

## Year of Engagement 2025 Diary Dates

### Launch of Year of Engagement Hereford Cathedral

Saturday, 4th January, 2025, 3.30pm

### Bishop's Study Days

Tuesday, 24th June 2025, 10am-3pm

Wednesday, 22nd October 2025, 10am-3pm

### Bishop's Teaching Days

Saturday, 31st May 2025, 9.30am-1pm

Saturday, 19th July 2025, 9.30am-1pm

Saturday, 13th September 2025, 9.30am-1pm

Saturday, 8th November 2025, 9.30am-1pm

**Venues to be advised unless stated. For more information about these and other diocesan events please visit our diocese Eventbrite page online at <https://bit.ly/4ebcnCL>**

GROWING TOGETHER

Year of Faith 2024



### Final Bishop's Study Day

At the final workshop for the Year of Faith, at St Peter's, Hereford, Bishop Richard was joined by The Rev'd Preb Dr Isabelle Hamley, Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge to discuss how they came to faith and how they keep it

alive. A celebratory service will be held to mark the ending of the Year of Faith and the start of 2025's Year of Engagement, at Hereford Cathedral on 4th January, 2025, at 3.30pm.

As we approach the conclusion of this special year, you may want to know where to find resources to support your growing faith moving forward, as an individual or a small group. We have added a list of some of our favourite Discipleship courses to our website: <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/our-faith/year-of-faith-2024/>.



## What does Christmas mean to us today?

by The Very Rev'd Sarah Brown, Dean of Hereford

Dear Friends,

I'm not going to wish you a merry Christmas yet even though this is probably my best opportunity to infest the whole diocese with my festive cheer. As I write, the thoughtful season of advent has not even begun so I don't want to sing gloria at you, or bellow ho-ho-ho. Expressions of seasonal enthusiasm have changed, and I wonder how many people today really understand the original language of Christmas anymore. "To us is born a saviour." What does that mean and why should it matter?

Advent is about looking at ourselves and at the world and realising just how much we need that saviour. Christians understand that Christmas would be pointless if we didn't - just a marketing ploy cooked up by sellers of toys and frozen party nibbles to get us all to spend as much money as possible. But what if you have never been told? If a fire engine screeched to a halt outside your house with sirens blaring and blue lights flashing, you might wonder what it was doing there if your house was not

on fire. You might be mildly interested but you would hardly celebrate your salvation! In the same way this baby whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day and who we hail as Saviour is presumably similarly underwhelming if you cannot see anything that we need saving from!

Sometimes it feels easier to believe in evil than in God. But if you do believe that evil exists- if you see it in all its brutality in our daily news, if it touches you in grief, loneliness, hatred, jealousy- then you perhaps may dimly begin to understand why we need our Saviour. If you look at the impact of individual and corporate greed or the priorities and conduct of those who run our society you may begin to understand why we need our Saviour. If you look at crime, war, corruption and oppression, then you may perceive our deep need of salvation

Perhaps we all vaguely sense the need for a Saviour because we can all see

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## A message from Bishop Richard

A statement from The Rt Revd Richard Jackson, Bishop of Hereford following the publication of the Makin report and the resignation of the Most Revd Justin Welby as Archbishop of Canterbury

"In response to the release of the Makin Report, I along with many church leaders' and others read the report in horror. I am ashamed and deeply saddened that the Church of England failed the victims, despite the bravery of those who tried to speak out about their abhorrent experiences at the hands of the late John Smyth.

The abuse that took place is quite simply inexcusable. It is a matter of deepest regret that Smyth might have been brought to justice had appropriate, timely action been taken. I continue to hold in prayer all who have experienced abuse, sexual assault or violence of any kind. The report rightly asks us some challenging questions. I hope that we will embrace the report's recommendations in full and learn the lessons. Safeguarding must be everyone's responsibility in the Church.

That is why I continue to pledge that the Diocese of Hereford will always take safeguarding extremely seriously, we will listen to you, believe you, and ensure that you are supported, if you raise a concern with us. My focus as the diocesan bishop remains making our churches safe and welcoming spaces for all.

The resignation of Archbishop Justin was a matter of conscience. This is the case for anyone in public life or in a leadership role. I hope that his stepping aside will allow us to refocus our attention on the support of survivors and victims of abuse and our continuing determination to foster a safe church for everyone.

I continue to pray for all affected by this report and for the wider church."

## Diocese News

### St Peter's Church and the Hub awarded King's highest honour



As part of the King's Birthday honours, it was announced last month that the volunteers of St Peter's Church and the Hub in Peterchurch have received a King's Award for Voluntary Service for their support of its local community. Over fifty volunteers of all ages, ranging from a teen up to some 80 year olds, support the church and Hub in a variety of ways, helping to bring people in this rural corner of the county together and provide support to those in need. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE.

The Revd Simon Lockett, Vicar of St Peter's Church Peterchurch and Director of The Hub, explains: "I know that all our volunteers will be thrilled but equally slightly baffled that what they do is seen as anything exceptional. They are a wonderful group of people and all they do day in and day out are wonderful examples of quiet Christian service."

Edward Harley, Lord-Lieutenant for Herefordshire, said: "I am delighted that St Peter's, and the Community Hub has been awarded this honour. I send my

warmest congratulations."

Programmes run by the church range from cafes to hosting a branch of the County Library to wellbeing programmes and providing healthy, affordable meals, sharing pre-loved clothes during the heating crisis and offering friendship and fellowship.

A Hub volunteer, Mary adds: "It brings great joy to all of us who volunteer that we can help each other and those in our community. One day you may be the volunteer, another you are the person who is being supported."

The Rt Revd Richard Jackson, Bishop of Hereford, adds: "I am delighted with the news, and it highlights how our rural churches can find new ways of serving their communities. We must also congratulate the Revd Simon Lockett and Sarah Halliday, the project coordinator, for their vision, drive and commitment to the project and of their Christian service to their community. This project is utterly brilliant."

St Peter's and The Hub's wesite: [www.hubcommunity.org](http://www.hubcommunity.org)

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some of what is wrong. It is only a step from that yearning for things to be better to realising that science and virtue-signalling won't deliver and that our only hope of real change is in God. Whether we recognize Him in the Christmas story repeated every year by those persistent folk in the churches and our tiny children with their tea towels on their heads is

another question altogether.

Perhaps this year it might be time to look a bit deeper and see what all the fuss is about. Coming soon to a church near you.

**Dean Sarah**