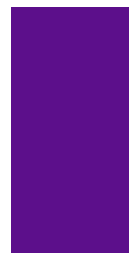

 — Diocese of —
Hereford
 Proclaiming Christ + Growing Disciples



Diocesan Profile





Prayer Comes First

We put our collective faith in God, believing that through Him all things are possible.
We have a Diocesan Prayer, which we read together at all diocesan gatherings.

*God who in Jesus calls us -
open hearts and minds
to your invitation.*

*God of the pilgrim way -
be our companion day by day.*

*God of the still, small voice -
teach us to pray.*

*Grant that in our calling,
our following,
our pilgrimage
we may see your kingdom
of truth and peace -
and delight to bring others
to your love.*

*We make this prayer
through Jesus, the Lord.*

Amen



—Diocese of—
Hereford

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Great contrasts yet great opportunities

A deeply rural diocese **YET** Highest weekly attendance & one of the highest proportions of life events

Smallest diocesan population and fewest number of churchgoers **YET** Amongst the fastest growth in new worship communities

250 churches have fewer than 15 regular attendees **YET** 33% of the diocese live in 10 parishes; 20% live in Hereford city

Oldest age profile & significant exodus of young adults seeking opportunities **YET** Growing reputation for intergenerational mission and engagement within deprived urban areas

Lowest levels of planned giving & least amount of income **YET** Fastest take-up of Parish Giving Scheme

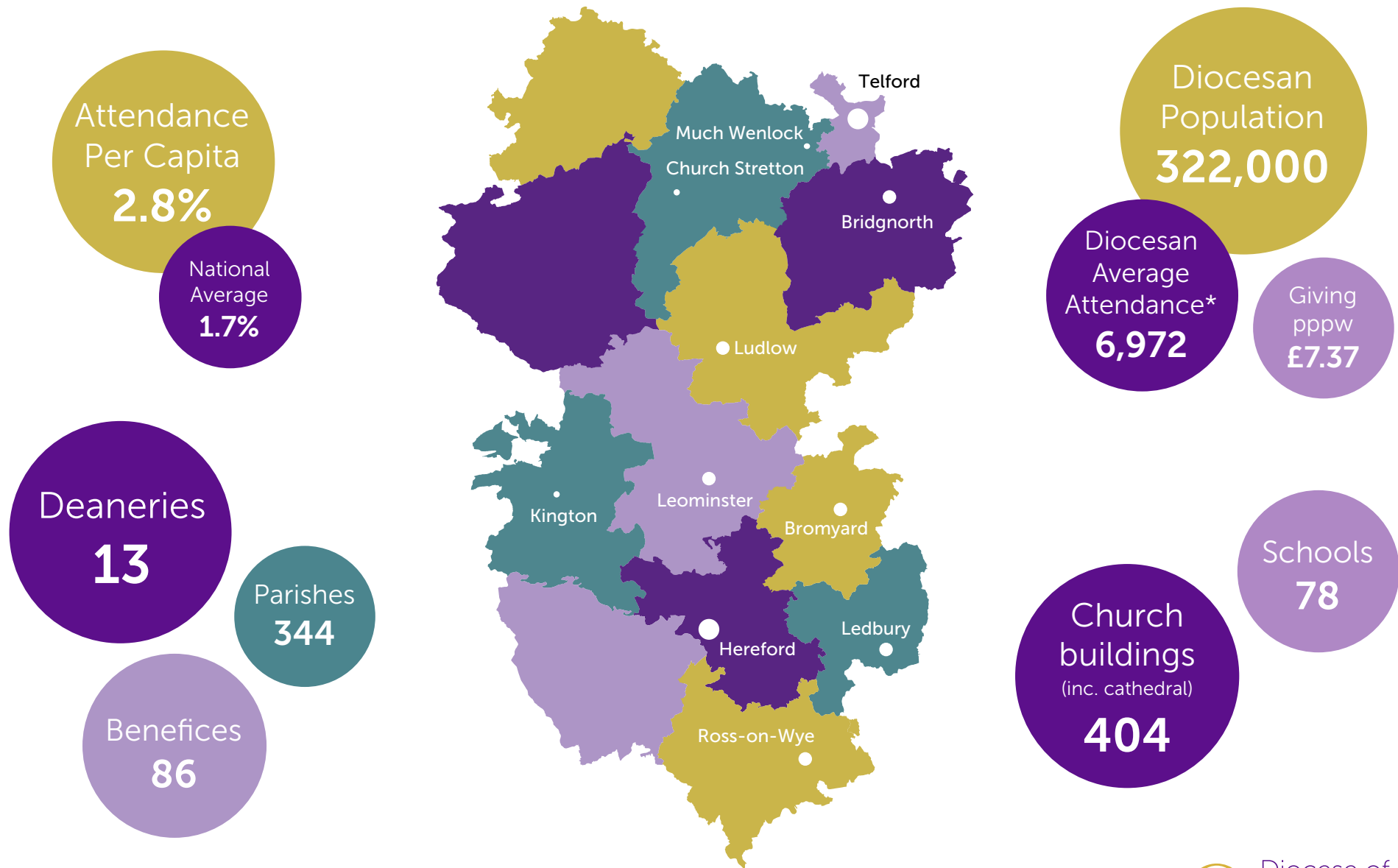
Fewest stipendiary ministers **YET** Highest ratio of clergy per person

Fewer than 1% of people attend urban churches **YET** Over 5% attend in rural areas

By far the highest ratio of church buildings per person **YET** National reputation for making the best use of church buildings

Large number of rural schools **YET** Strong Ofsted & SIAMS performances

A brief look



*Average Sunday Attendance, information taken from 2017 Parish returns

Our Strategic Plan

Our vision as a diocese is: **God's Kingdom growing in lives and communities**

PRIORITIES

Grow Spiritually
and numerically

Contributing to
the common good

Reimagining
ministry

Focus our
resources where
there is greatest
mission need and
opportunity

WHAT WE EXPECT TO SEE



Increasing
number of
worshipping
Christians
under 35



Grow confident
wholelife
disciples



Increased
engagement
through social
action



Grow a variety of
styles of worship
and churches in
each Deanery



Reduce average
age of clergy - at
least 2 under 30
each year



Growth in the
worshipping
community
across the
diocese



A balanced
budget by the
end of 2020



A 20% increase
in Lay Leaders



Parish offer to
increase

WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY

Enabling robust
mission action
planning

Assisting the delivery
of fruitful mission

Equipping lay and
ordained Ministers

Providing effective
financial support/
advice

THE DIOCESAN STAFF WILL SUPPORT THE PARISHES IN

Inspiring Prayer

Inspiring Schools
and young people

Inspiring
whole-life
disciples

Inspiring fresh
approaches

Inspiring ministry
and mission in 21st
Century

Inspiring
Communities



Where we are

Over the past 5 years we have been focusing on:

- Achieving a more intentional and strategic approach to mission planning
- Energising and equipping clergy and laity
- Transforming aspirations
- Sharing the Gospel
- Transforming real possibilities for mission
- Having particular care for young people, children and schools
- Prioritising central resources

We are ambitiously continuing to work together to further this agenda

Place

“The nearest earthly place to paradise” - PG Wodehouse, on Shropshire

You can either regard the quotation by PG Wodehouse as a somewhat smug characterisation of our diocese as a whole or as a more exacting Charge.

You may have seen our diocese featured on the BBC programme *A Vicar's Life* which followed four of our vicars as they go through their lives in our most urban and rural areas.

Our diocese is formed from Herefordshire, South Shropshire, some Welsh parishes along the border, and a portion of Worcestershire. Much of it is intensely rural with many areas of outstanding natural beauty, yet the glorious landscape is often a setting for serious poverty and paucity of opportunity for chances in life.

Most of our diocese is not far removed from the urban areas where many people find employment, but it has very distinctive characteristics of its own. This is traditional border country; cultures overlap and interact with each other within its boundaries. To the west our diocese shades into Wales; small differences can accumulate into something important. Sometimes boundaries seem distinct; to the east of Shropshire the boundary is marked both by the longest steam preservation railway and the largest contiguous oak forest in England.

The part of Telford that lies within our diocese is both the birthplace of the industrial revolution - with its associated monuments and museums – and also a place where there is severe deprivation and social concern.

Hereford

Hereford itself is a city physically dominated by our cathedral. The Bishop's Palace, magnificent with its beautiful gardens running down to the River Wye, is the oldest continually inhabited domestic building in England.

Nearly 60,000 people live in Hereford and it serves mainly as the main trading centre for its hinterland. The city has undergone considerable changes in its physical infrastructure and appearance in recent years and like the rest of our diocese is a friendly and welcoming place.

Hereford Cathedral plays a vital part in the life of our diocese. As the seat of the bishop, it seeks to provide prayerful support and companionship.

It is the scene of many of the great occasions in the life of our diocese and, in its calling to be inclusive, seeks to welcome all traditions and understandings of our Christian faith.

The Cathedral plays a complementary role in discipleship education and is able to promote a range of courses that speak to a wide audience. With its long and historic musical tradition and its liturgical worship, it is able to provide a particular focus for our diocese and enjoys sharing its traditions with others. Links with parishes are of great importance, and over the years there have been different programmes of engagement, all focusing on the cathedral's ministry of welcome and hospitality.





Across the Diocese



Our diocese is a beautiful part of the country, where produce is grown and livestock reared. We are also home to some internationally renowned brands (Tyrrells, Bulmers, Heineken, Cargill and Westons Cider) and many small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, tourism is an essential part of our local economies.

However, holidaymakers do not dominate, as accommodation and attractions are spread across a wide geographical area. Our diocese often has a lasting impact, and many past visitors return to settle here during retirement.

A number of serving and retired military personnel live in the diocese, and we are strong supporters of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Our diocese is a beautiful part of the country, where produce is grown and livestock reared.



Diocesan pragmatism

Just as our position on the Welsh Marches far from central authority has led to a certain independence of mind and parochial outlook, so its relative remoteness has also led to a deep ecclesiastical pragmatism, a willingness to reach out across boundaries and a mutual understanding of the challenges of being church and people that transcends many of the theological positions that are seen elsewhere in the Church of England.

This means that in most things the church in our diocese is rather good at 'getting on with it'. On the other hand, it can mean that at times individuals find themselves compromising deeply-held views in order not to offend their neighbours on whom they may well depend.

In 2017, the Diocesan Synod passed a motion in support of liturgies for same-sex couples by a two-thirds majority. A significant number remain concerned about any change to the present Church of England position, and this can be a source of tension.

However, with our Diocesan pragmatism, we are proud that we are usually able to disagree well and do not allow this to intrude on our shared mission.



Church tradition and theology

There are no parishes receiving alternative episcopal oversight in our diocese. We have consistently had one of the highest percentages of women as incumbents since the ordination of women as priests in 1994 (currently 33%), and our Diocesan Synod overwhelmingly carried the motion enabling the consecration of women to the episcopate.



Ecumenical relationships are developing across our diocese, with some partnerships such as the ecumenical agricultural chaplaincy. However, there is more to do, especially with the urban non-denominational congregations, along with the opportunity to develop these links further.

Ecumenical relationships are developing across our diocese



Re-imagining Ministry

The structure of ministry in our diocese reflects many years of adaptation upon the traditional parish structure, with the underlying medieval bones still remaining surprisingly intact in many respects.

Overall clergy numbers began to reduce earlier than in some rural dioceses, leading to a well-established culture of multi-parish benefices within which creative partnership between clergy and laity has been recognised as the key to successful ministry. After some 15-20 years of relative stability, this structure feels to be under increasing strain; new initiatives in some areas offer exciting opportunities and we look to be able to engage energetically with these challenges.

The rural multi-parish benefice is the norm outside Hereford city; some towns are the foci of small teams but others have been dissolved in the past decade. There is a reliance on PTO clergy and Readers (a majority of active Readers are over 70) to maintain Sunday services, and in a number of places worship is often led by laity.

Local Ministry, originating over 25 years ago, has been pursued as an intentional diocesan strategy, but with only ever partial coverage. At best it has resulted in true partnership in mission between clergy and laity, and a seedbed of vocations.

Over the last few years we have seen an increasing range of creative and intentional 'divsruptors' to the existing pattern: the SDF-supported Intergenerational Missioners; a small number of lay and ordained Pioneers; an increasing proportion of younger clergy and ordinands; imaginative working across some of the most rural deaneries.

Many stipendiary clergy, including curates and almost all SSMs and Readers, have been trained through Cuddesdon: Gloucester & Hereford (formerly WEMTC) based in Ludlow, with which we have a close and significant partnership.

Despite the mantra 'we cannot go on like this,' the majority of parish churches still remain, and are in better repair than ever; a recent survey of clergy wellbeing indicated relatively high levels of satisfaction. Nonetheless, we are seriously concerned about the sustainability of the present structure and are seeking ways to address this.

We are looking to reimagine ministry for the next generation. We wish to build on our present strengths while also discovering what it means to release the energy of the whole people of God. In particular we wish to revitalise and re-envision our ideas of lay ministry and to open up new possibilities for locally-deployed and trained ministry which mobilises our local congregations to share the good news with the communities they love and serve and to promote the common good.



Deployment of clergy and resources

Whilst we have the highest proportion of people attending church they are spread thinly and we have numerous multi-parish benefices of between 6 and 12 churches apiece.

We are not always deploying clergy to minister effectively to people in our urban environments. This is demonstrated by a large number of clergy serving in benefices with small populations whilst in urban areas we have just one priest serving much larger populations.

Finances

While our diocese has considerable financial resources at its disposal to pursue our ministry, we face challenges to maintain and develop this position in the longer term. We currently run a deficit of c £0.3m p.a. (on total income of around £6m), which we have committed to eliminate by 2020.

The ideal solution will be to increase giving from all sources, including, but not only, through the traditional parish offer model. Until and unless this is achieved, some tough decisions on resourcing will be needed in the short to medium term.

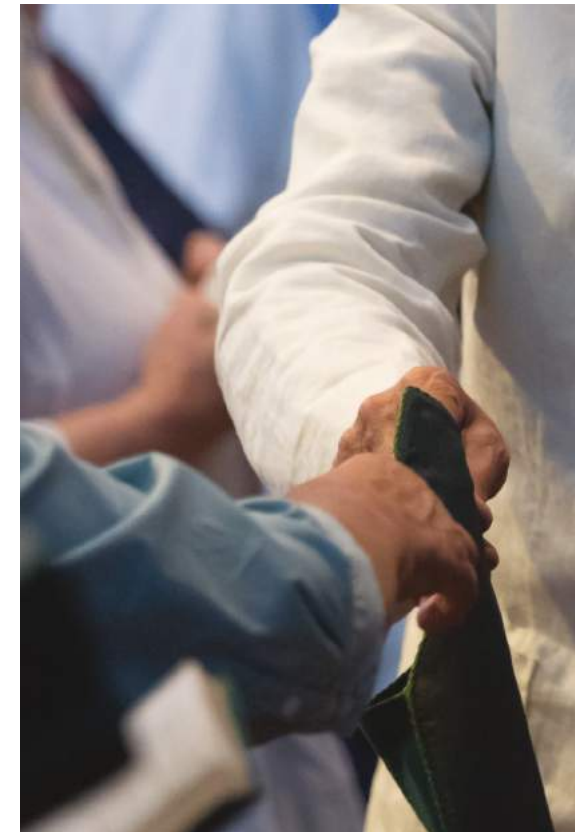
Receipts from Parish Offers (previously parish share) have flat-lined for the last 7 or 8 years at £3.9m p.a., during which time inflation has eroded their value significantly. That said, the balance sheet is strong, with net assets of around £78m. which include **Clergy Housing (£53m), Glebe Land (£6m), Commercial Property (£2m), and a portfolio of listed investments (£17m).**

A significant programme of work is underway to maximise the yield from these assets largely through property development.

Financial information is now thorough and timely, and financial control is judged to be good.

We have recently adopted Total Return Accounting which is now applied to our Endowment Funds, which has the practical benefit of allowing highly-controlled access to a fighting fund for proven mission projects.

Financial information is now thorough and timely, and financial control is judged to be good





Buildings

We are judged a national leader in the care and creative use of our buildings. Our ancient churches are much loved and well-tended by their communities; they often provide the only cohesive spiritual and social focus for our villages. Place is a significant feature of rural life, with a strong sense of ownership of the church building even if people rarely attend.

For many people, belief in God is part of the accepted order of things even if they are not regular worshippers; for others, faith can be expressed either as a personal relationship with Christ, an appreciation of the Creator, and/or as a life lived in co-operation with the Holy Spirit. The diocese is working on a strategy that complements our mission priorities whilst strengthening the sustainability of our churches.

It is easy to imagine that our buildings are not an issue and that we have everything under control. However, the truth is that many of our rural communities struggle to maintain their buildings and the situation in some places is extremely fragile.

In this context, unexpected and costly repairs can have a disproportionate impact on the ability of parishes to fund the mission and ministry of the local church and diocese, and can raise questions about the future viability of church life. Consequently, we have to balance the significant opportunities for mission and ministry that our buildings provide with the need to maintain so many significant listed places of worship.



Many of our rural communities struggle to maintain their buildings and the situation in some places is extremely fragile.





Education



Our diocese is a wonderful place to bring up a family, and our schools, from the largest in Hereford, to the smallest in the Shropshire hills, are filled with dedicated teachers and education professionals who go the extra mile for the good of their communities, their children and young people. Most Ofsted and SIAMS inspections judge our schools to be good or better.

We have 193 schools in the Diocese, teaching approximately 46,300 children. Of these, 78 are Church of England schools, with 12,543 children in total, although 40% of these have fewer than 100 pupils; there are more pupils in our C of E schools than regular attendees at Sunday services. Our own Educational Trust, with 3,200 pupils across 16 academies, is currently undergoing redevelopment. We are also in early discussions with the new university (NMITE), which welcomes its first students in September 2019.

Our schools can be wellsprings of spirituality. We have many of them, and while often very small and in deeply rural settings they complement our network of churches.

Christian life within our schools is providing church growth and prompting experimentation in styles of worship and fellowship; these too can engage the whole community.

Safeguarding

We want all employees to be champions for good safeguarding practice and to build on the work we have been doing on safeguarding to ensure our churches are safe spaces for those who use them. We recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone in our diocese.

Eco Issues

At the March 2019 Synod, the motion to become an Eco Diocese was enthusiastically and unanimously embraced, yet we recognise that being effective stewards for God's creation will have an impact upon our rural environment and, in particular, the farming and associated industries that are key elements of our communities.

This is especially true when future reshaping of agricultural subsidies may have a knock-on impact on the nature of farming and land use.

Travelling around our diocese is already challenging and expensive, public transport outside the urban areas is almost non-existent, fuel is expensive in rural areas, and we do not currently have the infrastructure to support the wide use of electric cars.

That said, environmental issues are at the forefront of the minds of many of our younger generations and we have an opportunity to demonstrate that Christian communities within our diocese are leading change rather than reacting to it.

Taking forward the synod motion to put us on a sustainable path into the future will be challenging, and we seek to embrace action as enthusiastically as we did the motion.





Festival and Culture

“In the 14th century, babies in Herefordshire were baptised in cider.”

There is a wide variety of specialist events from the prestigious Three Choirs and Haydn festivals, to the Ludlow Food Festival, to various rock and pop gatherings, and to the many cider, beer and microbrewery festivals across our diocese.

From the past to the present, language and landscape have intertwined. George Herbert’s ‘A Priest to the Temple’ has both inspired and intimidated rural clergy since it first suggested that “the things of ordinary use” could be made “to serve for lights even of Heavenly Truths”.

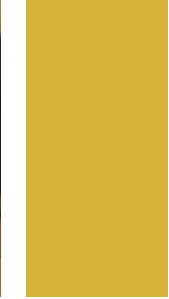
Housman hymned the landscape, Elgar dreamt the landscape into music, and its beauty was the England (and Wales) from which Wilfred Owen went to war. The modern Olympics began, as all know, in Much Wenlock.

There are castles everywhere - Cleobury Mortimer, with a population now of 3,000 - had two. Over the centuries, this has been a disputed land in complex ways, and perhaps the memory of that still shapes mentalities in places.





*From the past to the present, language
and landscape have intertwined.*



Our Future

The Diocese has a desire to move beyond the concept of 'successful' churches as ones which are well-attended on Sunday mornings. Rather, we have an ambition to build on good relationships between church and community to evangelise all the people amongst whom we live.

At present we find ourselves in a place of tension and exploration. In a number of our rural benefices, able incumbents maintain a traditional pattern of church life. We recognise that this is not enough, and clergy and lay leaders are increasingly creating strategic hubs for ministry.

Rural and market town life is itself a negotiation of voluntary networks of various kinds, and it is our task to support all these social structures. We can see that we are starting to do this, but we need courageous leadership to help us to be alert and agile in grasping those opportunities which are open to us. As a rural diocese of great contrast and opportunities

we are well able to win people and places to Christ if given strong leadership.

It is perhaps a paradox that this seemingly conservative Diocese may in fact become a crucible for forging new patterns of ministry for the national church. We are a small organisation and can evolve quickly. Also, we are unlike any other diocese in England, but most dioceses have places within them that resemble us. Therefore, we can provide a culture of excellence that is a resource upon which the whole Church of England can draw.



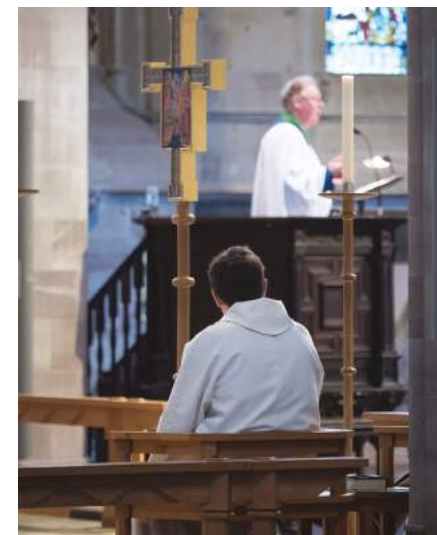


*Above all we seek those
called by God to serve the
people of our diocese*



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Hereford

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The Diocesan Office • The Palace • Hereford • HR4 9BL
t: 01432 373300 e: info@hereford.anglican.org • www.hereford.anglican.org



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