

## Draft Pastoral Scheme

The Bishop of Bristol has asked the Church Commissioners to prepare a draft Pastoral Scheme in respect of pastoral proposals affecting the following benefices.

Benefices of Saint Paul, Chippenham with Hardenhuish and Langley Burrell; Kington Saint Michael; Colerne with North Wraxall; Box with Hazelbury and Ditteridge; and By Brook.

Full details of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 Diocese of Bristol can be found on the Hardenhuish Church website [www.harnish.org.uk](http://www.harnish.org.uk)

## Prayer and Share

You are welcome to join us every Tuesday morning at 9.30am at St. Nicholas church. A quiet space and a time for praying and sharing together.

## Chippenham Town Deputy Mayor Cadet

Congratulations to Explorer Scout Alaric Childerhouse who has been chosen to be the Chippenham Town Deputy Mayor's Cadet for 2021/2022

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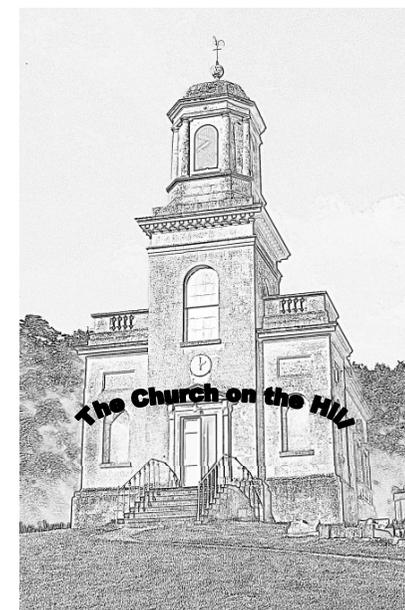
## Greenways Group of Churches

# St. Nicholas News December 2021

### *The Rt Rev Maurice Wood (1916-2007)*

*Bishop Maurice Wood prayer seems appropriate for Hardenhuish:*

*“Make us like a city set on a hill whose light cannot be hidden; so that men and women and children may find Christ as the light of the world, and his church as the family of the redeemed, and eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”*



<b>Sunday</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>3.00pm for 3.30</b>	<b>Afternoon Praise</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>3.00pm for 3.30</b>	<b>Afternoon Worship</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>3.00pm for 3.30</b>	<b>Carol Service</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>24<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>9.30 p.m.</b>	<b>Christmas Eve Communion</b>

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## ***News from the Diocese of Bristol***

### **'Courage, the devil is dead' – Diocesan Synod November 2021**

**On 13 November 2021, the Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, Bishop of Bristol, gave the following presidential address at the first in-person Diocesan Synod meeting since the start of the pandemic:**

"I wonder if you have, stored away in your soul, incidents, moments which continue to carry you through life's ups and downs?"

I remember one, the week before Cambridge finals, when I was a chaplain, and anxiety levels were running high and one student came to tell me, with a smile, that her father had been to visit but they hadn't met up. He had travelled from Scotland, and had simply left a note on the door of her room.

'Courage, le diable est mort', it read. Courage, the devil is dead.

She had returned from the library to find the note there and her father long gone.

What a beautiful token of love from father to daughter, and what a wonderful affirmation of Christian faith. So that is where I want us to start this morning, with that affirmation of Christian faith, and so to reflect a little on that message left on a student's door.

The key to Christian life is that the key events of history have already happened, and those events have world changing significance. God acted in delivering his people from slavery in Egypt and brought them to freedom in the Promised Land. God acted in Christ in delivering us from all that holds us in slavery and offers life to the whole world. God continues to draw the whole of creation together at the feet of Christ risen and ascended.

Or, in the more familiar words of the letter to the Romans: 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor

anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'.

And that's the root of our agenda today. Because, as we travel together on the road, as we travel together in synod, God's story is where we are to be founded and formed:

- in the eternal decision of God to create the world (even while we have to make hard decisions about creating new things in the present),
- in the actions of God when the worst happened in the rejection and death of his son (even while we have to attend to the risks and threats to the church in the present),
- in our faithfulness in a world where everything is God's gift (even while having to be as effective as possible in a world of givens).

We are not called to change the world. We are called to reveal the way in which God has already changed the world. And that is what being prophets is all about.

And that makes all the difference in the world.

That great story of God's action is what we draw on when we tell, in words and sacrament, our own story of faith. It is what we draw on in anamnesis, in remembrance.

So, to move on from what some of you may be thinking is high flown, to the day to day life of the church, and its calling, and to consider the sorrowful mysteries of Christian life in recent months.

This synod meets two days after Armistice days and on the eve of Remembrance Sunday, when remembering becomes a formal national and local activity and in many places led by, held by, followers of Jesus. This week I was reminded of this Remembrancetide's particular context. I met a senior army commander who works in this diocese and who will spend this morning with a group of soldiers who served in Afghanistan and whose comrades died there. In the weeks after the evacuation, they are finding it

difficult to make sense of their time in Afghan. So this senior officer will, as he does many Saturdays, go with them for a run, and then go with them to Greggs (rather than to the pub) and will listen to their stories of the week. He admits he himself cannot yet make sense of the Afghan action and evacuation, but he has faith to hand that to God, and offer his presence in the name of Christ to those who have no story of faith to live by and nowhere to put their grief and anger.

As a church we have learnt recently from the armed forces in their work of what has been called decompression, and programmes which have their roots in the observation that those who came back from the Falkland War by ship fared so much better in subsequent life than those who flew back simply because they had time and space and companionship to tell their stories, and to reflect on them, and to support each other, and to move on. In the months since the height of the Covid epidemic, decompression programmes have begun in social and health care settings where teams who had worked on the front line were becoming increasingly fractious. In recent weeks Archdeacon Neil has been providing decompression days for clergy. What he has learnt is that clergy need more time than he, or they, expected, to reflect on their experience. He has learnt that the trauma of Covid has been deep, and some need to take their time to remember well before being able to move on well.

Alongside those sorrowful mysteries of remembering, of anamnesis in recent months there have also been the joyful mysteries.

Earlier this week Bishop Lee, at the eucharist for the staff team, offered a fascinating and rather different slant on remembering from his background in immunology. It is the remembering which our bodies have experienced in vaccination, as our bodies create an immune response. And the second doses, and the boosters intensify both the quantity and the quality of that response so that we can survive and thrive in the face of virus. And scientists call that response anamnestic, and that memory response is the bringer of life.

Alongside the trauma of Covid times has been the hopefulness of Covid times.

Since we began to reopen our churches, to gather, to sing, to pray, to serve, there has, alongside the weight of grief, been the gift of joy. There has been the fulfilment of plans made during Creating Connections. We will hear more of that later this morning, but here are some examples:

In this place there has been the building and opening of Kingfisher school, and the beginning of the creation of its school community alongside this Deanery school. Together, these two schools and their wider community engagement will be fundamental to offering Wichelstow, the community of houses which has sprung up here during lockdown, a story to live by and an identity to grow into. That story is of God's work in Christ.

Since we have begun to reopen our churches over the summer there has been a deepening sense of God's call in Christ demonstrated in a multitude of baptisms, in the confirmation of young people (yes, young people) and the steady stream and increasing diversity of vocations to lay and ordained ministry.

Since we have begun to reopen our churches there has been the opportunity to see what has been achieved in our church buildings, with some churches seizing the opportunity of lockdown to complete work planned for years and in some cases decades, determined that the thresholds between church and community should be lowered and these churches restored to a central place in their locality. St Mary's Purton, Christ Church Clifton, St Mary's Almondsbury I salute you.

Since we have begun to reopen our churches, we have marked the beginning of one entirely new church, in the inauguration of The Well. This new church has been supported by gifts and finance from Pattern Church, and the prayers and presence of north Swindon parishes as it propels the news of Christ outwards from St Francis school.

And throughout lockdown, parishes and individuals, alongside their service of neighbourhood and community, have continued to give financially so that mission and ministry can continue. That giving has been both faithful and hopeful. And I am deeply grateful.

And it has meant that we have been able to continue the work of developing plans for the diocese. The Archdeacons will be presenting the work of Transforming Church. Together, later this morning, with the application of the values Openness, Generosity, Creativity and Bravery we have observed, and you have helped to refine and cherish. We have taken our time, because some need time. And we are moving forward because many now have energy for the future.

We know that there will be demands and difficulties ahead. The budget tells us that. But our memories of recent months, of continuing to live the fact that the devil is dead and that we are safe in Christ, gives us faith and hope for the years ahead."