


Connect

 **DIOCESE OF
BATH & WELLS**
Changing Lives, Changing Churches for Changing Communities

Extraordinary testimony to God's faithfulness

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church about giving, he expressed an important principle for churches in their relationship with one another. Paul wrote: "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty might supply what you need." (2 Corinthians 8:13-14) It is the principle that underlies "S" category in our Diocesan Common Fund system, and it is such a joy when we see that Biblical principle worked out in practice. St. Michael's, Twerton is in a particularly

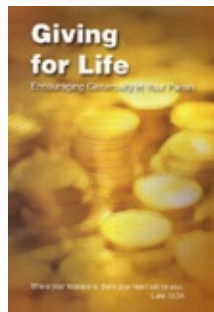
challenging part of Bath. Seven years ago, the deanery recommended that St. Michael's be treated as "S" category so that those of us with relative plenty might supply their need. During those seven years I've had the privilege of meeting with the Twerton PCC each year to review that situation, and it was been a real encouragement and challenge to me to see the extent of their faith as they have worked closer and closer to moving back out of "S" category. It has been the most extraordinary testimony to God's faithfulness, and the courageous faith of the leadership and congregation there which has enabled them to reach that

final step into "D" category from January 2010. And I know that prayer has been at the very heart of that decision.

But it has also been a witness to the mutual support that should lie at the heart of our life as churches in this diocese. Finance is only one area of that support, but it is a very visible. We are called to sacrificial generosity as we support one another through the hard times, knowing that God will abundantly supply our needs.

Ian Lewis

Giving for Life



The national church has launched a major new stewardship project, aimed at helping PCCs encourage generous giving amongst your church members. Giving for Life has four themes to support generous giving as an integral

part of discipleship, which resources God's mission in the world and has an impact on our lifestyle. It will help your parish to: preach and teach generous giving, link giving to mission & ministry, review giving annually, and thank givers.

We will be making the introductory materials available to parishes. These include PCC discussion guides, a clergy guide and leaflets for individual church members. Further copies and additional

downloadable resources will be available from the national Parish Resources website.

Giving for Life events

We will be holding an initial Giving for Life evening event on Tuesday 17 November, aimed at parishes planning a stewardship campaign in the autumn and open to any parishes wanting to look at giving issues. More local events in each Archdeaconry are planned for March 2010, which we hope many parishes will attend.

The Giving for Life event on Tuesday 17 November will be held at the Bishop's Palace in Wells, 6.30 for 7.00 - 9.00 pm, at which the National Stewardship and Resources Officer, John Preston, will be speaking. We hope that, if you are interested in attending the autumn event, you will be able to bring a small group from your parish. If you would like to attend the November event, please contact Sue Whitehead at the Old Deanery

and she can provide you with more details and put your name(s) down – tel 01749 670777 or email sue.whitehead@bathwells.anglican.org.

We intend to make the Giving for Life packs available to parishes attending the November event, or on request to any other parishes which need them in the autumn to plan stewardship work. A more general mailing of the Giving for Life packs to all parishes will occur in the New Year.

The Archdeaconry Giving for Life events will be held in the evenings during March 2010 - details will follow. Parishes are encouraged to get together a small group of people such as Treasurers, Giving officers, Clergy and PCC representatives to attend whichever of these events is most convenient for you. We are looking at how we can best offer support to help parishes in Bath & Wells make the best use of the resources following the events.

Message from the editor I'll be taken over the reins as editor from next month and it's great to see the quality and range of contributions from Connect readers. It's your newsletter so keep those articles and snippets coming, along with thoughts on what you think we could improve or include in future issues. The deadline is the first of each month. For editorial, comment or changes to the distribution list, email comms@bathwells.anglican.org or contact me on 01749 685111. As you know, we aim to reduce costs and environmental impact with this e-publication but appreciate that not everyone can access the internet or get a printed version from a colleague, so we can send hard copies out. I look forward to working with you. *Gillian Buzzard*

The Good Childhood Inquiry (GCI)



The Good Childhood Inquiry (GCI) was commissioned by the Children's Society and was the UK's first independent national inquiry into childhood.

The GCI aims were to renew society's understanding of modern childhood and to inform, improve and inspire all our relationships with children. The research included 34,000 contributions, 20,000 of these directly from children and young people. The report was published in February 2009 and the impact ripple has begun. It includes recommendations to parents, teachers, Government, the media and society in general. For further details please see www.childrenssociety.org.uk. There are copies of the report available from the Diocesan Resource Centre.

Individual change

If we are going to overcome some of the fear adults have toward and for children and young people we need to generate

a change of attitude. We need this not only to overcome fear but to counter the excessive individualism in our society. In other words attitudes need to shift from, 'Me, Myself & I', to 'Other people matter as much as I do'. This is especially important in our attitude to children and young people. Surely this echoes the second half of The Great Commandment; Mark 12:29-31 (New International Version): "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.'"

Collective responsibility

The Inquiry found key areas needing change in our communities, as much as in our individual lives. Those changes need to take place within our relationships,

our understanding of love, within the way we regard children, with the values we hold and share and with our sense of collective responsibility. The African view that it takes a village to raise a child is one that the Inquiry found great sympathy for. The idea that all adults have a collective responsibility towards children is one that has fallen away from public support. But if all children are to experience a good childhood then we need to revisit the role and responsibilities of neighbourhoods and communities for the children and young people among them.

Love

The Inquiry concluded that if excessive individualism created a lack of care toward children and young people in our society, more love was the answer. Specifically, that our society should be based on the law of love, that love should be the driving force in our society.

The role the Church has to play in this is a massive opportunity for the Church at all levels to respond to the Good Childhood Inquiry and to be a part of the continuing conversation. As secularism begins to take hold in society, Christians can be part of changing attitudes individually, in our churches and amongst local communities - especially in relation to the GCI. 20,000 responses from children and young people is a significant voice and we need to be open to listen and act.

Tony Cook

If you would like to host an open session to discuss things further, you can contact Jim Davis directly Jim.Davis@childrenssociety.org.uk; or tony.cook@bathwells.anglican.org

Audit of children and young people's services delivered through parishes

We are currently re-auditing all the work with children and young people in parishes and deaneries across the Diocese. We have sent an audit booklet via PCC secretaries to be filled in by the most relevant person in your parish. Please help us in encouraging completion and return by the deadline of **FRIDAY November 6th**.

Why are we carrying out this audit? For the Diocese to continue being a significant player in the delivery of children and young people's services, we need to regularly monitor and

record relevant information. This will enable us to celebrate and map out the valuable work you carry out with children and young people in many of our churches. It will also help us or you to access to potential sources of funding.

Using the audit, we will also completely revamp our database of youth/children's leaders and helpers so we can be more effective in our communication from the start of 2010. If your church does not have any work with children or young

people please still fill in the relevant sections of the form and return it to us.

If you need any help in completing the form or would like a conversation about the audit please contact Tony Cook on 01749 685134 or tony.cook@bathwells.anglican.org.

Parish Share 2010

If Diocesan Synod approves the draft 2010 diocesan budget on the 24th October, the overall increase in the Common Fund will be 5%. For individual parishes the increase in parish share may be greater or lesser than 5% as the amount asked of each parish is determined by the church membership figure and the parish's choice of socio-economic weighting (A to D). Full details of the budget and explanations for the increase are contained in a report available on request from the Diocesan Office or online at www.bathandwells.org.uk/diocesan_information/finance.php following approval. As highlighted it last month's Connect parish share primarily pays for stipends and other clergy costs which will rise in 2010 primarily due to the impact of the recession on the Clergy pension fund.

Parish share is based on the biblical teaching that we are all members of the body of Christ and we should each contribute to the welfare of all according to our means or ability to do so. A church with a large membership

pays more than a church with a small membership. Even when two churches have the same membership one will be better able to make a higher parish share contribution than the other because its members are comparatively better off in socio-economic terms. Parish share is not a tax – rather it is a fair contribution to mission and ministry across the diocese. For this reason many regard it as a Christian duty and a privilege.

Nick Denison

Out of the (beat) box

I'm known by some as 'the beatboxing* vicar' and it was on this premise I was invited to pen a piece for Connect. But I'm not going to talk about that at all. As clergy we don't need to think quite so far out of the box to help change lives in our communities.

Brenda has never been to a regular church service - just the occasional funeral or wedding. She has friends that go to church but would never consider attending on a Sunday and would not describe herself as religious. She is a wife and mum and works locally as a part-time cleaner. Tina, a friend of hers, is part of The Rose Cottage Community, a missional community in Twerton, which seeks to bless the wider community through running a cafe and community centre. Tina invited Brenda along, she visited the café, loved it and was eager to get involved. We explained to her that it was a Christian Community - part of the parish of St. Michael's - and as such had a common purpose with members committing to support

and pray for each other. Brenda had no problem with this, joined the Community, and agreed to volunteer in the cafe. She filled in forms and signed a membership contract – a gentle commitment between us and her. Over the weeks, the Community welcomed Brenda. We listened to her, loved her and offered to pray for her. At the beginning of each day we pray together. Brenda, never having encountered corporate prayer, initially bowed her head and remained silent. After several weeks, she asked if we could pray for her daughter. Several weeks later she prayed out loud to Jesus. Brenda was connecting with God and 'getting' what it means to become a disciple of Jesus. She has begun a journey of faith.

Rose Cottage was established by the parish as a bridge between the community and the church. The idea was that, through the project, people would be encouraged to attend St Michael's. Thanks to the recent move

in the Church of England towards mission-shaped church, the project has changed and has become a Community or church in its own right. Now St Michael's is a typical mission focused parish church. It's dawned on us that God wants everyone in our parish to be connected to him – not just the eighty or so that meet on a Sunday morning. We need to have multiple expressions of church that connect to all sorts of different people. Rose Cottage is the first expression, The Rec House - a community seeking to bless the wider community through creative arts - is another. These are exciting times and God is at work. To find out more, visit our parish web site at: <http://www.stmichaelstwerton.com/>

Gavin Tye

(*Ed's note – if, like me, you're not sure what beatboxing is about, type it into YouTube and be amazed!)

1100 snapshots



The caving Bishop



The walk from Pitney



The big match - "Howzaaat!?"



4th July celebrations

On the ground

I couldn't get my head round the guest preacher last week so I started thinking about other things. It was when I read '...and some three thousand were added to their number that day.' That's when it struck me.

We are shrinking. Usual Sunday attendance, that's what they call it, was 137 of us last year. 129 this. The records don't lie. The Duty Warden uses a little clicker to register each person across the doorway. Last year they clicked them all in and they clicked them all out again. And 8 of them were coffins.

So our income is bound to go down. Or is it? We don't need that much more money this year and inflation is low. So we only need ask people to increase enough to cover the 8 missing people.

It looks like about 5 or 6%. We could manage that.

Trouble is, as I think about it, if we keep going in this direction then as long as the last person left standing can cover the Parish Share and the cost of the church repairs, all will be well. Nobody will tell us off. Daft that. They'd have to be happy to be Treasurer mind.

Suppose we don't want all to be well, like that? Suppose we want to stop shrinking? My football team bought two £10 million defenders last season to avoid relegation. It worked. If it hadn't we'd have been relegated, bankrupt and docked points this season. That slope would have been very slippery. They risked losing it to win it, as Mr Eriksson used to say when he managed England.

Could our church invest in someone who could turn the team around? A youth worker? A family worker? An evangelist? Or maybe something as simple as a new sign outside the building? Could we budget to use the Back-to-Church Sunday resources next year – they seem to be working in a few places?

We'd have to increase our giving a lot this year but then there might be more of us to cover the costs next? Dare we?

I'm grateful to the occasional bad preacher. I have all my best thoughts while they're working.

*Jim
North Somerset, October 2009*

Things you may not know

Swine flu update

The Archbishops have stated that the Church of England advice on swine flu will be reviewed towards the end of October. You can also access the latest FAQs at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/swineflu/swinefluFAQs.html>

Ready, steady, slow this Advent

Ponder the planet with the Church of England's 2009 Advent campaign. The online Advent calendar will be fully live at www.whywearewaiting.com from November 29 but you can preview the site and sign up for daily thoughts and tips now. Videos and podcasts will feature, linking with the vital UN Climate Change talks in Copenhagen this December.

Bishop calls for arms trade clamp down

Bishop of Bath and Wells, Peter Price has joined other church leaders calling for a new strong and effective Arms Trade Treaty to prevent conventional weapons reaching the illicit market. Read more at http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/news_and_events/item.php?580

Curate launches latest book

Rev Dr Chris Steed reacts against dehumanising influences in our time in his new book *The Peace Weaver*, which will be launched at the end of October month. Find out more at http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/news_and_events/item.php?581

Faith and the Future of the Countryside 3-5 Nov

The 2010 conference will be held at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details and a booking form are available online at www.rural20.org, by email: katrinas@rase.org.uk or by phone: 024 7685 3075.

Mission 21 - Planting Life!

A gathering for church planters and planners is to be held in Bath from 17-19 November. Full details at www.mission21.info

'Green' Wedding tips

The CofE's wedding website has a wealth of information for couples planning a church wedding. The latest tips are all about going green on the big day. www.yourchurchwedding.org/your-wedding/have-a-green-wedding.aspx

Night of 1100 lights

As part of their 1100 celebrations, churches in Weston Super Mare are hosting a merry alternative to Halloween. The focus of the event on 31 October will be a procession of 1100 lights from local churches to Clarence Park. Other activities include: a superheroes fancy dress competition, live music, pumpkin carving and a puppet theatre. For details see http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/news_and_events/item.php?573

Vacancies in the Diocese

A current incumbent willing to take on the role of Wells Archdeaconry Warden of Readers is just one of the positions currently sought by the Diocese. For the full list check online at http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/diocesan_information/vacancies.php

Gift ideas

The 1100 merchandise could make ideal Christmas gifts. Right now you can buy a copy of A Diocesan Celebration and get any other 1100 item free! As well as chocolates, ale, t-shirts and bags, a DVD of the 4th July Glastonbury celebrations is also available. Do pass on the website and online shop details to members who may be interested. <http://shop.bathandwells.org.uk/acatalog/BW1100.html>.

Advent Prayer – Advent Praise

The Diocesan Renewal Group invites you to this event at St Cuthbert's, Wells on 28 November. Guest speaker is Jane Holloway, National Prayer Director at the World Prayer Centre. For more details see: http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/news_and_events/item.php?587

Songs of Praise

On 21 Nov, a songs of praise service at Wells Cathedral will formally draw the 1100 celebrations to a close. All welcome. More details at http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/news_and_events/item.php?585