

Healthy Churches Development – Update, May 2023

It is ten months now since I arrived back in the Diocese, having been an incumbent in the Dioceses of Leeds and Carlisle since 2014. My brief was to re-launch the over-arching focus on Healthy Churches in the Diocese. While there is continuity with the ministry and facilitation offered by Martin Saxby and Tim Mitchell, and support across that time from NCD and Diocesan mentors, there are also fresh avenues to explore and share.

NCD Surveys – a small number (8) will have been conducted by June 2023, as we continue to rebuild congregations and kingdom activity following the pandemic. There are a number of ‘free’ surveys on offer currently (*as many as 30, in fact*) and expressions of interest are currently under review for 2023/24. Surveys are no longer mandatory, but still offer a valuable way of assessing the eight essential qualities which themselves express quite well the fruit of natural church development. A survey can lead to more focused work in specific areas of interest, but also help validate and celebrate the areas where progress is being made.

Themes – I am focusing on a small number of over-arching themes in 2023/24, including one that you will see as a consultation document within the next few days, on *‘Rewilding [the church]’*. Other themes include *Passionate Spirituality* (in conjunction with the Diocesan Spirituality Advisor, Craig Grocock) and learning from the *letters to the 7 churches in Revelation*, and their angels. The aim with each will be to promote healthy church principles, and offer tools and resources for learning together. These will be introduced in CMD sessions and made available through the Equip Hub, for easy access and use within church and parish programmes.

Review – the plan is to end 2023 with a root and branches review of the Healthy Church agenda, as it will be ten years since the original launch of the NCD surveys within the Diocese back in 2013. The process of listening has already begun, and this will be as much about directing energy and effort in the right ways from 2024 onwards in line with your own priorities, along with those of the Diocese.

NCD Character Guides – the international ‘discipleship resources’ within the NCD programme have recently been re-branded – they link back with the series of books on Spirituality, Ministry (Gifts), Community (including small groups), Leadership. I am finding churches have an interest in exploring these where surveys have historically shown the bigger picture. I am currently working, or planning work, with churches in a number of these areas, and the *Passionate Spirituality* resource will be a Diocesan focus this Autumn. It was a point of real significance to 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. [Natural Character Development \(ncd.life\)](https://ncd.life)

Revd Clive Hicks

Healthy Churches Development Enabler, Diocese of Coventry

E - Clive.Hicks@Coventry.Anglican.org M – 07496 821460

Visioning & Away Days - attending and contributing, designing and facilitating ... different options are opening up for working with churches, parishes and benefices. I am also available to share work alongside the new family of Mission Hubs. Recent sessions have been based on the rewilding theme, the angels of churches (Revelation 2), and can be more practical or visionary, more analytical or more creative, depending on your requirements. I am usually able to schedule work in at three months notice, but could attend your own sessions informally at shorter notice.

Vacancies – I work in partnership with churches going into vacancy, as directed by Barry Dugmore, Archdeacon Missioner. This may include ministry and preaching (which seems to have had a healing and prayer ministry dimension, recently), consultancy and some work, if required, on refining Parish Profiles.

Diocesan Prayer Diary – I am taking a lead on coordinating the Prayer Diary, with an interest in seeing prayer ministry deepen and develop across the Diocese. I would welcome your suggestions on how this work might have greater traction.

CMD & training – I have offered a small number of conversational learning and exploration opportunities, including with Deanery Chapters, with curates and within the Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) programme – this could extend to PCCs and other groups for whom Healthy Church is a focus at any point in the year.

I have also engaged in a variety of more informal ways, including networking, with representatives of churches across the Diocese, which involves a lot of listening and learning on my part – hopefully building trust and possibilities of partnering in the near future. On occasions this includes one to one engagement, which may develop in the future to include spiritual accompaniment within the Diocesan scheme.

I am also enjoying exploring other fresh thinking – ranging from Blue Ocean Strategy, to Motus Dei (movement of God), to Adaptive Church, and Public Missiology, as well as building greater knowledge of practical tools and developing identity for churches such as Leading Your Church Into Growth (LYCIG), Healthy Healing Hubs as well, of course, of links with work by various agencies including Wildlife Trusts, the RSPB, A Rocha and our own Diocesan Environment Group.

The Healthy Church agenda is certainly very varied, and you may be about to help take it in other directions.

Which of these areas interest you the most?

Where are you looking for support with church health in your own context?

[Our Shared Future - Diocese of Coventry \(anglican.org\)](http://anglican.org)

[Healthy church strategy - Diocese of Coventry \(anglican.org\)](http://anglican.org)

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