

Healthy Churches Development – Update 8, December 2025

The foundation of my work on Healthy Churches themes is building longer-term relationships with clergy, lay people and churches. Of 25 churches and projects I was involved in in 2023-24, I remain in touch in complementary ways in 2025-26 with 18. I have developed new relationships in 2025-26 with a further 25 churches. I am generally involved with 60-70 churches at any given point in time.

Reviewing outcomes from my 2025 workplan: varied success and impact.

1 - Developing best practice with frameworks for **evaluating the health of churches**. One NCD survey was completed in the last 12 months; the plan is to formulate new ways to capture the health of churches, especially in mission and ministry, in a more discursive and reflective style. I recently shared a range of possibilities with third year curates, and plan to complete the first phase of this work in early 2026.

2 - The Leading Your Church Into Growth (LyCiG) pilot, involved three more churches in 2025. The feedback has been universally encouraging; it is easy to see how participation can refresh vision and alert leaders to challenges in areas such as welcome, worship and discipleship. There are more free places for 3-4 people for a church/parish available in 2026. Churches are also very welcome to self-fund, but it is around £8-900 for three places. Contact me early in 2026 if you are serious about participating.

3 - Sharing know-how to build healthier churches - in vacancy, visioning and culture change. The intention this summer was to begin to consolidate a set of resources and offerings in these areas of church life. This is carried over into 2026, with the intention to place different kinds of activity and tools on the Equip Hub.

4 – Supporting or conducting interventions in consultation with Area Deans and Mission Hub leaders. I have had availability to support needed culture change in benefices and churches. Currently, this is most often deployed in response to needs for visioning, release of gifts and addressing conflicts in a variety of parishes. Away days, which are intended to generate energy, are a favoured way to generate a more open and adventurous church culture.

5 - How can the Diocese **build on the heritage of RED-BLUE-GREEN streams**, within the principles of Natural Church Development? My workload is still structured around these areas:-

Red e.g. **Leading Your Church into Growth** - LyCiG. The Pilot has been extended for a further year. Bishop Sophie has shared her interest in LyCiG with a number of clergy and lay leaders. At heart LyCiG reasons with churches to shift emphasis from maintenance to mission.

Blue e.g. **Passionate Spirituality** – engagements with spiritual accompaniment, contemplative spirituality and study continue; I have led a Chapter Quiet Day themed around ‘Gardens, Parkland and Landscapes’ in October. I’m part of a team preparing the 12-month training programme ‘The Art of Spiritual Accompaniment’ which will start in September 2026, and is seeking participants through to March 2026.



Green e.g. **Establishing relationships with new people**, in the outdoors and streets of our communities. An unexpected encounter at Tewkesbury Abbey River (Avon) Blessing in June, has enabled connections to begin to form with some of our own churches close to the River Avon in Warwickshire, including Rugby, Warwick, Stratford upon Avon and Bidford-on-Avon. June 14, 2026 is a Sunday involving a small number of churches in Gloucester, Worcester and Coventry Dioceses with river blessing. Two practitioners in outdoor church, from within our Diocese joined the Faith in Nature learning community (Abernethy Kilmalieu) in October.

Details of my 2026 workplan will be confirmed in the next Update.

INVITATION: I HAVE SET ASIDE THREE SUNDAYS IN 2026 TO OFFER TO PREACH/PRESENT FOR 10-15 MINUTES ON HEALTHY CHURCH THEMES – **18TH JANUARY, 12TH APRIL, AND 28TH JUNE** – WHETHER YOU KNOW ME ALREADY OR WANT TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY IN MINISTRY AND MISSION, DO CONTACT ME AS SOON AS YOU ARE ABLE IN 2026. JUST THE THREE AVAILABLE.

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① Heart work / GARDENS: [~]**1-to-1, with individuals** - 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 – hopefully building trust and possibilities for partnering. I am a spiritual companion within the Diocesan scheme, and can offer one-to-one support in other ways, too. Typically, I meet informally with 2-3 church leaders for a coffee each month, to listen and encourage! [~]**Training & learning for groups** – Interactive sessions help explore new opportunities for church health, including with curates this November – this extends to PCCs and other groups for whom Healthy Church may be a focus at any point in the year.

FOR INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL GROUPS: 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 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](#). **There is now a complete set of online tests within the family – I am making Spirituality and the NEW Wholeness tests available through tokens (value £5-6 per person) which can be requested from me for individuals and small groups.**

② Collective Action / PARKLAND: [~]**Visioning & Away Days for congregations** – attending, contributing, 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 in 2023*; *The Biggest Little Farm (on Apple+)*, *Riverwoods (available on My 5in 2024)*, *The Boy Who Planted a Forest*, and Jean Giono’s short story ‘*The Man Who Planted a Forest*’ (2024); or *the change of vision at Bristol Zoo Project (2025)* - 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 may be able to advise or co-produce sessions at shorter notice, I am currently at different stages with churches in the Rugby, Nuneaton Coventry North and Coventry South Deaneries. [~]**Vacancies/ sabbaticals in church leadership** – I do some work in partnership with churches in vacancy, including reviewing Parish Profiles, and as invited by clergy during sabbaticals; these may include ministry and preaching (which often continue to have a healing and prayer ministry dimension), consultancy and facilitation work, and as required. A series on ‘being Healthy Church during a vacancy’ is taking shape. It has been a great pleasure to serve St Barbara’s, Earlsdon, Arden Marches churches and St Philip’s - Potters Green this past four months; I now have very limited availability on Sundays from January through to September 2026. **See yellow block on front page.**

FOR CHURCHES AND CONGREGATIONS: NCD (Natural Church Development) Surveys – No surveys have been completed so far in 2025. They are best integrated with planning cycles in churches, and can lead into workshops based on the key findings; there are still ‘free’ surveys, value £250, on offer; my own involvement will be supportive, but lighter touch. 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; they are most useful as a starting point for future focus and direction. A church in Fosse Deanery just repeated a third survey after a period of years, with some interesting areas for discussion and reflection – I attended the PCC for part of an evening.

③ Recognising the Bigger Picture / LANDSCAPES: [~]**Diocesan Prayer Diary** – Having coordinated the Prayer Diary for three years, I’m now stepping aside to allow a fresh approach led by others.

[~]**Speaking Out, Wider Communications** – periodically I can address the big picture, healthy churches agenda, influencing and speaking out on strategically significant themes, continuing to explore new challenges and issues. I produced a Healthy Churches Review document in October 2025, following on from the 2024 report that received consideration by the Bishop’s strategic team in July 2024. *Do ask if you are interested in discussing this as individuals, a group or at a gathering.*

Tov is the Hebrew word for good. Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer speak in their books of ‘a church called tov’ – promoting a goodness culture that resists abuses of power and promotes healing.

Generous Giving: I line manage Simon Jones, Diocesan Stewardship Advisor (0.6fte), and since November Rev Adam Tams, Generous Giving Enabler (0.4fte), having supported the implementation of the Digital Giving Project, which delivered more than £125,000 through 40 devices across the Diocese in 2024 and 2025;

Coventry School Foundation: I step down from being a member of the Board for the, serving on the People & Wellbeing, Audit & Risk and Education Oversight Committees, in March 2026.

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