

## Healthy Churches Development – Update 7, July 2025

### My 2025 workplan:-

**1** - Developing best practice with frameworks for **evaluating the health of churches**. The NCD surveys are still available, but the plan this year is to formulate new ways to capture the health of churches, especially in mission and ministry, in a more discursive and reflective style. I have been gathering resources on 'Appreciative Enquiry' along with other approaches.

**2** - Going beyond **the Leading Your Church Into Growth (LyCiG) pilot**, to involve more churches. There are now 12 places (for 4 churches) this year, but this could be expanded further if the demand is there, either in 2025 or 2026, if a similar budget is retained. Churches are also very welcome to self-fund, but it is around £8-900 for three places.

**3 - Sharing know-how** to build healthier churches - in vacancy, visioning and culture change. The intention this summer is to begin to consolidate a set of resources and offerings in these areas of church life.

**4 – Supporting or conducting interventions** in consultation with Area Deans and Mission Hub leaders. Making more of my availability to support needed culture change in benefices and churches. Currently, this is most often in response to needs for visioning in vacancy parishes and away days.

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

**Red** e.g. **Leading Your Church into Growth** - LyCiG – is in Year 2 of a pilot phase, with more than 25 clergy and lay leaders having attended the June and October conferences in 2024, and scheduled in 2025. There are 3 places free for the October conference in 2025 (at Swanwick). Plans for 2026 are being formulated ahead of Autumn budget decisions.

**Blue** e.g. **Passionate Spirituality** – engagements with spiritual accompaniment, contemplative spirituality and study continue; I led a Quiet Day themed around 'Gardens, Parkland and Landscapes' in early July, and I am scheduled to be involved with rural church leaders this year. I play cello with the growing Dwell worship team in the Bridge Mission Hub. A number of churches are establishing spirituality focused strands to their ministry and mission. I am part of a team preparing the 12-month training programme 'The Art of Spiritual Accompaniment' which is scheduled to start in September 2026.

**Green** e.g. **Establishing relationships with new people**, in the outdoors and streets of our communities. An unexpected encounter with the 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. I continue to link with the Faith in Nature learning community (Abernethy Kilmalieu).



**THE OTHER PAGE SHOWS HOW I SEE MY WORK FROM THREE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES – INDIVIDUALS/SMALL GROUPS (THE 'GARDEN'), CHURCHES AND BENEFICES (THE 'PARKLAND') AND THE WIDER WORLD (THE 'LANDSCAPE') >>>**

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**Heart work / GARDENS:** <sup>≈</sup>**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! <sup>≈</sup>**Training & learning for groups** – Interactive sessions help explore new opportunities for church health, including with Deaneries (Coventry East, July), with curates (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.**

**Collective Action / PARKLAND:** <sup>≈</sup>**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 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 three churches in the Rugby and Coventry South Deaneries. <sup>≈</sup>**Vacancies/ sabbaticals in church leadership** – I do some work in partnership with churches in vacancy, and as invited by clergy during sabbaticals; these may include ministry and preaching (which continues to have a healing and prayer ministry dimension), consultancy and facilitation work, and as required, shaping refreshed Parish Profiles. A series on ‘being Healthy Church during a vacancy’ is taking shape. It has been a great pleasure to serve St James’s - Styvechale, St Mary - Tysoe and St Philip’s - Potters Green, most recently; I have limited availability on Sundays from September to the early 2026.

**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. All Saints, Bedworth, reviewed their preaching as a result of their 2024 survey, with encouraging results reported twelve months later– 86% surveyed found preaching was directly applicable to their current life situation.

**Recognising the Bigger Picture / LANDSCAPES:** <sup>≈</sup>**Diocesan Prayer Diary** – I coordinate the Prayer Diary, hoping to see prayer ministry deepen and develop for individuals and churches across the Diocese. I reported on some of the repeating themes and requests at Diocesan Synod in March. There continues to be a thematic focus each month and Deanery focus on 11 months of the year.

<sup>≈</sup>**Speaking Out, Wider Communications** - big picture, healthy churches agenda, influencing and speaking out on strategically significant themes, continuing to explore new challenges and issues.

**“Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a radical process of organizational development and change predicated on involving those affected in designing the change, and on building on success as well as learning from failure... it is ideally suited to help organisations stay flexible, resilient and adaptive in today’s rapidly changing world.”**  
~ Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management (Sarah Lewis et al, 2016)

**Generous Giving:** I line manage Simon Jones, Diocesan Stewardship Advisor (0.6fte), having supported him with the implementation of the Digital Giving Project, which delivered more than £112,000 through 40 devices across the Diocese in 2024 and 2025; a new Generous Giving Enabler, Rev Adam Tams, has now been appointed (0.4fte), and will start in November; I am a member of the Board for the **Coventry School Foundation**, serving on the People & Wellbeing, Audit & Risk and Education Oversight Committees.

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