."

"We are very keen to hear a diversity of voices, including those of children and young people and have produced some guidance notes for those facilitating discussions."

The consultation closes on 30 April 2023. The responses will be collated and reviewed so we can determine our next steps. Find out more about how you can get involved at bathandwells.org.uk/vision

News in brief

Celebrating growing in faith

In February, after a week considering the theme of 'Everyone, Everywhere Growing in Faith', people from across Bath and Wells gathered in three venues to celebrate the conclusion of the Everyday Faith event.

Clare Phillips who attended the in Taunton gathering said she enjoyed the opportunity to meet with others to talk about and discuss faith together, "It was really great to meet so many different people, people with whom we don't normally get together. It was a good opportunity to share our faith." Everyone who attended offered sunflower seeds to take away to act as seeds of hope and a reminder of the week. [Find out more at bathandwells.org.uk/everyday-faith-event](https://bathandwells.org.uk/everyday-faith-event)



RHS school champion

St Margaret's Church of England Primary School, Tintinhull is one of the top five green schools in the UK. The little school, which lies 4 miles west of Yeovil, has been appointed by The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) as a Growing Champion School alongside four others across the country. They will be making regular videos for the RHS's digital channels, as well as sharing tips, experiences and advice for other schools on growing flowers and vegetables

Warm spaces welcomed

A 'community living room' warm space at St Paul's in Kewstoke which was set up at the beginning of this year is being embraced by the local community and helping bring people together.

Revd Gail says, "We are now getting 20-30 people coming along to our coffee mornings where previously we only had around 8. And we are having to add more tables every week.

"We have made new friends in the village who would never have come along to the church coffee morning but who now feel comfortable to come into the community living room."

'When we hoe a field'

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

'When we hoe a field, we all start in this corner and we go this way' is my favourite Zambian proverb. I've been sharing its words with people from our parishes, schools and chaplaincies as a way of inviting us all to think about how our diocesan vision can be refreshed and developed to help us look towards the future with confidence and joy.

Our vision calls us to 'live and tell the story of Jesus'. It speaks of faith in action. It makes clear that all we do is in the name of Jesus. And it's full of aspiration; living out its words is a life-long task.

But what might our vision mean in terms of what we'd like to focus on specifically? This is where my Zambian proverb comes in. For my

sense is that in our common life we would be strengthened if we had a greater focus of what we're all working towards together.

To help us think about this, I'm suggesting four themes that I hope we can all get behind. The aim is not to generate a new initiative, rather it's to identify priorities for our common life upon which we can all focus. Our diverse communities of course mean that anything we do needs to fit local contexts. But I hope the four themes can provide a common framework that will help us all.

Under our overall vision of 'living and telling the story of Jesus', the themes are: (1) Valuing and cherishing the people we already have, (2) Offering worship and sharing our faith together in new

and different ways, (3) Developing our own faith and the faith of others. (4) Sharing in ministry and leadership.

I'm inviting everyone to have their say about how these could be developed, adapted or altered. Please do speak with each other and your local church, school and chaplaincy leaders about how this can happen where you are. More information to enable feedback is available at bathandwells.org.uk/vision.

Please be part of the conversation! Your insights, thoughts and experience are invaluable in helping us think together what it means to 'live and tell the story of Jesus'.

Every blessing,
Bishop Michael

'We are blessed here'

Elizabeth Shearcroft, vicar of All Saints, Taunton and her congregation were the first to engage with Bishop Michael's questions about our vision.

What prompted you to get involved?

Bishop Michael spoke about his hope for people to engage with the vision at the clergy retreat before Christmas and for us, as one of the poorest parishes in the diocese, getting on the front foot and planning for a positive future for our church seemed a good idea.

Who engaged in the discussion?

We are blessed here. We have got a very faithful, but small worshipping community and I felt it was important that we were all involved, not just the PCC.

How did you undertake it?

We incorporated the discussion of questions one and two into the sermon slot and we will be tackling the other questions during another



Members of All Saints, Taunton discuss the vision in their context.

service on Sunday. I shared the questions in advance so everyone had time to think about them. Julia Hill from the Deanery and Parish Support team helped by facilitating the session which allowed me to listen and support.

How did the session go?

It was really positive. Everyone here knows all about stewardship and prayer and are very supportive

of one another here and very comfortable about growing in faith. The next questions will be more challenging for us.

Any outcomes so far?

We are not planning on sitting still, we are changing. Not for changes' sake, but because it works. We are not going to be oppressed by what we can't do, but are going to take risks with what we can do in our small way.

Any advice for those thinking about holding a discussion?

Tackle the questions but make sure you know where the insecurities are as well as the securities are. If you can get a facilitator that's handy, as that allows the vicar or local leader to step in and support during the discussion if needed. Read more at bathwells.anglican.org/blessed-here

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Living the story. Telling the story.