

21st century church

In 2018 an exciting new project was launched to help us reimagine what it means to be church in the twenty first century. The Pioneer Project aimed to encourage a culture shift by appointing pioneer ministers to explore appropriate ways of sharing the good news of Jesus with different groups of people and in different places.

As a result of the project there are nine full time pioneers doing life alongside the inhabitants of nine different towns and villages across the diocese, outside existing church congregations and often on the margins of society. They include pioneers who are coming alongside families, and communities, pioneers focused on the arts and



Exploring new ways of being church on young people.

Tina Hodgett, who led the Pioneer Project in Bath and Wells until late 2021, said, "The Christian Church in the west has been through centuries of stability. In the past most people accepted the Christian faith but society is changing rapidly and the people have flowed away from the church door. Jesus spoke our language

and pioneered a whole new way of being in fellowship with God and today's pioneers follow in His footsteps."

The project is not just about appointing a few people to do things differently, but inspiring everyone to see how they can share the Gospel where they are and 25 people have completed the Certificate in Pioneer Mission, a year-long course to help them do just that.

Tina concludes, "We've made distinct progress in becoming more pioneering, innovative and imaginative since 2018. The culture shift has started!"

Read the report at bathandwells.org.uk/pioneering-report ■

News in brief

Funding step forward for flood church

St. Peter and St. Paul's Church Muchelney, near Langport on the Somerset Levels, has moved a step closer towards becoming a community hub after receiving a £12,500 grant from South Somerset District Council. The grade one listed church was a focal point for its community during the floods of 2013/14 when the village was cut off for more than ten weeks. The latest grant, together with £44,000 already raised will go towards the estimated £75,500 needed for the first phase of the development; to build a toilet and put in mains water. Churchwarden Sarah Nicholas said, "We can make the church building the heart of the community again." ■



Looking out to the town and beyond

New Minster for Taunton

On March 13, St Mary Magdalene, Taunton, is designated to become Taunton Minster. Already the civic church for the town, as a minster it will play a more active role in bringing together and supporting the whole town and wider area. Revd Tobie Osmond, Vicar at St Mary Magdalene says, "This is particularly important as the town adapts to meet the challenges presented by the Covid pandemic." ■

Join with us this Lent

Join with us this Lent as we explore 'Knowing You, Knowing Me, Knowing God'. There'll be a range of resources focusing on the themes of offering and receiving welcome, hospitality, inclusion, and generosity as a way of better knowing and understanding others, ourselves, and God during Lent 22 and beyond. The resources will include videos of new residents of Somerset, weekly bible reflections with study questions, a weekday video and conversation starter, and useful links relating to the themes. Find out more at: bathandwells.org.uk/lent-2022 ■

A signpost to God

By Rob Martin, Honorary Assistant Bishop for Bath and Wells

2022 has begun, with all its potential for joy and for sorrow. What lies ahead I wonder? Will Covid define us, as it continues to exert its baleful influence and disrupt our plans? Or will the joy of faith-filled lives trump the gloom? Rejoice in the Lord always, begins our key passage from Philippians. Amen!

New Year resolutions - have you made any? They are rooted in a godly desire to improve our lives. They say 60 per cent of us make them, but only 8 per cent stick with them! I'm part of the 92 per cent, who try, but usually give up. Sometimes something sticks.

Two years ago, following a diocesan initiative to encourage

more prayer, I resolved to get the Lectio 365 app. It has helped me ever since. I'm guided to sit, read, reflect and prepare for my day's activities. It's a form of Lectio Divina, similar to Dwelling in the Word, used in Bath and Wells, which encourages us to mull over God's word, in our own personal time, and in the company of others, allowing God to speak to us.

Lectio 365 ends in this prayer: Father help me to live this day to the full, being true to you in every way. Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to all I meet. Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do, and say.

Our pioneers reach out to

those around them, building relationships and using ever more creative ways, to point people to God. Cocktail bars, art work, pizza evenings, outdoor activities, pilgrim walkways... the list is gloriously endless! The Lectio prayer reminds us that everyone is a channel for God's grace, a signpost to God. By encouraging others to grow in spiritual awareness, we can all be pioneers in our own situation.

Bishop Rob



A pioneering journey

Trevor James became a pioneer in Keynsham in November 2019

What led you to become a pioneer? The journey started before knowing pioneering was even a thing. I just felt called to stop doing the ministry that I was doing; it wasn't stop and leave, it was simply stop and so I knew something was coming.

How has your role developed over time?

It's been a journey. I came with lots of plans. Six months in and we had lock down which transformed everything. It got to a point where I thought I'd got this wrong; do I need to just hand my notice in? But God being God just transformed the journey and that's where the Sanctuary Garden came in.



Trevor James (centre) is reaching people outside church congregations

What's the Sanctuary Garden?

It is a holistic space on the river where I do a regular prayer meet for people to come and be together at the beginning of the day in God's presence. I have also met pastorally in the garden with a bunch of folks, including young people. The things that we've done through the garden space have been so fruitful it has completely shocked me.

Who are you engaging with?

The people that I am meeting wouldn't go inside the church. It's not because there is anything wrong with it, it's just not how they live out their faith. That's especially true of the younger ones.

What have you learnt about pioneering?

The element of play. The more I push into the adult and the strategic side I don't see fruit. When I let go and allow myself to be a child in God, to enter the playground of His Kingdom and play with Him in ministry, it is so freeing and fruitful. Read more from Trevor at bathandwells.org.uk/keynsham-pioneer ■

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