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## **BISHOP OF LUDLOW ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT**

After forty four years serving the people of the Diocese of Hereford, the Bishop of Ludlow has announced his intention to retire at the end of June 2009. Bishop Michael Hooper has spent his entire career in the one diocese.

The Bishop began his priesthood as a curate in Bridgnorth in Shropshire, where he met and married his wife Rosemary. The couple celebrated their Ruby Wedding Anniversary at last year's Lambeth Conference. From Bridgnorth, he moved across the County to Minsterley and Habberley, where he also served as Rural Dean of Pontesbury.

In 1981, he was honoured by becoming a Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral and at the same time became vicar of Leominster Priory. In a revolutionary move for the whole Diocese, he became 'Team Rector' in 1988, the first of its kind in the Diocese. His success there was translated into his appointment as Archdeacon of Hereford, proving that his already outstanding pastoral skills were complemented by his organisational ones. In a popular move he became Bishop of Ludlow in 2002.

"In many ways, Bishop Michael *is* the Diocese of Hereford! Bishop Michael has been outstanding in his service of the people of the whole diocese for the past 44 years. He and his wife, Rosemary, are hugely loved, appreciated and respected for all that they have given to so many, many people," said Bishop Anthony Priddis, the Bishop of Hereford. "Bishop Michael is a marvellous Bishop and Archdeacon of Ludlow, a wonderful colleague and friend. He will be sorely missed when he leaves us, but he will leave a great heritage with the diocese in good heart, not least from his own unstinting work."

There will be a service later this year in Hereford Cathedral to give thanks for Bishop Michael and Rosemary's ministries, and pay tribute to them. The process for finding his successor will be put into place immediately.

*A jpeg picture of Bishop Michael is available on request. Please contact Anni Holden*

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