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From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells ☩ January 2025

Seeds of hope

The start of a new year brings with it a sense of possibility. It's often a time to take stock of where we've been and think about where we are heading. While the challenges of the past year may still linger, the beginning of a new year offers us an opportunity to look forward with hope and optimism.

Hope isn't always about certainty; it's about belief that things are possible. Like seeds carefully planted in spring, hope starts small, but with nurturing, it can grow and flourish. Revd Debbi Turley, Vicar of St Peter's Church in Taunton said, "The outpouring of love from the community was great



Community support after vandals smash church windows

after I discovered vandals had smashed and damaged windows at the church, leaving us facing a large bill for repairs.

"In the hope of raising funds towards the repair costs, I decided to set up an online fundraising page. I thought it would just get a few donations, but within hours, there was an overwhelming response from the local

community. We even had donations from people as far away as America. Before long we had raised the amount we needed to repair the window.

"This could have been a sad story, but it turned into a good news story. It brought the community together."

Hope for the new year doesn't always require grand resolutions or sweeping changes. Instead, it can come from small steps. It is about progress, however modest, being possible. As the new year begins, may we all look ahead with a renewed hope, a hope which is rooted in God's love for us all.

News in brief

Deputy Lieutenants appointed

The Revd Prebendary Narinder Tegally, Lead Chaplain at the Royal United Hospitals Bath and Interfaith Adviser for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, and Caroline Boddington, Senior Non-Executive Chapter Member of Wells Cathedral, are two of five new Deputy Lieutenants appointed to support the Lord-Lieutenant, His Majesty's personal representative in Somerset. Appointment to the office is in recognition of distinguished service to the community, country, or county.



More than 120 confirmed

Wells Cathedral was filled with joy as more than 120 people from across the diocese were confirmed. The candidates, from a diverse range of ages and backgrounds, were joined by family members, friends, and church supporters. Bishop Michael said, "It has been extraordinary to be in Wells Cathedral to confirm so many people, each here because their Christian journey has brought them to a new place, of commitment, of love of God and a willingness to serve God in the world today."



'Space' by Luxmuralis comes to Wells Cathedral

From 28 January – 1 February 2025, 'Space', a spectacular immersive light journey will be at Wells Cathedral. The artwork, which allows visitors to walk through and explore the space of Wells Cathedral in a new light, invites people to look out into space and think about what humans have achieved in our place in the world. The son-et-lumière artwork encourages reflection on humanity's place in the universe as vibrant light is projected around the Cathedral, turning the walls and ceilings into a stunning cosmic display.

Find out more on these and other news stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

Bringing hope

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

“A leader” said Napoleon Bonaparte, “is a dealer in hope.” At the start of 2025, this is a tough challenge for leaders everywhere! Conflicts continue around the world. The climate emergency is ongoing. At the polls, voters in many countries express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. As we look around us, can hope mean anything more than mere wishful thinking? As we look on all the challenges that exist, have we anything more to say than “I hope that that somehow, somewhere, something will turn up”.

More than ever, the Christian understanding of hope is what we need. Christian hope is broader, deeper, stronger altogether than any ‘wishful thinking’. In scripture, hope is not just a vague desire that

something good in the future will somehow happen. Rather, the Biblical understanding of hope is of a confident expectation and desire that good in the future will come. It’s an assurance based in our pre-existing experience of God’s goodness, God’s love, the faithfulness that he has already shown towards us.

Scripture also contains the idea that while hope is something which comes primarily from God, it is also something in which human beings have a part to play, a contribution to make. The letter to the Hebrews says this: “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same

diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realised.” (Hebrews 6:10-11)

God graciously calls us to join in bringing hope into the world. Our work, our love, our diligence matter. The contribution we make is important in bringing into being the future that God wants for us. At the start of this new year, we are called to take the lead: to be signs, symbols, dealers in the hope for which our world longs today.

Bishop Michael



Hope rising

Revd Jon Ball tells us about Orchard Grove Church, a new church established on a new build housing estate and shares with us the hope it brings.

How does the new church reflect hope for the future?

2,000 homes are planned for Orchard Grove, currently there are 350. The leadership in Trull had been asking God how to serve the people moving in. In 2023, a weekly prayer gathering began, leading to the launch of Orchard Grove Church, a year later this had already grown.

How does the mission in Orchard Grove offer hope?

New housing is notorious for not having good connections or a good community feel, but our hope for Orchard Grove is that it's a thriving community with this new church at the heart of it and part of the fabric of it, offering hope to the community. That hope is



Jon and Imogen Ball (seated) with the Orchard Grove Church Team.

ultimately in living and telling the story of Jesus here. And people being drawn into that life with him and finding the living hope that he offers.

What role does perseverance play in building hope?

It’s definitely been a step of faith. Ours is a story of long-term hope. For anyone else with an exciting idea of how to engage where they are, it is about perseverance

and holding on to hope all the way through.

How can the story of Orchard Grove inspire hope in others?

We need to keep taking steps of faith and waiting for God to open doors, which is sometimes hard. But he is our hope and we’ve seen him give those green lights throughout this journey.

How do you start to build that community of hope?

We have a vision for a few years’ time for what this community will look like, and it is a hopeful one. It’s a hope that Orchard Grove will look different from what people might expect from a new housing development.

Hear more from Jon at bathandwells.org.uk/reaching-new-homes-with-orchard-grove-church

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