

Year of Engagement Dates for Your Diary

Bishop's Teaching Events

Saturday, 31st May, 2025

9.30am-1pm

St. George's Church, Pontesbury

Saturday, 19th July, 2025

9.30am-1pm

St. Michael's Church, Madeley

Saturday, 13th September, 2025

9.30am-1pm

St. Michael & All Angels, Ledbury

Saturday, 8th November, 2025

9.30am-1pm

St. Mary's Church, Ross-on-Wye

Bishop's Study Days

Tuesday, 24th June, 2025

10am-3pm

Craven Arms Community Centre,
Shropshire

Wednesday, 22nd October, 2025

10am-3pm

St. Peter's Church, Hereford

To discuss holding a **Spiritual Question Time** for the Year of engagement, please contact Rev'd Stephen Hollinghurst by email at Stephen.Hollinghurst@hereford.anglican.org

Everyone is welcome to these events. For more information about or to register for these and all our events please visit our diocese Eventbrite page online at <https://bit.ly/HfdDioYOE> or scan the QR Code



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If you have never taken a closer look at a lichen then why not take a hand-lens or magnifying glass and give it a go. Lichen colonies have been described as minute, self-maintaining gardens, providing a natural cladding for the stone. They are beautiful and endlessly fascinating and if you like a challenge, why not look up the British Lichen Society website and find out more about how to identify them.

All the best,
[Harriet Carty](#)
Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk - individuals and groups in the diocese receive 20% members discount on all CfGA materials. Use the discount code **diomem22**



Welcome to the February Issue of Parish News by The Rt Rev'd Dr. David Thomson, Acting Bishop of Hereford

Dear friends,

The New Year is underway, and I am standing in for Bishop Richard while he is on sabbatical. He has given us themes for recent years: Prayer, Faith, and now it's Engagement – with Celebration to come! There's a lovely sense of flow between them, I think. Let me say what I mean...

Our church is rooted in Christ, and our relationship with him in prayer is where it all begins. Without the roots, nothing else will grow. St John loves to use the word "Abiding" for this relationship – one of peace and permanence, of being where we belong. "Abide in me as I abide in you." (John 15.4) When we find our place, we find our peace and become people of peace. We are seeing a global increase in anxiety, and "We are Farming Minds" has shown how that is true locally, too. If we can be people of peace and offer places of peace, we can make a difference in real, local lives.

Out of the roots of prayer come shoots

of faith: "I am the vine; you are the branches." (John 15.5) As we abide in Christ, so we come to trust him more as the well-spring of our life. We seek security in all sorts of things, some good, some less so; but also realise that what they offer is limited and sometimes deceptive. I sensed this Christmas afresh how fundamental the Christmas presence of Christ was compared with any of the presents life can bring, right here, in a broken world of lost homes and lives. I have friends on my heart for whom Christmas brought bad news not good, and my longing for them is that they will know Christ's presence in their predicaments.

Then, the shoots of faith lead to the fruits of engagement, as lives are touched and changed for the better. "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit." (John 15.5)

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CREATING COMMUNITY Year of Engagement 2025



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It may well be that the need to find peace and solace in a disastrous world first draws us to the church. But as Christ grows in us and we in him, we realise that the church is not an escape craft from the world but a landing craft into it. God's great desire is that the whole world should be saved. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in

him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3,16) And that is worth a Year of Engagement in God's mission with the world around us now, and a Year of Celebration when it comes!

+David Thomson
Acting Bishop of Hereford

[Bishop Richard returns from his on sabbatical in April 2025]

Diocese News

New Appointments, Leavers and Retirements February 2025

Hereford Diocese announces the following recent and upcoming appointments and moves:

Clergy Appointments

- ◆ **The Rev'd Jeanetta Stokes**, Vicar of Worfield and Rural Dean of Bridgnorth – Following the merger of Bridgnorth and Telford Severn Gorge Deaneries to become Severn Borders Deanery, becomes **Rural Dean of Severn Borders Deanery** (December 2024)
- ◆ **The Rev'd Preb Dawn Taffinder**, Vicar of Sutton Hill and Woodside - Following the merger of Bridgnorth and Telford Severn Gorge Deaneries to become Severn Borders Deanery, becomes **Assistant Rural Dean of Severn Borders Deanery** (December 2024)
- ◆ **The Rev'd Canon Laura Jane Hewitt** becomes **Rector StowCaple Benefice & Rural Church Missioner** (Spring 2025)

Diocesan Staff Farewells

- ◆ **The Rev'd Preb Mark Melliush**, Mission Enabler is leaving to join New Wine as their National Strategic Director
- ◆ **Mariia Shumylo**, Project Assistant, is leaving the Support for Ukraine team
- ◆ **Jo Gibbon** is retiring as Administrator of the Support for Ukraine team

Diocesan Staff New Starters

- ◆ **Ed Ceney** joins us as Youth Pioneer, Leominster Youth Hub Pilot, funded nationally to explore engagement with youth in rural communities
- ◆ **Ian Hill** joins us as the Net Zero project manager schools, funded from the national church as part of a joint project Worcester and Gloucester Diocese
- ◆ **Tom Milton** joins us as Ukraine project administrator

Caring for God's Acre

By Harriet Carty



other life cannot. Provided there is enough light and moisture lichens are able to grow on bare stone, not needing cracks or soil to root into. Some lichens grow very slowly, perhaps half a millimetre per year whilst others grow more quickly. Many lichens are long-lived so the lichen you see in a churchyard may be almost as old as the wall or gravestone it is growing on. Astonishingly there are over 2,000 different lichen species and it is not unusual for a single churchyard to contain more than 100 different types.

Lovely Lichen

Churchyards are the ideal place for a lichen enthusiast to while away many happy hours. Lichens can be found on walls, monuments, trees and, if you have ancient grassland there may be lichens within the sward as well.

To the uninitiated lichens can look broadly similar with subtle mosaics of colour, often greys and yellows forming expanding circles as they increase in size as the years go by. There is more to lichens than meets the eye however. Firstly they are two or more organisms living together as one, usually a fungus and an algae. Fungus forms the visible part of the lichen and within, protected by threads of the fungus, are cells of algae and/or cyanobacteria which photosynthesise. So the fungus provides a home and the algae provides food. Lichens reproduce through microscopic fungal spores which, if they find a suitable partner, can colonise surfaces which are not too shaded or too smooth. These spores are released from structures which look rather like tiny jam tarts, flasks or pimples!

Lichens are fantastic at surviving where

Churchyards are particularly rich in lichens as they contain so many old stones with a variety of types; limestone, sandstone, granite to name a few. Some stones are smoother, others rough and they may have differing amounts of shade, wind and moisture depending on where they are within the churchyard, which side of the monument the lichen is on, whether they are vertical, leaning or flat. The carving of the inscription itself provides microclimates with different amounts of light and moisture within the lettering. All of these changes in conditions will suit different lichen species. They are also found on trees, wooden fences and gates, grassy areas, pathways and even dustbin lids!

Most lichens offer protection to the surface they grow on and it may be easier to read lettering which is lichen-covered rather than bare, eroding stone. They do not need much care but do avoid the use of any chemicals near to lichens and definitely don't try and remove them. Lichens can die if shaded out so try and keep ivy or other climbers from encroaching over them too.

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