

Healthy Churches Development – Update 3, January 2024

Themes – I continue work on a small number of over-arching themes as we have moved into 2024. Each promotes healthy church principles, and offers routes and resources for learning together. These will be available in clergy and lay development, promoted as small group resources, and accessible through the Equip Hub for use within church and parish programmes. They fit well within the ‘*three colours*’ of natural church development:

Green ‘*Rewilding [the church]*’ featured in various Diocesan communications in November 2023, and this included some more in-depth learning about A Rocha at their Canadian base, in British Columbia. Plans are brewing to connect with actual **Rewilding** projects in 2024, including some local and longer-distance field trips; St Giles, Exhall, has already had a themed Vision Day in January, with a programme that can be tailored to other church contexts.

Blue *Passionate Spirituality* – engagements with spiritual accompaniment, contemplative spirituality and study continue; I led a session on ‘*Rewilding Spirituality*’ with the Spiritual Formation Group in September and an Advent Series focusing on saints at St Peter, Wellesbourne in December. I will deliver a short talk in the Berkswell Lent Series on Hildegard of Bingen in February. Looking at the lives of saints, and our own ‘*sacred journeys*’, promises much going forward. I am one of the Spiritual Advisors for the Diocesan Cursillo weekend in June.

Red includes Biblical reference points for **Mission** include the *letters to the 7 churches in Revelation*, and their angels; I am planning a trip to biblical sites in Turkey in 2025. This links very well to the outreach agenda of Leading Your Church into Growth - LYCIG – which we see as offering a valuable process for churches wanting to develop clearer Mission Action Plans in 2024/25. Fifteen places have been booked on the national conference in June, for a few churches.

Visioning & Away Days – attending, contributing, designing, facilitating different options are available for working with churches, parishes and benefices. Sessions have been based on the rewilding theme, on NCD survey results linked with a movie or video clips (*The Wild Gardener*, *The Biggest Little Farm (on Apple+)*, *Riverwoods (available on My 5)*, *The Boy Who Planted a Forest*, and Jean Giono short story ‘*The Man Who Planted a Forest*’), the angels of churches (Revelation 2), developing networks of small churches; these can be practical and visionary, analytical and creative, depending on your requirements. I am usually able to schedule work in at three months’ notice; I can also co-produce sessions at shorter notice.

LYCIG - Having personally attended the Leading Your Church into Growth (LYCIG) conference at Swanwick in June, and tabled details of a pilot with senior leaders (Area Deans and Mission Hub leaders) in November, LYCIG will be made available to five interested benefices in early 2024, with [1] paid-for conference attendance for up to three from participating churches [2] a supported process lasting 12 months in the church and community it serves.

[Leading your Church into Growth](#)

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Review – a root and branches review of the Healthy Church agenda is ongoing – very much about directing energy and effort in the right ways from 2024 onwards, and tailored to what clergy and churches are aiming for within the refreshed Strategic Framework for the Diocese [A update from our Diocesan Secretary - Diocese of Coventry](#)

NCD Surveys – 19 churches have been impacted by the most recent NCD surveys as at December 2023; we anticipate up to a further 20 in 2024. The surveys are best integrated with planning cycles in churches, and can lead into workshops based on the key findings; there are ‘free’ surveys, worth £250, on offer. The surveys still offer valuable listening to the voice of key people in your congregation and a perspective on the eight essential qualities in your church. A survey can lead to more focused work in specific areas of interest, but is also helping validate and celebrate the areas where there is already progress. While comparisons are made with pre-Covid surveys, it seems like they are most useful as a line in the sand for future focus and direction. In November, Pam Howell was interviewed about her recent experience for the All Saints Benefice in online Diocesan news.

NCD Character Guides – the international ‘discipleship resources’ within the NCD programme have been re-branded – they link back with the series of books on Spirituality, Ministry (Gifts), Community (including small groups), Leadership and now Love. The *Passionate Spirituality* resource helps recognize that within any church/parish there is likely to be a wide range of individuals with different spiritual preferences, which of course is a gift in thinking more creatively about new worshipping communities. [NCD Life - Individual Character Tests](#) A new test has just been launched linked to the ‘3 Colors of Love’ book [NCD NEW test - Love \(Jan 2024\)](#) if you want to explore something brand new.

Vacancies – I work in partnership with churches in vacancy, as directed by Barry Dugmore, Archdeacon Missioner. This may include ministry and preaching (which continues to have a healing and prayer ministry dimension), consultancy and work, as required, on shaping priorities within Parish Profiles. It has been a great pleasure to, among others, serve The Offchurch Group, Wolston & Church Lawford, St James, Fletchamstead, and the United Benefice of Baginton, Bubbenhall and Ryton-on-Dunsmore during 2023.

Training & learning – Interactive sessions help explore new opportunities for church health, including with Deanery Chapters, with curates and within the Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) programme – this extends to PCCs and other groups for whom Healthy Church is a focus at any point in the year. I am happy to speak at Deanery Synods on *Healthy Churches*, as invited, and did so in October for the Coventry East Deanery.

Church Base and 1-to-1 Links – I am based out of St James, Fletchamstead, within The Bridge Mission Hub; I seek to pray weekly with clergy and other staff there. I engage in a variety of more informal ways, including networking, with representatives of churches anywhere in the Diocese and support MDR for some individual clergy; listening and inevitably learning on my part – hopefully building trust and possibilities for partnering in the near future. I am now offering spiritual accompaniment for a number of people within the Diocesan scheme, and can offer one-to-one support in many other ways, too.

[Healthy church strategy - Diocese of Coventry \(anglican.org\)](#)

Diocesan Prayer Diary – I coordinate the Prayer Diary, with an interest in seeing prayer ministry deepen and develop for individuals and churches across the Diocese. A refresher on leading intercessions was published in January. I would welcome your suggestions on how this strand of work might have greater traction; I attended Renovare/Launde Abbey’s ‘*Rooted and Grounded*’ programme this month, looking for more answers on how to model and support personal and collective prayer!

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