

contact

The Parish of Keynsham magazine



February 2024

Quiz for Christian Aid

You're invited!



- What:** Join us for our
QUIZ
- When:** Saturday 3rd February
2024
- Where:** St Dunstan's Church Hall,
Keynsham
- Time:** 7.00 p.m.
Donations welcome. Raffle.
Tea/coffee/nibbles provided.

All welcome, bring a friend.

We're raising funds for Christian Aid to help people in poverty around the world. We'd love you to join us!



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SERVICES & ORGANISATIONS

St John the Baptist, Keynsham

EVERY WEEK - 9.15am - with choir
11.00am - with band

Occasional Festival Services: 10.30am - on these Sundays there is an earlier said 8.30am Holy Communion
The news sheet on the website has further details

Evening Services - as advertised

Weekday Holy Communion: 11.30am Tuesdays

Holy Baptism: In public worship / or Sunday 1.00pm
(either by arrangement)

Choir Practice: Friday 6.15 - 8.00pm - Junior Choir & Choir Club
Adults 7.30 - 9.15pm

Worship Band Practice: Wednesday 8.00pm

Bell-ringing Practice: Thursday 7.30 - 9.00pm

Mothers' Union: 1st Wednesday - 1.00pm

Toddlers Group: Wednesday - 10.00am

St John's Pastoral Visiting:
Marcia Cohen T: 986 5687

St Francis', Warwick Road

Morning Service: 9.30am

1st Sunday: Eco Service

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

Other Sundays: Morning Worship

(Crèche area at back of church if needed)

Evening Services: as advertised

Holy Baptism: In public worship by arrangement

St John Ambulance: Wednesday: 6.00 - 9.00pm

Brownies: Tuesday 6.00pm

Officers Group: Wed: 9.30-11.45am (term time)

St Margaret's, Queen Charlton

1st & 3rd Sundays: 11.15am - **Holy Communion.**

St Michael's, Burnett

2nd & 4th Sundays: **Holy Communion (1662)**

11.15am

3rd Sunday: **Morning Worship:** 11.15am

MISSION PARTNERS:

TLM Mission partner: Bangladesh: *Dr Ruth Butlin*

CMS Mission Partners: Kenya: *Aaron Stanbury*

CMS Prayer partner: *Ruth Radley*

Chipata South Parish, Zambia.

*A number of groups meet regularly for Prayer, Bible Study and Discussion.
Ring the Parish Office (0117 986 3354) for details.*

**Arrangements for Banns and Marriages etc.
9.30 -10.30am on the 1st & 3rd Saturdays at the Parish Office
Appointment needed**

THE PARISH OF KEYNSHAM DIRECTORY

(www.keynshamparish.org.uk)

The Parish Office is now open to visitors from 10am-12noon Mondays to Fridays. You can make contact by email at office@keynshamparish.org.uk, by phone on 0117 986 3354, or in person during opening hours.

Office Manager: Lin Fry - Facilities Manager: Vanessa Body

Team Rector:

Vacancy

Team Vicar in Charge

Rev'd. Anika Gardiner - Tel:0117 985 3470

Pioneer Missioner:

Trevor James - Tel: 07368 526997

Readers:

Rachel Hall, June Lowe, Rachel Shaw, Paul Thurlow

Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults:

Parish officer: Wendy Harwood - Tel: 0117 986 2323

safeguarding@keynshamparish.org.uk

Directors of Music / Choirmaster:

St John's: *Sam Shackleton BA, MMus* - Tel: 07914186634

St Francis: *vacant*

samshackleton@keynshamparish.org.uk

Tower Captain:

Edric Broom - Tel: 07890 364754

Parish Youth Worker:

Philippa Lovell - contact via the Parish Office

Parish Children and Families Worker:

Vacant

Caretakers: - contact via the Parish Office

St John's: - *Graham Mitchell*

St Francis: - *Jenny Minty and Katie Poynter*

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Message of the Month

February 2024



Along with all the cataclysmic world news of continuing wars and record global temperatures, January 2024 in Britain may well be remembered as the month when the shameful bubble of denial surrounding the Post Office Scandal finally burst. Were you, like us, mesmerised by the ITV drama ‘Mr Bates v the Post Office’. We’d sort of heard over the years about the issues of faulty software and sub-postmasters being falsely accused of theft, but, until the drama brought it to life, we had no idea of the ramifications of the issue and the terrible financial and human cost to hundreds of ordinary honest people and their families.

We’ve heard of the lies, the sense of betrayal by a trusted institution, of powerlessness and sheer frustration at not being heard, of years of living under a shadow of shame. How do we react to these revelations? With rage? with compassion for the sufferers? With a desire for revenge, to find a culprit that we can blame? It’s easy to paint individuals as heroes or villains, and many individuals made bad or wrong choices, including the neighbours and customers who were quick to ostracise the wrongly-accused victims. And the truth came out because of dedicated individuals who refused to abandon the ideal of justice.

It’s not just about heroic individuals, but about the values of the communities and institutions we are all part of whether we like it or not. Schools, workplaces, political parties, churches, multinationals all have stated values or aims of some sort, but are these worked through in practice or is the real drive for something else? Once we start to lose sight of basic values like fairness, equality, honesty and the greater good then evil comes in by stealth. Once we put profit or reputation or power or popularity or nationalism before justice, truth and sacrificial care for all, then evil slips in by the back door, sin becomes normalised and suffering follows. Even if we don’t like using these ‘religious’ words we all recognise the process and we know in our gut that it’s wrong.

While we may be aware of a sense of slippage in our common life, it seems to take something like a TV drama or a prophetic voice (in the true sense of showing us the bigger truth) to really make us stop and think and decide to change our ways.

I've heard Christians ask 'Where are today's prophets?' as if God has given up on us. But God speaks to our realities all the time, in so many different ways, surprising us with hope. Here are some unexpected examples I've heard or read recently. *(answers below)*

"The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy... and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation and we scientists, don't know how to do that."

We could all use a little kindness in our lives. Surprisingly, a little altruism can actually have big benefits for our own health!

'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

All resilience, zeal and creativity come from ordinary (but also extraordinary) civic love, and so the language and logic of love must be at the centre of any argument.

So, persevere in the way of love, truth and justice, for it is God's way and you will find God, who loves each and every one of us, walking that path with you.

*Gus Speth, environmentalist. quoted in BRF, 'New Daylight' Daily Bible Notes 20.12.23
Michael Mosley, 'Just One Thing' Radio 4.
Jesus (Matt 25 v 40)
Zoe Williams, quoted on Thought for the Day 10.01.24*

Editor Needed

I have enjoyed editing Contact for three years, but the time has come to retire. We are looking for a new editor to take up the post.

The task involves collecting useful articles and pictures about the churches both locally and nationally as well as finding other gems that readers might find interesting or amusing.

The collation and publishing of the magazine is done by Robert Cook who is happy to continue for the present.

For further information please email keynshamcontact@gmail.com. There is a brief "job description" available and I shall be very happy to discuss what is involved.

Kath McCarthy

KEYNSHAM CHIPATA SOUTH TEACHER EXCHANGE LATEST NEWS



Susan and Febby either side of Tim Legge who brought letters from the Chipata pupils to pupils at St John's school.

After much planning and fundraising, Teacher Febby Sakala and Head Mrs Susan Sakala from Chipata Parish School will be in Keynsham 11 - 29 April.

They will be following a tailor-made programme devised for them by staff at St John's CE School and Two Rivers School. They will be based at Two Rivers for the first full week (15– 19 April) and at St John's 22 to 27 April.

Without overloading their timetable we want to give them a very warm welcome into our church family, so there'll be opportunities to meet them at church services, over meals etc.

Here's how you can help

- * Collect Susan and Febby from Heathrow on Thursday 11th April
- * Take them to Heathrow for return flight on Monday 29th April
- * Accommodation for all or part of the visit.
- * Meals
- * Weekend leisure activities.
- * On hand for lifts etc.

Please contact Rachel Shaw asap if you'd like to help.

Email rachrshaw@gmail.com Phone 0117 9868638; mob 07974412261

For Valentine's Day

Romance, love, marriage and all that stuff – the way children see it....

How do you decide who to marry?

You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the crisps and dip coming. - Alan, age 10

No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with. - Kirsten, age 10



What is the right age to get married?

23 is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then.

- Camille, age 10

No age is good to get married at. You got to be a fool to get married.

- Freddie, age 6

How can a stranger tell if two people are married?

You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids. - Derrick, age 8

What do you think your mum and dad have in common?

Both don't want any more kids. - Lori, age 8

What do most people do on a date?

Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say, if you listen long enough.

- Lynnette, age 8

On the first date, they just tell each other lies and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date. - Martin, age 10

What would you do on a first date that was turning sour?

I'd run home and play dead. The next day I would call all the newspapers and make sure they wrote about me in all the dead columns. - Craig, age 9

When is it okay to kiss someone?

When they're rich. - Pam, age 7

The law says you have to be eighteen, so I wouldn't want to mess with that.

- Curt, age 7

The rule goes like this: If you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them. It's the right thing to do. - Howard, age 8



Winter Now

'Tis winter now; the fallen snow
Has left the heavens all coldly clear;
Through leafless boughs the sharp winds blow,
And all the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn;
His life within the keen air breathes;
His beauty paints the crimson dawn,
And clothes the boughs with glittering
wreaths...

O God! Who giv'st the winter's cold,
As well as summer's joyous rays,
Us warmly in thy love enfold,
And keep us through life's wintry days.

From a poem by Samuel Longfellow 1819-92

A Leap Year Saint- St. Oswald of Worcester

St Oswald of Worcester died on 29th February 992, which is his festival day on 29th February. What happens for three years out of four? Do we just forget about him? His family story was extraordinary, and full of some surprising ‘leaps’, all by itself. It provides a tantalising glimpse of what happened to at least one of those pagan Viking warriors who settled in Anglo-Saxon Britain.

Oswald’s great-uncle had come to England in 865, as part of the ‘Great Heathen Army’ of Viking invaders. These invaders conquered most of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms except Wessex; in 878 Alfred the Great defeated them, and as part of the peace treaty agreed that the Vikings should continue to rule “The Danelaw”, which was most of the Midlands and East Anglia.

However his son, Oswald’s uncle Oda, forsook paganism, and not only converted to Christianity, but actually ended up as Archbishop of Canterbury. From there, Oda was in a position to help his nephew, Oswald, which he did.

Oda sent young Oswald to be educated at the abbey of Fleury, a great centre of learning. There Oswald absorbed the ideals of the Benedictine monks, which would guide his later life and work. Once back in England, Oswald became Bishop of Worcester in 961, and supported by the King, Edgar, eagerly joined in major reforms of the Anglo-Saxon church. In 972 he was made Archbishop of York, which was in the Danelaw, where he pursued one of his great life interests of renewing the Christian church in the Danelaw. He founded Ramsey Abbey, which became one of the great Fenland monasteries.

Oswald was a popular archbishop who always washed the feet of the poor every Lent. On 29th February 992 he had just completed this task at Worcester when he collapsed and died. In later years, Worcester adopted both him and Wulfstan to be its two chief saints, they flank the tomb of King John, which is in the cathedral.



Oswald dying while washing the feet of the poor

The war in Gaza-Israel – Bishops urge people to pray and act

“The first thing Christians can do in response to war is to pray for peace and for those affected.” That is the message of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. The Archbishops are praying for “those mourning, those injured, and all those fearing for their safety,” and for “restraint on all sides, and renewed efforts towards a just peace for all.” The Archbishops and Bishops are also encouraging Christians throughout the UK to join them in prayer, and to consider practical action, by supporting organisations “working to promote peace and human flourishing in the Middle East.”

The following is posted on the Church of England website:

Christian Aid is the official ecumenical arm of Churches in Britain and Ireland and has been working with the poorest and most vulnerable people in the Middle East since the early 1950s, when it provided humanitarian relief to Palestinian refugees.

The Church Mission Society is a historic Anglican mission society which supports mission partners across the region.

The Council of Christians and Jews is a leading interfaith charity which works to help Jews and Christians to meet, to understand each other better and to create meaningful engagement between the communities.

There are also Embrace the Middle East, Friends of the Holy Land, The Jerusalem Middle East Church Association and USPG.

Thank you to Hero

With changes afoot in the editorial team we are starting to prepare for the next steps. Hero has been a member of the team for three years and has contributed articles and pictures as well as expert advice on graphics during this time. However, the time has come to take a break. We are very grateful for his help, and hope that when his health improves he will be able to share his knowledge and expertise once more.

Statement from the House of Bishops on the ongoing war in Gaza

The following are extracts from the Statement.

We are dismayed that the place of our Saviour's birth is once again wracked by violence, death and destruction.

We grieve that innocent children have been disproportionately affected by this conflict.

Of the 1,300 people killed in the abhorrent terrorist attacks of Hamas on 7th October, 33 were children. Of the 250 hostages taken, 34 were children. In Israel's exercising its right to self-defence, more than 18,000 people have reportedly been killed, over 40 per cent of whom were children. Thousands more have been injured.

We re-affirm our position of last autumn (31st October) that there is no equivalence between the atrocities of Hamas against Israeli civilians, and the right and duty of Israel to defend itself. We also want to be clear that we do not believe that the devastating loss of civilian life and humanitarian catastrophe resulting from Israel's bombardment and siege of Gaza can be morally justified.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is more than another regional conflict, but one with both international and domestic resonances. The current war in Gaza risks sowing the seeds of the next several generations of vengeance and violence unless it is resolved equitably now. For this reason, we call on the British Government to appoint a dedicated Minister or Peace Envoy for the Middle East.

We condemn the fresh growth of antisemitism in Europe, a shameful feature of our Western Christian history that needs to be constantly rebuked. In schools, universities, on streets and in places of work and worship, antisemitism has been the root of so much racism. Once one group is allowed to be attacked, merely for religion, race or heritage it seems to open the gates of hell to all other forms of hatred.

Church Action on Poverty Sunday. Supporting those in need.

This year Church Action on Poverty Sunday is on 11th February, when Christians around the country are urged to remember those in real need.

Perhaps one of the most serious impacts of poverty is the dire state of homelessness. The numbers are staggering. More than 300,000 people are homeless in the UK; 119 families in England are made homeless every single day; and 140,000 children are currently without a home. The figures are the highest on record.

When you picture a homeless person, he or she will probably be a rough sleeper; but rough sleeping is only one manifestation of homelessness, and not the most frequent one.

Homelessness ranges from living on the streets, to living in emergency accommodation, in women's shelters, and in other temporary accommodation. Homelessness is not always a visible problem. But the cost-of-living crisis, record rents hikes, stretched local services and withdrawal of emergency Covid measures have led to more people falling into desperate positions than ever before this past year.

Green Pastures is one organisation who is working to enable Christians to make a difference. It has been housing the homeless for 25 years, and it exists to help Christians do their bit to tackle the growing homelessness crisis.

Green Pastures has grown to now house more than 1500 formerly homeless people across the UK, in more than 100 towns and cities. To fund property purchases, Green Pastures has raised more than £47 million in funding, through everyday people who lend them some of their savings and receive interest in return. This model enables the organisation to buy property and work in partnership with local ministries to directly impact the lives of people in need.




Kev (pictured left, with Green Pastures partner, John) lives in a Green Pastures home in Cumbria. At a visit, without prompting, Kev said, "This home saved my life, in fact this man saved my life."

For those facing homelessness, it starts with the life change of a safe and secure home. Tenants like Kev are also offered compassionate wraparound support, pathways towards recovery and independence, and the opportunity to know Christ for themselves.

With many more people in need waiting for help, this month is a great time to consider how the Church can make a significant impact. You can find out more about Green Pastures' work, and how you might get involved, at www.greenpastures.co.uk.

manna

From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells  February 2024

Making space for nature

Across Bath and Wells our churches are working with local communities and schools to care for the environment, with more than a third of churches in the diocese engaged with the Wilder Churches project. Launched in 2021 with Somerset Wildlife Trust, it offers free online training sessions to help communities learn more about the land in their churchyards and burial grounds, appreciate its wildlife value, and explore ways to enhance the biodiversity.

Churchyards are often the oldest enclosed parcels of land in a parish. Unaffected by agricultural changes, they often have diverse ecosystems containing wildflowers, ancient trees, a variety of wildlife, and provide habitats for numerous species. These natural ecosystems contribute to clean air and water, and often provide good carbon storage.

Sara Emmett, Climate Justice & Environment Advisor for the Diocese of Bath and Wells says, "Our churchyards form a network of pockets of space for nature within



the heart of our communities and for our communities. They are vital for species and habitat survival as well as for people to connect with our world. Every churchyard that supports nature in its care and management is contributing to this bigger picture and even the smallest actions make a difference."

Hundreds have taken part in the Wilder Churches online training sessions and get-togethers or watched the recorded sessions.

This year the diocesan Environment and Everyday Faith teams plan to hold interactive sessions in parishes, to provide young people with the opportunity to learn more about caring for God's earth with practical sessions on constructing bird boxes, bug hotels, and more. Find out more at bathandwells.org.uk/environment

News in brief

Green dates for your diary

The Great Big Green Week (8 to 16 June) - a celebration of community action to tackle climate change.

Come together to show the heartfelt, everyday actions being taken to stand up for nature and fight climate change.

Churches Count on Nature 2024, part of Love Your Burial Ground Week (8-16 June), focuses on the wildlife to be found in churchyards. It is a joint initiative promoted by Caring for God's Acre, the Church of England, the Church in Wales and A Rocha UK.

Net Zero Week (6-12 July 2024), the UK's official national awareness week, brings together all the stakeholders needed to reach net zero by 2050, and to ensure Britain's energy is both secure and affordable ■

Supporting the community

Revd Deborah Perreau, Deanery Mission Priest for Somerset South, has received a Community Resilience Award from Somerset Council in acknowledgment of her exceptional efforts following severe flooding in the area in 2021. Deborah has collaborated with local agencies, secured additional funding for emergency flood resources, and facilitated opportunities for people to share their experiences. "It was vital that care and compassion were our outer garments but even more so a listening ear. The church takes in the battered and bruised and sends us out restored and with resilience." ■

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

Caring for those working at sea

More than 400 gift boxes filled by church communities in Bath and Wells have been shared with sailors who came to Royal Portbury and Avonmouth Docks near Bristol so this winter.

Chaplains from the Mission to Seafarers also gave out hundreds of

warm hats, scarves and gloves, all knitted volunteers in the diocese. Fr Jeremy Hellier said, "95% of everything we use comes by sea, those who work on the ships that deliver the goods will be far away from their loved ones at for many months at a time." ■

Our precious gift

By Alastair Redfern, Assistant Bishop for the Diocese of Bath and Wells

As Christians, while we may look to reduce our own carbon footprint, we are called to be stewards and witnesses of a much more radical resource. The clue is in the word 'ecology'.

'Eco' comes from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning house, or dwelling place. Ecology is partly about our responsibility to recognise the precious gift of the Earth, as our dwelling place: to be thankful, and play our part. God made humankind to care for the earthly world: Jesus amplifies the call, as He uses 'nature' as the sign of how we can live in order to flourish and to fulfil God's will.

'Logy' comes from a Greek word *logos* interpreted as reason, the ordering of knowledge, logic. In John's Gospel, *logos* is a word to describe Jesus – through whom all things are made and from whom all true knowledge comes. *Logos* is the word, the source of all goodness and grace, for every human life, and for all of creation.

It is the 'logos', the word, who inhabits our lives, our creation – inviting us to recognise His light, and allow it to overcome the darkness

of our own limited concerns and agendas. We meet the *logos* in scripture, in worship, in prayer, and deeper reflection.

In Jesus, as *logos*, we can find the wisdom, the resources and the commitment to play our part in caring for creation. We are able to invite others to recognise the deeper truths about Eco, our common dwelling place, and to see more clearly how we join with others to work out what to do, how to live, and honour the gift of life that we receive through Him. The *Logos* is the possibility of good news for humankind and the Earth.

What a responsibility each Christian disciple is called to bear! And what grace can be ours to enable us to fulfil our calling, and help all of God's children become caught up in the praise and prayer that gives true life to our dwelling place, and to exercise our stewardship appropriately.

Read John 1v1-14. Become an ECO-warrior – committed our common dwelling place – through celebrating the power and presence of the LOGOS.

ECOLOGY: we know it makes sense ■ **Bishop Alastair**

Making a difference

Pippa Rayner, Wilder Projects Coordinator for Somerset Wildlife Trust, talks about their partnership with Bath and Wells.



What is Wilder Churches?

It is a partnership initiative between Somerset Wildlife Trust and the Diocese of Bath and Wells to provide a series of training sessions aimed at anyone interested in taking action for nature in their local churchyard, burial ground or other church land. We want to help people understand how important these spaces can be.

What has the reaction been to it?

We started with a launch session in 2021 and had an amazing reaction to that. People have continued to take part or have been able to catch up because we recorded all the training and we also run regular sessions for new communities. What's been very rewarding is that people have been finding habitats they never knew were there.

Is that the reaction you expected?

We were absolutely delighted with the response. We provided support so that they have access to advice, with the wider benefit of not just doing

but doing it as part of something that's happening across the whole diocese.

What's been the most surprising thing you've found out running this?

The Somerset Botany Group approached us and asked if they could offer surveys for communities, which was great. They got round a lot of sites and found some amazing things, which was absolutely fantastic and just shows why these places are so special.

Is it a lot for a church to do?

No. You can start small. Even churches that don't have grassy areas can have flowerpots planted with bee friendly plants. It's important enthusiasm doesn't cause people to rush in and change things without having time to understand the space and the communities. We support any action the community decides to take and help them find what will work best and how to do that.

Any advice for someone looking to take part?

Always talk to your church leader and those already involved. Ask who currently manages that space and who currently decides how it is managed ■

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Problems for Christians in India

Hundreds of Christians arrested under India's anti-conversion laws

The recent anti-conversion laws in India have led to the arrests of hundreds of Christians, according to church sources. UK-based Release International, which raises the voice of persecuted Christians worldwide, warns: "The persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in India increases dramatically with each passing month."

Twelve of India's 28 states have now passed anti-conversion laws, and momentum is building to impose a national law across the whole of India. This would limit the freedom of religious minorities, including Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Sikhs, from sharing their faith.

Police are arresting Christians under a law that is intended to prevent conversion by force, but in practise prevents any Christians from sharing their faith – even though their right to do so is enshrined in the Indian constitution. *UCA news* report that nearly 400 Christians have been arrested in the state of Uttar Pradesh since the law was passed three years ago. They say most of the 398 Christians arrested are Protestant pastors and church members.

Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state. It has long been a hotbed of 'Hindutva' – 'Hindu-ness' – which is championed by extreme Hindu nationalists who claim that to be Indian is to be Hindu. Observers warn that Hindutva religious nationalism is on the rise across the country.

India is set to hold national elections in 2024, raising the possibility of further gains for the Hindu nationalist BJP. "Given the prevailing trend, the persecution of Christians in India is likely to increase," warns Release International CEO Paul Robinson.

Last year in Manipur, ethnic/religious rioters killed about 175 people, burned down 300 churches, and drove some 60,000 people from their homes. Release International has launched an appeal to help Christians in India. For more details go to: <https://releaseinternational.org/campaign/thumleima/>

Ukraine - Two Years Later

Although Russian troops were massing near the borders of Ukraine in February 2022, we naively believed their denial that an attack was imminent. Since then, an all-out war has resulted in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, and hundreds of thousands of military casualties. A quarter of the Ukrainian population has been displaced. Eight million are now refugees, spread across Europe.

Few of us realised that a war between the two countries really started in 2014, when pro-Russian regions of Ukraine rebelled and Crimea was annexed.

Hostilities between the two countries had begun even earlier. Ukraine had joined the Soviet Union in 1922 and ten years later lost more than a million of its population in the 'Holodomor' famine, now widely regarded as genocide inflicted by Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader. Relationships between the two countries have always been turbulent, and Russia's possessive attitude towards its neighbour is deeply resented.

Ukrainian refugees in the UK are mainly women and children, for their men are needed for war service. So, they have organised themselves into self-help groups, painstakingly learning to read and write in English, as well as working full or part-time and keeping up their morale by organising groups for young and old. Choirs have sprung up, often assisted by British musicians. One member wrote movingly of how singing helped her cope with the mental trauma of her homeland fighting for survival. Ukrainians are unceasingly grateful for our hospitality, but they fear our compassion may wear thin, as our attention has been diverted by news of the barbarity between Israelis and Palestinians. That conflict also has a long history of smouldering hatred on both sides. Wars rarely solve disputes. When wearied people recognise their futility, settlements may be negotiated. Forgiveness takes longer.

The Ven John Barton

From Avon Wildlife Trust

A Happy New Year to all

What does 2024 have in store for us? Well, so far it seems to have been all rain and wind.

Heavy rain and strong winds during winter can have various effects on our wildlife. While many species are adapted to cope with seasonal changes, extreme weather events can pose challenges.

Flooding of rivers and low-lying areas, disrupts the habitat for both aquatic species and small mammals. Pollution of our waterways due to the runoff again affects aquatic life. Flooded areas can wash away invertebrates, reducing the food sources for birds and other wildlife. Extreme wind and rain combine to make the environment feel colder and less suitable for some species, and strong winds damage trees and vegetation affecting shelter and food sources.



So what are the solutions to this increasing weather pattern? For the bigger picture, we need long-term natural flood management, planting trees in our uplands and slowing the flow of water through the landscape, whilst keeping active floodplains. Conservation efforts and habitat restoration projects can play a crucial role in helping wildlife adapt to and recover from the impacts of severe weather events.



Pictures - credit Bevis Watts

What do hedgehogs, nesting birds, hippopotamuses, and polar bears have in common?

Answer: They are all celebrated during February!

Hedgehog Day. 2nd February. (Also Candlemas.)

The earliest traceable practice of the belief that hedgehogs can predict the coming of spring goes back to the Romans, who relied on them to determine if spring was coming soon. Later, Germans did a similar thing with local badgers, while migrants to America decided that groundhogs can offer a similar prediction. Hedgehogs are definitely a gardener's friend, eating many invertebrates you might not want in the garden.



Nest Box Week 14th-21st February: Organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, National Nest Box Week, 14-21 February, encourages people to help the birds by putting up nest boxes. With the nesting season about to start, garden birds will be soon be preparing for their busiest time of the year. The main nesting season runs from March to August, but birds are traditionally thought to have paired up by Valentine's Day, 14 February. As well as feeding birds, the Trust says that it is important they have a suitable shelter and site for breeding. With natural habitats such as trees and hedgerows being lost to development, providing a nest box in your garden can be a real benefit.

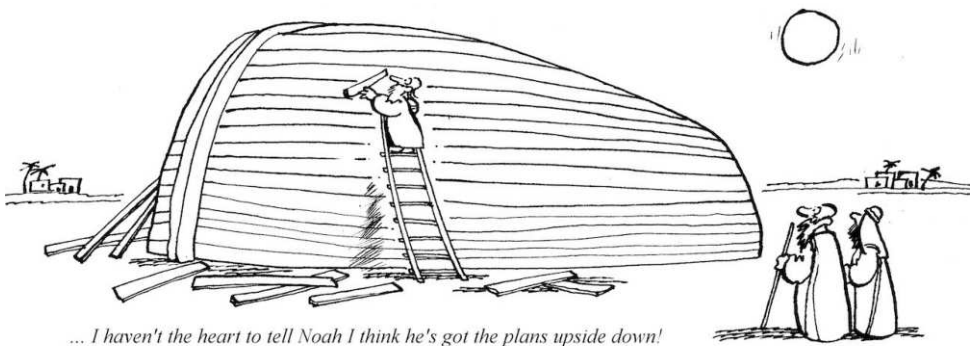
World Hippo Day 15th February:

Hippos live along rivers and lakes throughout sub-Saharan Africa. They seek refuge from the heat by living in water during the day, and at night they come ashore to feed on grasses and fruit. The eyes and ears of a hippopotamus are on top of its head, so it can keep watch for enemies — mainly crocodiles — while lying low in the water. These giants are currently at risk from habitat loss and are listed as vulnerable. World Hippo Day encourages people to learn about the threats they face, and how we can help to protect them.



World Polar Bear Day 17th February:

This day was founded to coincide with the time when polar bear mothers and cubs are snug in their dens. This year the focus is on raising funds to help protect mother and cub polar bears, giving them the best possible chance of survival. On average, only about half of all cubs reach adulthood. The WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) says: "While climate change remains the greatest threat to the polar bear's survival -----the oil and gas industry is turning its eyes to the Arctic with the potential risks of habitat destruction. Contact with oil spills can reduce the insulating effect of a bear's fur and can poison it. Polar bears can also be exposed to toxic chemicals such as pesticides through their prey."



... I haven't the heart to tell Noah I think he's got the plans upside down!

Poster seen in a French Church (translated)

When you enter this church it may be possible that you will hear "the call of God"

However, it is unlikely that He will call you on your mobile.

Thank you for turning off your phone.

If you want to talk to God, enter, choose a quiet place, and talk to Him.

If you want to see Him, send Him a text while driving!!!

Sound advice I think!

Avril Plunkett

I've been replaced by a Robot!

I've been replaced by a robot –
His name is 'Chat GPT.'
He is a poet of a robot –

And that's what troubles me.
He can read in a moment
Shakespeare, Keats, and Lear –
More in that one single moment
Than I can read in a year!

He has an acceptable metre;
His work runs quite nicely to time,
His work gets neater and neater!
And he is quite good with a rhyme!

In fact, so good is his manner
The robot is quite hard to see:
So, I'll have to dumb down my grammar:
"This poem, it woz writ by me!"

By Nigel Beeton





New year, a new woodland

Record breaking number of trees to be planted in the Chew Valley: Volunteers needed!

As we move into 2024, it's time to think about new goals and activities. The team behind Great Avon Wood is calling for a record number of volunteers to help plant a whopping 16,000 trees this winter. Time spent in nature is shown to improve mental and physical wellbeing giving another great reason to volunteer and get stuck in.

Last year, teams of hard-working, local volunteers planted an astonishing 6,500 trees in just seven weeks at Great Avon Wood, the new 100-acre woodland just north of Pensford.

The Forest of Avon Trust and Avon Needs Trees have jointly purchased the land for this groundbreaking woodland creation. Volunteers are helping to plant and care for over 40,000 trees that will be supplied by the Woodland Trust.

Avon Needs Trees CEO Dave Wood said *"We were quite simply blown away by the response last year. This year our planting target is even more ambitious, and we need people's help to create this incredible local woodland."*

Volunteers can watch our short film and register to volunteer at avonneedstrees.org.uk/gaw **Contact:** Vicki Cracknell - 07904 689826 vicki.cracknell@avonneedstrees.org.uk



Hard at Work
Credit Niamh Harrington

St John's DCC meeting –16th January 2024

Summary of the Meeting.

Anika Gardiner opened the meeting by reading from Psalm 89, followed by a prayer.

Church Heating Graham Shaw gave a comprehensive report on behalf of the Committee formed to investigate the best heating system for the church. To date three heating engineers have visited the site, as well as the Bath and Wells Net Zero Carbon advisor. A visit has also been arranged with an electrical heating contractor. The group will also investigate whether there are any grants available to help with the cost. Graham plans to give a detailed update to the DCC in March once the heating contractors have made their reports. As replacing the church heating system is a complex issue the time line for the new heating system is thought to be December 2024. Graham and the group were thanked for all they have achieved to date.

Building for the Future. The DCC agreed that the Building for the Future group should arrange for a survey of the church pews to determine if they were designed and constructed by an eminent Victorian Church architect. The results of the survey may affect whether the pews can be removed in the future.

Moving forward the group feels it is time to encourage more people with experience and skills in areas such as fund raising, community engagement and communications to join them.

It was noted

- that the installation of the internal church lighting system is almost finished. A final visit is needed to complete the lighting above the area where the choir sits.
- it is hoped that work to install the clock tower lighting will commence shortly.
- the external clock tower lighting will be funded by a Town Council grant and donations from Davies and Way, The Friends of St John and the Church Wardens fund.
- the upkeep of the church clock is becoming expensive with much of the cost being met by the Friends of St John. The Friends will investigate whether there are any grants available to help fund repairs to this historic clock, which is considered to be an asset to the town.

Finance – A report by the Treasurer and the new Finance sub group were noted. It was noted that St Johns currently owes approx. £23,000 in respect of Parish Share for 2023.

The budget for 2024 includes an element of Faith (deficit) estimated to be £28,000. Although the budget was agreed by the DCC it will be subject to a review in June. There followed a discussion about fundraising, planned giving and ways in which the deficit might be reduced.

The DCC also agreed the non-statutory fees for wedding and funerals for 2024 and a request to apply for a licence to hold a planned Grand Spring Draw.

Development. It was noted

- the meeting with Clare Horton, an experienced Parish Support worker to consider what kind of Team Rector would suit our parish went very well
- the Parish Profile for a new Team Rector is almost complete.
- St Johns services held in the Parish Hall are going well although there can be congestion near the kitchen area when coffee is served between services especially if the 9.15am service over runs.
- The date of the Vision and Prayer meeting is now Tuesday 20th February rather than during half term week.

Reports. Reports from the Pastoral Team and Music Director were noted.

Miscellaneous. It was noted that Christmas Services had been well attended with a lovely sense of the community coming together.

Please note that some items on the agenda were not discussed as the meeting had over run

These are not official minutes.

Deborah Hall - St John's DCC Secretary

Notes from the PCC – not minutes

The PCC met on the 9th January with Anika Gardiner in the chair.

- A group has been set up under the chairmanship of Graham Shaw to look at the heating for St John's church and to find the best solution.
- Martin Burton offered to help with making the return to the Charity Commission.
- It was agreed that no action would be taken in regard to Prayers for Love and Faith until a new Team Rector is in post. This is in line with the Bishop's recommendations.
- The draft of the Parish Profile had been circulated to members and it was well received. The draft timetable for advertising and interviews was agreed.
- The PCC will meet on the 11th March to appoint the Parish Representatives on the selection panel (Two from St John's, one from St Francis and one from the village churches) These must be PCC members.
- The web site is yet to be updated.
- Property Update – Mike Burke's house is under offer. The curates house will be let. No suitable rectory has yet been found so the new rector may have to live in Park Road initially.
- Finance – there are fewer people giving due to deaths and departures but costs are still rising. Parish share is under revision.
- Zambia – a collection fund to provide a vehicle for Father Benard is in place.
- The editor of Contact will be stepping down this year. It was agreed that it should continue in its present form if possible and a new editor be sought.
- There will be visiting speakers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.
- DCCs will be asked to encourage someone to join the stewardship committee.

Robert Cook

FARM DIARY

This is written for non-farmers who live surrounded by farmland.

In the Field. Finally, the rain has stopped. This is not before a lot of crops around the country have been written off. The dry weather will allow further 'winter sown' crops to be sown. These varieties of cereals are usually sown around the first week of October. However, most can be sown until the end of January and some until the end of February. Free draining soils like sands are less affected and so they have done well in these conditions. Heavier clay soils have suffered but fare better under drought conditions. Cereals sown after Christmas will not yield as much. The tillers or extra stems that produce grain bearing ears need to be in place before then to produce grain of a harvest-able size.

The Sheep Game. For the tech savvy, this is the name of a popular you-tuber's post. He outlines the difficulties he faces with foot paths through one of his fields. He has had five dog attacks on his sheep in the last year. For countryside walkers, there is a massive network of footpaths in the county. All these can be found on the county council website. A dog must be on a lead when there are sheep around as sheep will run off when approached by a dog. Dogs then chase them with possible tragic consequences. If there are cattle in the field be prepared to let your dog off the lead if the cattle chase you. It is the dog they will chase and not you. You cannot outrun cattle. In addition, there is still Jeremy Clarkson on Amazon Prime for those who wish to learn a bit about the challenges facing farmers presented in a humorous way. The author still awaits his payment from them for this plug!

Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB). Reported in the February edition of British Farmer and Grower - the NFU journal - a conference of 260 farmers, scientists, vets, stakeholders, and policy makers heard an update. In England in the last 12month snapshot, cattle slaughtered had fallen 21%. Cattle that test positive are slaughtered. It does seem that badger control is working as one step towards eradication. The aim is to eradicate the disease by 2038. The next step is vaccination of cattle and badgers. This is likely to take some time but be accomplished at least before eight years have passed. Cattle vaccination is not a silver bullet. Studies in Ethiopia are ongoing and being watched closely. Vaccination efficacy is about 60% here but onward transmission might be more controlled. Farmers wanting information should contact the conference organisers TBAS - the TB Advisory Service - which offers free practical and cost-effective advice to all eligible farmers to help reduce risks with bTB at www.tbas.org.uk

Parish Register & Diary for February

DEATHS

Date of Death	Name	Age
06/10/2023	Ronald Abram	93
21/11/2023	Edith Cavell Chivers	107
26/11/2023	Margaret Taylor	86
15/12/2023	Stephanie James	72
23/12/2023	Thomas Arthur Jones	74

DIARY Events marked * by arrangement only

Date	Time	Activity / Event	Venue
3 rd	9.30am	Clergy Consultation Hour*	Parish Office
3 rd	10am	Who Let The Dads Out	St Francis Hall
4 th	10.30am – 3pm	Marriage Preparation Day	Parish Hall & OCT
6 th	7pm	PCC Standing Committee	Upper Room
7 th	2pm	Mother's Union	Parish Hall
7 th	7.30pm	Baptism Preparation Evening*	Upper Room
10 th	12pm	Free Community Lunch	Parish Hall
13 th	7.30pm	Vision & Prayer meeting	Parish Hall
14 th	11.30am	Holy Communion with Ashing	St John's Church
14 th	7.30pm	Holy Communion with Ashing	St Francis Church
15 th	12pm	Pastoral Lunch	Parish Hall
17 th	10am	Who Let The Dads Out	Parish Hall
18 th	6pm	Impact	Parish Hall
18 th	6pm	Youth Group	OCT
18 th	7.30pm	Youth Homegroup	OCT
23 rd	1pm	Trio Paradis lunchtime concert	Parish Hall



Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is one of the important holy days in the Christian calendar, opening Lent, a season of fasting and prayer. It takes place 46 days before Easter Sunday.

Ash Wednesday comes from the ancient Jewish tradition of penance and fasting. The practice includes the wearing of ashes on the head, the ashes symbolise the dust from which God made us. Ashes also symbolise grief, in this case, grief that we have sinned and caused division from God.



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Cover: Wild daffodils used to be known as Lent Lilies

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