

Healthy Churches Development – Update 4, May 2024

Themes – I am still working within the framework of three over-arching themes as we have move towards Summer 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 eventually be 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]'* - 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. This will be one significant strand of the wider Healthy Churches review, to be published by July 2024.

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. I will delivered 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 the Senior Spiritual Advisor for the Diocesan Cursillo weekend in June (#52).

Red I have worked with multiple Biblical reference points for **Mission** including the *letters to the 7 churches in Revelation*, and their angels; I plan a Diocesan-focused 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. Nineteen places have been booked on the national conference in June and October, for clergy and lay leaders from six 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 has been made available to six interested benefices in 2024 (4, June from Alcester, Nuneaton and Coventry North deaneries; 2, October, from Coventry East and Nuneaton deaneries), 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](#)

Revd Clive Hicks

Healthy Churches Development Enabler, Diocese of Coventry

E - Clive.Hicks@Coventry.Anglican.org T – 0247 652 1341

Review – a root and branches review of the Healthy Church agenda is ongoing – very much now about directing energy and effort in the right ways from 2025 onwards, and tailored to what clergy and churches are aiming for within the refreshed Strategic Framework for the Diocese. This is due to be tabled at the Bishop’s Strategic Integration Group in July 2024.

NCD Surveys – A small number of churches are using these surveys in 2024, including some Mission Hubs. They 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. Last 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, shaping priorities within Parish Profiles. A series on ‘being Healthy Church during a vacancy’ is also taking shape in partnership with friends at St James’s, Fletchamstead. It has been a great pleasure to serve The Offchurch Group, St James, Fletchamstead, and the St Philip’s, Potters Green, during the first half of 2024. I have only limited availability now until October/November.

Training & learning – Interactive sessions help explore new opportunities for church health, including with Deanery Chapters, with curates (second years, 8th May) and within the Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) programme – this extends to PCCs and other groups for whom Healthy Church may be a focus at any point in the year. I am happy to speak at Deanery Synods on *Healthy Churches*, as invited.

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.

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. 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 in February, looking for ideas to model and support personal and collective prayer! The DPD is again themed around strategic priorities for the Diocese this year, and open for many contributors as we seek to build a collaborative approach to deepen the Diocesan vision and mission.

Revd Clive Hicks

Healthy Churches Development Enabler, Diocese of Coventry

E - Clive.Hicks@Coventry.Anglican.org T – 0247 652 1341