



A vicar's life

THERE HAVE been few ordained High Sheriffs, and very few ordained female High Sheriffs. Although I was delighted to have a background in rural ministry in taking on the role, I did not expect suddenly to be faced with an interregnum, which meant that I had to take charge of eight parishes while at the same time – in the words of the Declaration – having to ‘take charge of the county’. It was quite a challenge of diary management!

I chose as my theme for the year *Tackling Loneliness and Isolation*. Loneliness is more widespread and more debilitating than any of the more fortunate can imagine, and dealing with it transforms lives as well as strengthens communities. The amounts of money needed to make a difference – especially when local government is so strapped for cash – are



A Vicar's Life: my Chaplain, Revd Ruth Hulse, with the Bishop of Hereford Photo credit: Sally Corrick

not large, and parish councils can play a vital part, complementing the work of volunteers. Lunch clubs, community transport, good neighbour schemes and social prescribing all have a role, and they complement the work of the police and fire and rescue services in identifying and supporting vulnerable people.

I convened a half-day conference for parish councils and all those with an actual and potential role. It was chaired by the Bishop of Hereford, and I was also hugely grateful for the powerful personal support that the Archbishop of Canterbury gave to my campaign. If any High Sheriff, in office or in nomination, would like a copy of my how-to-do-it handout on tackling loneliness, I will be happy to share it. This is a cause in which the ability of High Sheriffs to bring people together and energise them can have wonderful results.

The theme of loneliness was reflected in the hymns and liturgy of my Legal Service in Hereford Cathedral (for which I exercised my privilege of having my sword carried before me rather than wearing it – in this case, appropriately, by the County Colonel of The Rifles). Continued access to local justice in a rural county such as Herefordshire is a matter of increasing concern, so it was good to have such a splendid turnout of judges.

The legal theme was continued in my High Sheriff's Lecture to a packed house, in which Lord Judge, the former

Above: Before my Legal Service in Hereford Cathedral in October 2017. L-R: Stephen Betts (Worcestershire), Charles Lillis (Shropshire), His Honour Judge Plunkett QC, His Honour Judge Overall QC, Rt Hon Lord Justice McFarlane, Dowager Countess of Darnley JP (Lord-Lieutenant, Herefordshire), Revd Lady Lisvane (High Sheriff, Herefordshire), Rt Hon Lord Hughes of Ombersley, Rt Hon Lady Justice Thirlwall DBE, His Honour Judge Cartwright QC, Mark Davies CVO (Warwickshire), Air Vice-Marshal Michael Smart OBE DL, His Honour Judge Hilliard QC (Recorder of London), Jeremy Wilding (Under Sheriff, Herefordshire), Col Andrew Taylor OBE DL (County Colonel, The Rifles) Photo credit: Sally Corrick

Lord Chief Justice, reviewed the health of our largely unwritten constitution and identified threats to its proper working.

When I appointed my wonderful High Sheriff's Chaplain, the Reverend Ruth Hulse, I did not realise that I was going to have to share her with millions of television viewers; but Ruth was a star of the BBC series *A Vicar's Life*, which did a splendid job of showing the challenges and rewards of rural ministry as well as showing off our beautiful county.

The combination of ‘Reverend’, ‘Lady’ and ‘High Sheriff’ gave rise to quite a few protocol moments, and I got used to ‘Reverend Sheriff’ and ‘Lady Sheriff’; but the prize (at a rather grand occasion which shall remain anonymous) must, I think, go to ‘Reverend Mother’.

♦ Jane Lisvane
The Reverend Lady Lisvane
High Sheriff of Herefordshire 2017-18