

## Events and Training

### Year of Faith Bishop's Teaching Events

**Saturday 13th July**

St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

**Saturday 5th October**

Bridgnorth Deanery (venue tbc)

### Year of Faith Bishop's Study Day 2

**Thursday 24th October**

St Peter's, Hereford

For more information about all of the above, see our Year of Faith page on our website:

<https://www.hereford.anglican.org/our-faith/year-of-faith-2024/>

### Hereford Diocese Environment Conferences

**22nd June & 28th September**

Join us for our first Diocesan Environment Conference at Hereford Cathedral. Book free on Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/873207616487?aff=oddtcreator>

### Rural Mission & Ministry Course

**2nd-3rd October**

King's Park, Northants

An ecumenical course organised by the Methodist Church exploring what community, mission, evangelism & leadership can look like in rural contexts. Suitable for CMD.

Further information: [arthurrankcencentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse/](http://arthurrankcencentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse/)

## Churches Count on Nature Week, 8th-16th June



During 'Love Your Burial Ground Week', churches of all denominations are being invited to a week-long 'nature count' to monitor and celebrate the biodiversity in churchyards. This Churches Count on Nature initiative will see people visiting churchyards to record what they see – from the ancient yews to tiny ladybirds. The data will then be collated on the National Biodiversity Network. There will be a series of webinars, including about solitary bees, which also feature in our June God's Acre article on our website (link below). Apparently, beehives, while good for pollinators, may not be so good for some rarer solitary bee species that find particularly good homesites in our churchyards! All the information is available here:

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/churches-count-on-nature-faqs/>



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## The sin of our time?

by The Ven. Fiona Gibson, Archdeacon of Ludlow

Dear friends

As I write this I'm about to embark on a four-week period of interim study leave to complete (God willing) my PhD thesis. By the time you read this, we'll know whether or not I have succeeded!

The work focuses on one of the seven deadly sins, not necessarily the most popular of topics when the idea that human beings might be sinful creatures in need of a Saviour has rather fallen out of favour in our society. Even more obscurely, the sin I'm writing about is the one most people have never heard of: *acedia*. It's most often translated 'sloth' which is usually associated with laziness, and laziness isn't normally seen as much of a sin. An annoying characteristic, maybe, but not a sin.

But as I've studied this topic over many years (too many years; I've often felt like my own case study in *acedia*) I've come to realise it's far more complex than that, and may even be the prevailing sin of our time, all the more insidious because we've largely forgotten it even exists.

*Acedia*, according to the early theologians I've been reading and engaging with, is a toxic combination that occurs when

desire and anger become disordered. It makes us either withdraw into inactivity or hide in restless over-activity, in an effort to avoid engaging with God, or with fellow human beings, or with the tasks God has given us to do. That's why I'm suggesting this is the hidden but very real sin of our time.

One theologian calls it the container of all other vices because it triggers the other deadly sins. So far from sloth being almost trivial it appears it's potentially lethal for our spiritual lives, if left unchallenged.

But, thanks be to God, it needn't be. Like any other sin with which we battle, *acedia* has been overcome by Christ on the cross. In our individual lives and struggles against sin we can know God's grace, forgiveness, and strengthening in the daily battle against the sins we know all too well and this sin of *acedia*, whose name we may never have heard of but now may recognise.

Recognising it is the first step in overcoming it. I love the deeply realistic

Contd. on page 2

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## What's working in the Year of Faith?

Focusing on simple things that make a difference.



### Faith at work in the community

The Princess Royal has recognised the good work of Clun Valley Good Neighbours. Joan Kerry, the Benefice Administrator, who received the award on behalf

of the 31-year old group in April, said, "For many of us who are involved as volunteers it is part of living our faith in a tangible way. 'Love your neighbours'. 'Comfort the sick', 'Befriend the lonely', 'Comfort the dying'. Our way of showing we care. The scheme was started initially to help provide transport for those who could no longer drive because of illness or age." While not run directly by the church, it demonstrates, as in so many of our towns and villages, that faith and Christian teaching are inspiring community engagement and good works, making it a better place to live for the most vulnerable and, arguably, for those who volunteer!

### The Sin of Our Time? contd from p1

means of grace which our ancient predecessors in faith suggested as prescriptions for those suffering from acedia. They were written more than 1500 years ago, but could have been written yesterday:

First, pray short prayers, not long ones. The mind can wander and fall prey to acedia when praying long prayers.

Second, set yourself a short task, and don't get up or do anything else until you've completed it.

Third, physical work. That can snap us out of an acedia attack in the mind.

Fourth, try a warm bath (yes, really!). That one's a bit less practical if acedia strikes while you're at work.

Fifth, the one that usually makes people sigh in startled relief: tears. Because tears break down the shell that acedia has built around the soul, and bring healing.

I could write a lot more on the subject, which is just as well as I have 80,000 words plus footnotes to hand in, so for now I must bid you farewell for a few weeks as I stop procrastinating and get on with the work of writing about acedia and how, by the grace of God, we may overcome it.

## Diocese News



### Hidden prayer life of primary school children reveals positive results

As figures on young people's mental health issues continue to rise year on year, a new piece of research by Hereford Diocese's Education Team highlights the benefits of creating regular prayer habits amongst primary school-aged children outside school and church settings. The results show it can help them with their worries, giving them a

channel to release anxieties and promoting a sense of wellbeing. Children reported that outside spaces, away from distractions, were one of the best places to pray and feel close to God. As one of the pupils in the project concludes: "If you pray a lot, you get into the habit of it."

The research took place in 2023 in six Church of England primary schools in the diocese, and was funded in part by the Growing Faith Foundation. The findings will be presented at the National Growing Faith Research Conference at Ripon College, Cuddesdon later in May.

More information can be found on our website here:

<https://www.hereford.anglican.org/news/the-hidden-prayer-life-of-primary-school-children-reveals-positive-results.php>

## Stories of Faith

**Short reviews from people around the diocese of books that have influenced their faith journey. Send yours to [comms@hereford.anglican.org](mailto:comms@hereford.anglican.org)**



**BOUNCING FORWARDS** by Patrick Reagan with Lisa Hoeksma

**Chris Kinnersley** says:

"Exploring resilience, acceptance and emotional agility in an honest and practical way. Includes helpful 27 days of devotional readings, prayers and reflections to encourage us to develop good habits and to become more resilient."



**THE SACRED ROMANCE** by Brent Curtis and John Eldredge

**Carole Amos** says:

"This book draws us into a closer revelation of how much our Lord wants our hearts. Reading it for the third time....says it all, really!"