

Healthy Churches Development – Update 5, October 2024

Review – a root and branches review of the Healthy Church agenda was reported to the Bishop’s Strategic Integration Group in July 2024 – with a draft work plan tabled for 2025 onwards, tailored to what clergy and churches are aiming for within the refreshed Strategic Framework for the Diocese.

SUMMARY (July 2024)

[Clive Hicks talks about Healthy Churches](#)

This report on one strand of the Diocesan Strategic Framework – Healthy Churches – reviews the most recent history of relevant activities, especially the widespread use of Natural Church Development [NCD] surveys, then addresses themes and issues which have emerged in the last two years, and concludes by making suggestions to focus work for 2025.

The last time Healthy Churches were on the agenda for BSIG was March 2023, and the discussions then addressed, at heart, the significant need to move beyond mandatory NCD surveys when addressing what ‘healthy church’ might mean for the Diocese moving forward. The last fifteen months has seen this unfold in a number of ways....

Report highlights

- (i) details of what is offered currently by way of NCD surveys and other products;
- (ii) developments in other offerings such as Leading Your Church Into Growth (LyCiG) and more bespoke Away Days for churches;
- (iii) the intention to continue hold our Diocese within the theological tenets of NCD, emphasizing the core concern for real health in each and every church community, including new worshipping communities;
- (iv) to revisit the three different coloured strands – the Trinitarian Compass – at the heart of Natural Church Development (see the July 2024 Diocesan Prayer Diary):

Themes – *I am still working within the framework of three over-arching themes as we move towards the end of 2024. Each promotes healthy church principles, and offers routes and resources for learning together. They fit well within the ‘three colours’ of natural church development:*

Red **Leading Your Church into Growth** - LyCiG – is in the pilot phase still, yet with more than 20 clergy and lay teams attending the June and October conferences at Swanwick, and in the end more than 20 churches (in a number of benefices) potentially impacted. There are three conferences again in 2025 – January, June and October, for which funded places are likely to be available

LyCiG – Feedback from attendees has been encouraging, with the Diocese offering [1] paid-for conference attendance for clergy/laity from participating churches [2] a supported process lasting 12 months in church/community it serves. [Leading your Church into Growth](#)

Blue **Passionate Spirituality** – engagements with spiritual accompaniment, contemplative spirituality and study continue; I am speaking at a session for the Spiritual Formation Group on ‘Gardens as Landscapes’ in November. I was Senior Spiritual Advisor for the Diocesan Cursillo weekend in June (#52). I enjoy being part of the growing Dwell worship team within the Bridge Mission Hub, so played in the band for Steve & Kathy Burch’s funeral in October.

Green **‘Rewilding [the church]’** – I recently joined a learning community with Steve Aisthorpe and others – *Faith in Nature* – at Abernethy Kilmalieu, Scotland, meeting other strategists and practitioners, and I have added the story of Swifts (village of Harbury) to a growing set of case studies on what I call ‘radical hospitality’ by churches; St Giles, Exhall, Rewilding-themed Vision Day, was plugged at the Rural Church Conference in October. I am a new member of the Diocesan Environment Group (October).

Revd Clive Hicks

Healthy Churches Development Enabler, Diocese of Coventry

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

Sample of Postcards promoting ideas from Rewilding for 'Radical Hospitality'



Visioning & Away Days for congregations – 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.

Vacancies in church leadership – I work in partnership with churches in vacancy, as directed by Barry Dugmore, Archdeacon Missioner; likely to be churches in Fosse, Rugby, Coventry East and Coventry North deaneries this quarter. It may include ministry and preaching (which continues to have a healing and prayer ministry dimension), consultancy and facilitation work, as required, shaping priorities within the development of refreshed Parish Profiles. A series on 'being Healthy Church during a vacancy' is still taking shape. It has been a great pleasure to serve Binley Woods LEP, St James, Fletchamstead, Ryton and the St Philip's, Potters Green, during the second half of 2024. I do still have limited availability on Sundays from December into early 2025.

Training & learning for groups – Interactive sessions help explore new opportunities for church health, including with Deanery Chapters, with curates (December) – 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.

1-to-1 links 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 in the near future. I offer spiritual accompaniment for a small 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. The DPD was again themed

NCD (Natural Church Development) Surveys – A small number of surveys were completed in 2024. 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; they are most useful as a starting point for future focus and direction.

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 links to the '3 Colors of Love' book [NCD NEW test - Love \(Jan 2024\)](#) if you want to explore something brand new.

Since February 2024 I line manage Simon Jones, now our Diocesan Stewardship Advisor, supporting him with the implementation of the 2024 Digital Giving Project; since March 2023 I have been a member of the Board for the Coventry Schools Foundation, serving on the People & Wellbeing, Audit & Risk and Education Oversight (with a special interest in King Henry VIII Junior School) Committees.

Revd Clive Hicks

Healthy Churches Development Enabler, Diocese of Coventry

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