

Year of Celebration

Spiritual Question Times

Evening conversations with Bishop Richard plus local panelist/s (venues tbc)

Tuesday, 13th January, 2026 — Marton Village Hall

Monday, 16th February, 2026 — Lugwardine, venue TBC

Monday, 20th April, 2026 — Abbeydore Deanery, venue TBC

Tuesday, 12th May, 2026 — Hereford Cathedral with Dean Sarah

Wednesday, 15th July, 2026 — The Garway Moon Inn, Garway with Dean Sarah

Tuesday, 22nd September, 2026 — Bridgnorth with Dean Sarah, venue TBC

Tuesday, 10th November, 2026 — with Chancellor James Pacey, venue TBC

Celebration of Lay Ministry

Worship and Admission of New Readers with Bishop Richard

Saturday, 10th October, 2026 10:30 am at Ludlow St Laurence

Celebration of Music

Choirs from the diocese sing music through the ages by local composers

Sunday, 19th April, 2026 6pm at Leominster Priory

Celebration of Faith

A Service of Confirmation followed by a celebration tea with Bishop Richard

Saturday 20 June 2026 2:00 pm at Hereford Cathedral

Saturday 10 Oct 2026 2:30 pm at Ludlow, St Laurence

Celebration Days | Pilgrimage

Worship and communion led by Bishop Richard

Saturday, 16th May, 2026

Leominster, honouring St Eadfrith

Saturday, 19th September, 2026

Much Wenlock, honouring St Milburga

Saturday, 17th October, 2026

Golden Valley / Madley, honouring St Dyfrig

For more information and to register to attend, please visit our Eventbrite page at www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/united-kingdom--county-of-herefordshire/hereford-diocese/



Letting the Light In

by The Reverend Jane Plackett-Ferguson, Bishop's Chaplain

Spring does not arrive cleanly or all at once. It comes slowly and unevenly. The sounds of returning birds herald warmer weather, green shoots appear before the cold has fully released its hold. Even as the days lengthen, winter often still lingers. Spring understands something that faith has always known: that renewal is rarely quick, and almost never comfortable.

For me, spring is forever bound to the weeks I spent sitting beside my mother as she was dying. It was a season of watching and waiting. In her final days, nights seemed to stretch without end. At around four in the morning, birds would begin to sing outside her hospital window. Their sound floated into the room as we kept watch, fragile and persistent. Slowly the sky would lighten. Family would arrive. Nurses would come in with their laughter, their friendship, their quiet competence. Little by little, the weight of the night would begin to lift, and the light broke in.

The morning my mother died, a dove cooed outside the window. It was an ordinary sound, easily overlooked, but it

felt like a sign: God, by his Holy Spirit, had seen us, and God was present within it all. The following day, the weather broke into full spring sunshine. Within days, the trees burst into leaf, bright and astonishingly green. Amidst grief and deep tiredness, life was continuing to unfold, and beauty was to be found everywhere, and yet still, for many months, it was hard to worship, hard to pray and hard to hear God's voice.

The Biblical story never pretends that light appears without darkness first. As we read the Christmas story in the depths of the British winter, Luke is careful not to place God's arrival in ideal conditions, but in a world shaped by political pressure, anxiety, grief, and ordinary hardship. God's work of revealing himself does not begin with triumph or glory, but with quiet presence in tumultuous circumstances.

Many of us recognise that pattern in our own lives. We wait for things to feel resolved before we allow ourselves to hope. We tell ourselves that joy can come

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later, once the worry has passed or the loss has softened. That we'll return to church when the kids are older, or pray again when God isn't so mad about our bad choices. But Luke offers a different picture. Light appears while things are imperfect and unfinished, and bringing all that mess into the light is what makes it easier to bear.

Spring often teaches the same lesson. It does not begin when the ground is warm, but when it is just beginning to thaw. The first signs of life are fragile and (like the camelia in my garden) sometimes thwarted on a first attempt at breakthrough. We might spot a single bud on a bare branch or daffodils appearing in Tesco. These are not signs that winter is finished, but reminders that its days are numbered. Spring has broken into the harshness of winter despite the most unfavourable conditions.

This is not a dramatic kind of hope. It does not erase grief or hurry us toward resolution. Instead, it sits alongside what is unfinished. Luke shows us a God who

enters the ordinary: long journeys, crowded spaces, tired bodies, uncertain futures. Light does not come to deny reality, but to dwell within it.

As spring reaches its fullness, it reminds us that light works patiently. Each day grows brighter and longer almost without us noticing. Growth happens slowly and quietly. Faith, too, is less about sudden certainty and more about learning to trust the small signs of presence along the way.

Luke's Gospel invites us to pay attention to where light has already begun to show itself, and to embrace it wholeheartedly, no matter how unfavourable the conditions of life. Because, like the signs of spring in the dark of winter, God is here in the world and breaking into even the bleakest of circumstances. This hope is not sentimental optimism, but learning to recognise the presence of God with us, and gently making space again for him to meet us.

**The Rev'd Jane Plackett-Ferguson
Chaplain to the Bishop of Hereford**

Diocese bids farewell to Archdeacon of Ludlow



A Service of Celebration for the ministry of The Venerable Dr Fiona Gibson, Archdeacon of Ludlow, was held at St Lawrence's, Ludlow on 11th January, attended by clergy, civic leaders and well-wishers from across the diocese. Fiona will be installed as Bishop of Taunton on 8th February. We send our prayers and our very best wishes with her.

Caring for God's Acre by Harriet Carty



Spring Messenger

As winter starts to draw to a close and the days are getting noticeably longer we all start to search for signs of spring. One of the first spring flowers is the Lesser Celandine. This little plant, often viewed as a garden weed, lights up our churchyards with bright, shiny, yellow stars set off beautifully by the surrounding dark green heart-shaped leaves. An old name for Lesser Celandine was 'Spring Messenger' and, like the Snowdrop, it can lift the spirits with the message that spring is coming.

Another old name is Pilewort, suggesting that this plant was used to treat haemorrhoids. Richard Maybey in his *Flora Britannica* considers this prescription to have been due to the Doctrine of Signatures, a belief that similar shaped plants could cure specific ills. In the case of Lesser Celandine it is the knobbly tubers that were thought to resemble piles!

Lesser Celandine is a common plant which can spread fast and likes shady damp areas, but it is not fussy and can be found in grassland, at the base of walls or monuments, on banks, verges and along path edges and is always to be found within churchyards, chapel yards and cemeteries. The cheerful yellow flowers can carpet the ground offering an important early nectar supply to emerging

insects such as queen bumblebees, beetles and other pollinators.

Although small, the Lesser Celandine has attracted the attention of the famous. Wordsworth wrote three poems about it and the naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne in Hampshire recorded when he saw his first Lesser Celandine each year, the average date being the 21st February. This date has been known as Celandine Day since 1795. Now, due to climate change, the flowers can be seen earlier in the year with some coming into bloom in late January.

Enjoy the Lesser Celandine in February, its flowers and leaves both die back in late spring so please make a record of it using iNaturalist, as anyone looking at plants later in the year may not find any remaining traces of it so it can easily go unrecorded. Although a common plant it is an important one and one on which our early pollinators rely.

**All the best, Harriet Carty
Diocesan Churchyard Environmental
Advisor**

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Individuals and groups in the diocese receive 20% members discount on all CfGA materials. Use the discount code diomem22