

Vicar's Pastoral Monthly Letter - May 2026

Dear Friends,

How quickly the seasons seem to move. Only a short while ago we were noticing the first brave crocuses pushing through cold soil, then came the snowdrops, followed swiftly by daffodils blazing with colour along verges and churchyards. Now, almost before we have caught our breath, the bluebells are beginning to appear beneath the trees and the whole countryside feels alive with growth. Spring does not wait for us.

At the Vicarage, I have been reminded of that rather forcefully over recent weeks. What began as "a bit of a tidy up" has turned into battle with triffid-like rose bushes, rampant borders and growth that seems to surge several inches overnight. There is something both exhausting and wonderful about it all. Nature, once awakened, has a habit of getting on with things whether we are ready or not.

At Guarlford too, we have finally had to remove some of the trees that had become overgrown and unsafe (fear not, they will be eventually replaced). Yet looming above remains the great cedar tree — a tree I know and "love", but which is also becoming something of a headache. Its size, its gradual decline and its position close to the retaining wall all mean difficult decisions cannot be avoided forever. There is perhaps a lesson there for all of us. Sometimes in life and faith there are things we cherish deeply, but which still require wisdom, honesty and careful stewardship. Meanwhile at Powick's Garden of Remembrance, the box hedging has sadly been decimated by relentless munching pests (of a six and four leg variety) . Thankfully the PCC now have the matter well in hand, but it is another reminder that gardens, churchyards and God's creation require constant care and attention if they are to flourish.

That care for creation is something our churches are increasingly being called to take seriously. This year, I am hoping all our churches will work towards achieving at least the A Rocha Bronze Eco Church Award — recognising practical steps we can take in caring for our buildings, churchyards, communities and the environment God has entrusted to us. Sometimes that care begins with grand ideas, but often it starts simply: tidying, planting, conserving, noticing and valuing what has been given to us. Jesus often spoke about growth, pruning and fruitfulness because people understood gardens and seasons instinctively:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener... every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." (John 15:1–2 NRSV)

There is a deep spiritual truth hidden in all this spring growth around us. Some things in life need nurturing. Some things need cutting back. Some things need patience. Some things need letting go. And some things — however hard it may be — cannot simply be ignored forever.

We are also in the season of Annual Church Meetings, PCC elections and Deanery Synod appointments. These meetings may not always sound the most exciting part of church life, but they matter enormously because they shape the future and mission of our churches and

villages. Perhaps your own spring clean has created a little extra time, fresh energy or renewed interest. If so, could you help your church? We are always in need of people willing to serve, contribute ideas, care for our buildings and churchyards, support worship and help us connect with our communities. Churches do not run by magic — they flourish because ordinary people quietly offer their gifts, wisdom and time.

And speaking of flourishing, I want to give heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in last month's wonderful Parish Wedding Display at Powick. It was a tremendous success, bringing more than 200 people through the doors of the church to enjoy the extraordinary collection of wedding dresses, displays and stalls. There was warmth, hospitality, conversation, laughter and a real sense of community life at its best. Events like these remind us that our churches still hold a special place in people's hearts and imaginations.

As we journey rapidly now through Easter towards Ascension Day, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, the Church's seasons move just as quickly as the natural ones. The risen Christ ascends to the Father. The Holy Spirit bursts forth at Pentecost with power and fire and wind. Then Trinity invites us to stand in wonder again at the mystery and beauty of God Himself. And perhaps spring is teaching us this above all: God is always at work bringing new life out of what seemed bare and lifeless.

The world can often feel heavy and uncertain. Churches too can sometimes feel tired or anxious about the future. Yet every year the earth quietly preaches resurrection to us. Buds burst open. Colour returns. Life reappears where winter seemed to have won. Therefore:

God has not finished with His world.

God has not finished with His Church.

And God has certainly not finished with you.

So perhaps this month is an invitation to notice:

To notice the bluebells.

To notice the birdsong.

To notice the beauty of our villages and churchyards.

To notice the places in our own lives where God may be gently pruning, shaping or awakening something new.

And perhaps, amidst all the busyness and overgrowth of life, to hear again the quiet promise of Easter: that life, not death, has the final word.

With every blessing,

Rev Gary