

archdeacons' visitation news

We are so grateful for our churchwardens...



Once again we want to say a big thank you for all you do as churchwardens in our diverse churches – large and small, urban and rural, of every tradition – and thanks, too, to the many others who serve alongside you as treasurers, secretaries, safeguarding

officers and PCC members. We know that the governance entailed in running our churches as safe and legally compliant charities is complex and sometimes challenging. We are all too aware of the safeguarding crises the Church has had to navigate nationally, and the impact of this on morale locally, and it makes us all the more thankful for the wonderful people who serve in so many ways in parishes across Worcestershire and Dudley.

Within that larger picture, it's important to remember that the local church, in all its beauty, is where hope is shared and communities are transformed. It is in parishes like yours that disciples are made as God is worshipped. There is so much to celebrate on the ground!

We have been encouraged to see growth already in the number of children and young people we are reaching, as this priority gains momentum. Many new worshipping communities are springing up, drawing in new people for whom traditional services are not quite right, but who are exploring faith and a relationship with God and his people in an accessible option such as an intergenerational café, forest church or an after-school Gather service. Our nationally funded renewal churches are beginning to have an impact in larger population areas, and we are seeing real steps forward in our aim to become carbon net zero as more and more of you achieve Eco Church Awards.

As we prayerfully look forward to the arrival of a new Bishop of Worcester joining us on this adventure later in the year, there is much to give thanks for, and to anticipate with hope.

Nikki Groarke, Archdeacon of Dudley
Mark Badger, Archdeacon of Worcester

Are you an Eco Church yet?

The climate crisis can feel overwhelming. It is difficult to know where to start, how we can help, what difference we can make? Becoming an Eco Church is one easy, practical step all churches can take and a great way to put care for the environment at the forefront of your mission.

The Eco Church award scheme is run by A Rocha and involves completing a free, online survey which awards points based on how churches are caring for God's earth. The Eco Church survey consists of five sections:

- **Worship and Teaching**
- **Buildings**
- **Land**
- **Lifestyle**
- **Community and Global Engagement**

Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards are given depending on the number of points gained in each section. St Mary & St Milburgh Church in Offenham has recently become a Silver Eco Church with PCC member Debbie Harrison leading on the work.

She said: "After doing an Alpha course, I felt that our eco-responsibilities needed to be an important focus. I became our deanery eco champion and began looking more seriously at the Eco Church survey for our church. When I finished the survey, I found that we'd achieved Bronze easily and in some places were already Gold, which was great news!

"I really would encourage other PCCs to commit to talking about our environmental impact. People are often scared of the time that completing the Eco Church Award will take, but registration takes minutes, and you can dip in and out. Different team members can complete different sections, it doesn't all have to be done by one person. Churches might be surprised how easily they can achieve Bronze and for us Silver wasn't a huge jump, there were just a few new things we had to do."

Find out more about Eco Church on the diocesan website or at

 ecochurch.arocha.org.uk

Renewal in Kingswinford



The parish of Kingswinford in the Greater Dudley Deanery is one of our renewal parishes. It has received funding from the national Church as part of our priority to ensure that each major area of population has at least one larger healthy and sustainable church by 2030 – one with at least 150 people attending in an average week.

The renewal project is led by Father Adam Hadley and the parish has two churches, St Mary's in Kingswinford and Church of the Ascension in Wall Heath. Adam has a clear vision for this Renewal project which focuses on the inclusive Anglo-Catholic tradition that Adam has found life giving, and which these communities already embrace, meaning there are great opportunities for growth locally.

He said: "By 2030 I would hope that we are vibrant inclusive Anglo Catholic churches, fully incarnate in the communities that we serve."

He added: "It's about going out to where our communities are, not just expecting those communities to come to us, and that's particularly relevant in our context here. In both locations, a series of housing estates has developed since the 1960s and it's important that we take the gospel to them in places where they already live and meet."

Community is important to Adam who has already built some strong relationships as Chaplain to the Royal British Legion and padre to the Air Training Corps. His newest recruit, Mission Priest Sarah Roberts-Malpass, is an important appointment in adding capacity, as Sarah is able to spend more time in the community. This means Adam can focus more on continuing to set the strategic direction.

Kingswinford's mission plan recognises that some new people coming into the church may not identify with a traditional Eucharist service and Adam is keen to have a 'menu' of different services on offer, recognising that people encounter and experience God in unique ways.

He said: "Some people will be looking for deeply traditional worship, others for a charismatic expression, whereas still others will prefer contemplative reflection, so the plan has never been to focus all our energies on growing just one congregation."



Mission Priest Sarah Roberts-Malpass and Father Adam Hadley

Instead, the bulk of numerical growth will come from forming New Worshipping Communities (NWCs) and Adam and his team have already established 'Mainly Music', 'Singing Angels' and 'Soul Food'. Mainly Music and Soul Food happen at both churches on different days.

Church of the Ascension is also part of the inclusive church network, and they are in conversation with the Open Table network to see if they can create another NWC for LGBTQ+ Christians.

This is new ground, but Adam says one of the reasons he said 'yes' to becoming a renewal leader was the opportunity to learn more about what works well and the chance to share this learning with the whole inclusive Anglo-Catholic network. This has an important role to play in helping communities to strengthen and flourish.

One of the important aspects of leading a renewal is to keep the congregation involved in the journey so Adam often offers people the chance to have their say, and preaches regularly about where they're at and where they're headed to.

Sharing some of these insights, Adam said what really helped at the start of his journey was having a Mission Accompanier. "I've been richly blessed by the best Mission Accompanier and mentor in the world! Paul Wilcox is amazing and was so helpful in laying the groundwork."

He added: "Having a fantastic core team alongside Paul has also made this whole process lighter and more focussed. We recruited a fabulous Children, Youth and Families Minister, Sian Morgan, in the very early days, who hit the ground running and made inroads with local schools and families, laying solid foundations for growth.

"It has also been helpful that Curate Chris Smith is from a different tradition. That's been so useful in terms of perspective and understanding."

Administrator Lindsey and Operations' Manager Grace have both now settled in too. "Grace has a corporate background and has become really good at identifying grant opportunities and securing funds."

This means they can do even more for their local communities and support other churches in the area in terms of learning and resources too, something Adam is passionate about.

He concluded: "A few weeks ago the husband of one of the churchwardens was going past Church of the Ascension in Wall Heath. As the sun rose behind the church illuminating it, he stopped and took a photo. His wife texted it to me and said, 'the sun rises on the plans for our diocese'. It was an unguarded open moment. I hope it was the Holy Spirit speaking to us."



Support and resources for Churchwardens from Ecclesiastical

Ecclesiastical understands that volunteering for the role of Churchwarden and supporting your church can be a demanding job. Managing a treasured building and ensuring that it's a safe place for your congregation to worship, visit and enjoy can be daunting, but you don't have to do it alone.

Ecclesiastical church support managers

At no additional cost, Church Support Managers are there for their Ecclesiastical church customers. Providing tailored help and training to support church insurance needs, they can offer guidance on risk management, health and safety legislation and direct you to online resources. They can also deliver online and in-person group training sessions around topics including the basics of insurance, fire safety, fundraising, climate change and net zero, open churches and theft of metal.



Heather Ford



Joseph Davies

Heather Ford – Church Support Manager for the North.

Heather has roots in the Church, having previously worked for the Diocese of Manchester, and understands the demands of church life. Heather is passionate about supporting churches to understand how insurance can help, rather than hinder, to enable people to focus on their ministry and thrive.

Joseph Davies – Church Support Manager for the South.

Joseph is very much part of the Church family – his father was a parish priest, his mother a hospital chaplain, his wife was recently ordained as a curate, and he spent nine years as a verger at Salisbury and Ely Cathedrals.

“ Fundraising is crucial for sustaining church activities and initiatives. I am always delighted to offer guidance on effective fundraising strategies. We have an excellent online Fundraising Hub which has lots of information about how to get started and how to keep going on your fundraising journey. ”

✉ meetus@ecclesiastical.com
 🌐 ecclesiastical.com/church/church-support-managers

Fundraising hub

Fundraising plays a key role in boosting finances for your church. Ecclesiastical's fundraising hub offers user-friendly support guides which take you from 'where to start' through to 'key factors for successful fundraising' and everything in between.

If you have an Ecclesiastical policy, you can also contact their fundraising helpline, to arrange a call back from their expert team.

📞 **0345 601 9959**
 🌐 ecclesiastical.com/church/fundraising



Ecclesiastical's plain English guides

If you are looking for help in areas such as legal expenses, building work, or outreach, Ecclesiastical has a range of easy to understand Made Simple Guides to help, and their comprehensive document library is full of useful tools like risk assessment templates and Guidance Notes.

🌐 ecclesiastical.com/church/#madesimple

Ecclesiastical church insurance team

Do you have questions about your Ecclesiastical policy?

📞 **0345 777 3322** – lines are open 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays
 ✉ churchteam@ecclesiastical.com

Risk Advice Helpline

Are you looking for advice on how to minimise risks as you manage your church?

📞 **0345 600 7531** – lines are open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays
 ✉ risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

A claims team that really cares

Ecclesiastical's claims team are experts.

📞 **0345 603 8381** – 24-hour reporting service
 🌐 ecclesiastical.com/claims/claim-online

Ecclesiastical would love to hear from you

Do you have a story for Ecclesiastical? Perhaps you overcame a fundraising problem or found a way to get your local community more involved with your church. Sharing 'a day in your life' could really help other Churchwardens and members of the PCC.

✉ meetus@ecclesiastical.com

Contains promotional material

Month-by-month support

To help you plan maintenance and manage your church and its grounds, Ecclesiastical has created a calendar to keep you organised and on track – you can download your copy using this link:

 ecclesiastical.com/risk-calendar



Get monthly tips straight to your inbox




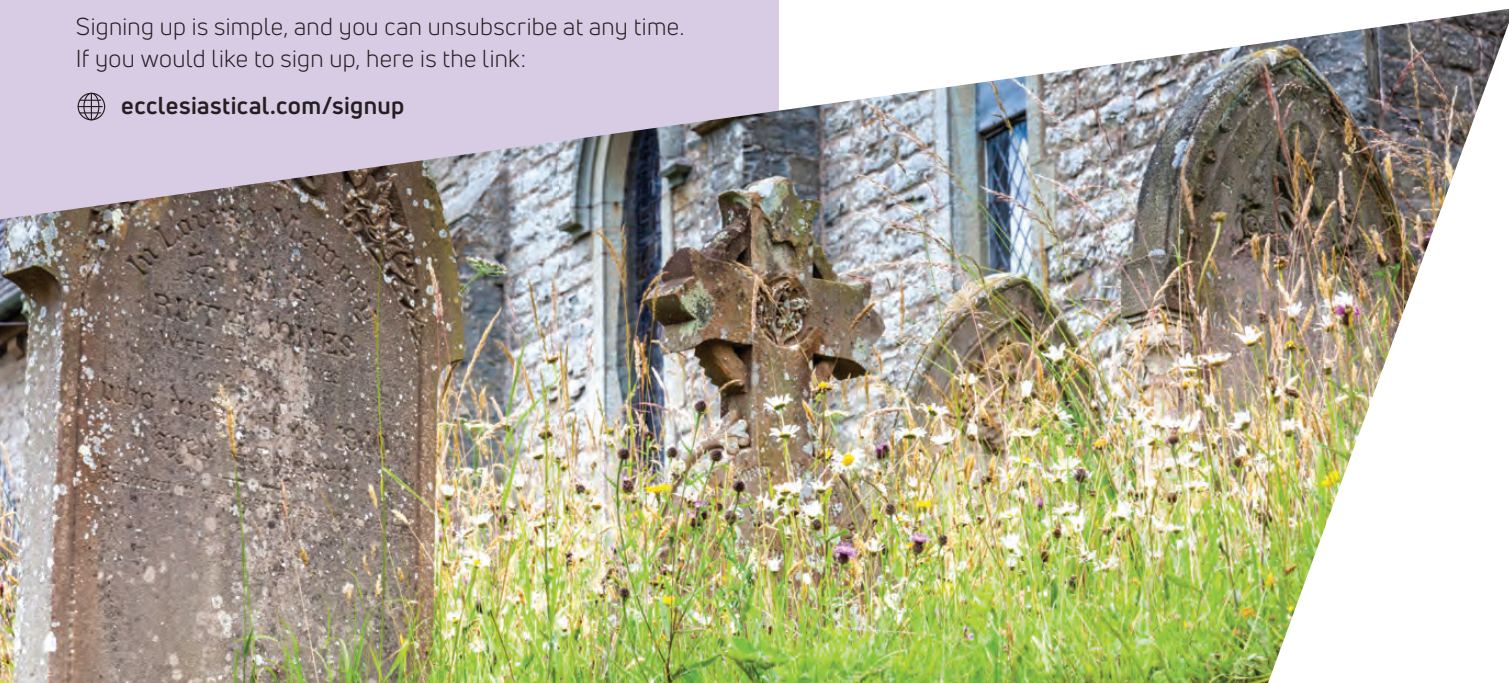
Join the community of church leaders who receive Ecclesiastical's monthly e-newsletter. It's packed with valuable advice about church security, event planning, fundraising and more.

Many of Ecclesiastical's customers already benefit from this e-newsletter, and we hope you'll join them.

Feel free to share the sign-up link with others in your church community who might be interested.

Signing up is simple, and you can unsubscribe at any time. If you would like to sign up, here is the link:

 ecclesiastical.com/signup



Why should net zero be a focus for churches?

A Q&A with the Church of England



BENEFACT TRUST



Julian Atkins

In 2024, our Group's charitable owner, Benefact Trust, pledged £1.5m towards the Church of England's ambitious goal of reaching net zero by 2030. Benefact Trust's funding is focused on equipping and inspiring churches across the UK to start their journey to net zero and reduce their impact on the environment.

Benefact Trust sat down with Julian Atkins, Net Zero Programme Director for the Church of England, to talk through some of the most commonly asked questions about the Church's net zero goal.

Whilst many of us want to play an active role in tackling climate change, the prospect can seem overwhelming due to the scale of the issue, the urgency to take

action and the abundance of complicated information. In Benefact Trust's short Q&A with Julian, he emphasises how important it is to keep things simple and start small.

Julian discusses what net zero actually means, why the Church has a responsibility to reduce its impact on the climate and low-cost ways to get started. Watch 'Net Zero and the Church' on Benefact Trust's YouTube channel:

 youtube.com/@benefacttrust

Here you'll find a host of helpful videos, including a full podcast with Julian Atkins.

Ecclesiastical supports sabbaticals

Ecclesiastical aims to support Anglican clergy by offering financial assistance for life-affirming sabbaticals through their **Ministry Bursary Awards** (MBAs).

Established in 1987, these awards have distributed over £1.4 million, benefiting more than 1,500 clergy members. An MBA can rejuvenate and enhance the ministerial development of clergy, offering them opportunities to engage in extended study, travel, or other enriching activities that can have a lasting impact on their personal growth and to the ministering of their congregations.



St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Kolkata, West Bengal, India

The **Revd Adam Dickens** is a recent recipient of such an MBA and he told Ecclesiastical:

“ I was very grateful for the MBA grant as it facilitated my sabbatical visit to Kolkata and wider West Bengal where I spent a month engaging with projects run by the Cathedral Relief Service of Kolkata Cathedral, as well as visiting various establishments that came under the ambit of the Diocese of Calcutta; these included churches, schools, colleges, a TB clinic, an AIDs hospice and a residential home.

“ It was an extremely rich time as I was offered a window into the joy and despair of life for people living in the city (as well as some of the rural areas in the state of West Bengal) and the creative ways in which church communities were responding. It provided interaction with a very different culture to the one I'm used to inhabiting, with all the challenges and growth that comes with it. ”

The application window for the 2026 MBA programme opens in spring 2025 and closes in September 2025. In 2026, we are particularly keen to see more sabbaticals which aim to support the drive for carbon net zero.

If you would like to find out more about the Awards, including eligibility criteria and application details, please visit:

 ecclesiastical.com/mba



Give yourself a financial health check

In today's world, with the high cost of living and rising taxation, it's more important than ever to ensure your finances are in top shape.

Expert advice for clergy



Ben Dabbs




Ben Dabbs, an independent financial adviser with Ecclesiastical Financial Advisory Service (EFAS), emphasises the importance of financial planning for clergy. “With little time available for clergy in their busy lives to focus on themselves, it's important for them to seek expert advice to manage their finances effectively and ensure their personal well-being and that of their

dependants is planned and catered for,” he explains. “Too often, clergy members will delay financial planning until the twilight of their ministry, which can lead to unnecessary hardship.”

Plan ahead with confidence

To help you review your financial arrangements, such as life assurance, pension savings, investments, mortgage options¹ and retirement planning, it's worthwhile seeking expert advice from an independent financial adviser who understands your circumstances and can put in place a plan to help give you peace of mind for the future.

If you would like to arrange a financial health check or receive a brochure providing information about the advice and services available, please contact EFAS at:

 **0800 107 0190**
 **getadvice@ecclesiastical.com**
 **ecclesiastical.com/financial-advice**

¹Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage. The value of your investments including pension investments can fluctuate, and you may not get back the amount you invested. Your capital is at risk.



Join the Movement for Good



Ecclesiastical is part of the Benefact Group and we do financial services differently – we give all available profits to charity and good causes. It's thanks to our customers that we can make this happen.

The Movement for Good Awards is our annual giving programme and anyone can get involved. The Awards give you the opportunity to nominate the charitable causes that matter most to you.

We're proud to have supported churches, Scouts groups, food banks, hospices, heritage charities and more, all nominated by their supporters.

How to nominate a charity or church to win £1,000

1. Visit movementforgood.com/ecclesiastical
2. Nominate before 15 December 2025. Your nomination will be included in all the remaining £1,000 draws in 2025, so the earlier you nominate, the more chances you have. It's one nomination per charity, per person, so you can get as many as you like in the mix.
3. Further down the page, there are resources you can personalise and share with your colleagues and congregation to encourage more nominations.
4. Keep scrolling to sign up for notifications, including special £5,000 draws and larger awards through partnership funding.

You'll also find more information about the Awards, including the terms and conditions at:

 movementforgood.com/tc

Best of luck!

Trust Ecclesiastical to insure your home and give back to your church!

As a church official, your home could serve as both a living space and a place for your ministry. You might host prayer meetings and counselling sessions from your home, or even help parishioners plan weddings and funerals. You will be supporting your parishioners throughout the years, and Ecclesiastical Insurance is there to support you, with their tailored home insurance policies.

A home insurance policy from Ecclesiastical Insurance can be adapted to suit the needs of the clergy in your work on behalf of the Church, or the general needs of your congregation and community.

Ecclesiastical Home Insurance

Ecclesiastical Home Insurance provides up to £750,000 for buildings and £75,000 for contents as standard. This cover includes protection for your home, personal belongings and even contents away from home up to £3,500. Additionally, 24-hour home emergency assistance and legal expenses are included, helping to ensure you are covered in unexpected situations.

But there is more!

When you take out a new home insurance policy with Ecclesiastical, they will donate £130 to an Anglican church or cathedral of your choice¹ – this programme has already contributed over £500,000, to churches across the country.



You can trust Ecclesiastical. They regularly win coveted awards for their home insurance products. In November last year, they retained their top spot in the Fairer Finance Home Insurance league table for a record twentieth time and remain the UK's most trusted home insurance provider!² Importantly, in today's online world, they also have an 'Excellent' score on Trustpilot too.³



When you talk to the friendly experts at Ecclesiastical's UK-based Head Office, they will work with you to make sure that your home and its contents are well-protected against a variety of risks. By choosing Ecclesiastical, you're not just insuring your home; you could also be helping your church. Call us today!

 **0345 777 3322** and quote **CHOPS25**
 **ecclesiastical.com/homeinsurance**

¹Terms and conditions apply. Visit ecclesiastical.com/trust130-terms. ²Fairer Finance Home Insurance customer experience rating, spring and autumn 2015 – 2024. ³Trustpilot reviews – 419 between 1 February 2023 – 14 April 2025. Correct at time of going to print.

New Worshipping Communities update



Kim Brown

Many New Worshipping Communities (NWCs) have been springing up over recent months as we work towards our diocesan priority of creating 100 NWCs by 2030.

These are aimed at people of all ages in our communities who are spiritually curious and yet are not part of a church community, perhaps because they feel there are barriers to them attending a traditional church service. They may be families with young children, they may be neurodivergent and/or have disabilities, or they may have never been to church before and are worried about knowing what to do and when.

New Worshipping Communities offer a more informal and relaxed form of worship, sometimes in a different setting to a church which members of the community may be more familiar with, and feel is more accessible. Having a NWC as part of your mix of services helps ensure a range of ways for people to come to faith and

worship God. To support parishes in developing these, a Guide to NWCs has been developed and is available on the diocesan website.

With a foreword from our bishops, the Guide includes advice and answers to frequently asked questions for those who are in the process of establishing a New Worshipping Community.

Diocesan NWC Enabler, Kim Brown, said: "This new guide sets out a range of advice for parishes as they begin to think about establishing a NWC, including developing discipleship and thinking about giving as well as considering what liturgy would be appropriate. It also includes advice on safeguarding. We are asking parishes to ensure that all NWCs are registered on their parish safeguarding dashboard and to complete a form included in the guide so that we are aware of the communities being established."

Parishes can also access further support through joining a learning community. Those churches who are part of the Myriad community are now in their second year of meeting together. The community provides an opportunity for members to discuss their ideas and challenges in a mutually supportive environment, and receive feedback, inspiration and encouragement from other members of the group.

Kay Mason who leads a NWC in Kempsey has been part of the group. She said: "Attending the learning community and meeting other people on a similar journey really helps. Other people share ideas that you might not have thought of, and it has given me confidence that we're going in the right direction with the journey we're taking people on. Through the community, we are being equipped to help others to grow in faith."



There will be a new opportunity for parishes to join with the Greenhouse learning community in October, which is an offering from the national Church. This will meet three times a year over two years and will provide support as churches think through what they might be able to offer to their community, develop their ideas into a NWC and ensure that it provides a discipleship pathway.

Kim said: "NWCs provide an experimental space for churches. I'm encouraging people to give something a go for six months and then to reflect and adapt using what has been learnt during that time. We're now about 3-4 generations away from the time when everyone attended Sunday school, and we need to be developing something that will support people starting a long way back in their faith journey. Trying something new is not about displacing or disrespecting traditional forms of worship – we are all one body – but about offering something different to reach people who live and work differently."

Churches don't have to start something completely new, but instead might want to explore extending something that is already successful – for example strengthening engagement with families at a toddler group.

"St Kenelm's Church in Clifton-on-Teme have been running a successful Warm Welcome lunch gathering in the village hall for the past couple of years. The team are now starting to incorporate Soul Space, with a short time of worship and prayers immediately after the lunch for anyone who wants to stay," continued Kim. "When people already feel comfortable and trust the leaders then there are more opportunities to begin to tell them about our faith and help them develop their own."

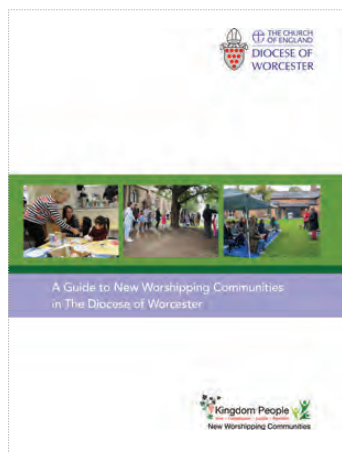
"We don't know where the Church is going to be in 10 or 20 years' time, but developing New Worshipping Communities is all about setting up spaces where we can try to imagine and learn what works for people without throwing out everything we know and love about church," said Kim.

Find out more about NWCs on the diocesan website:

 cofe-worcester.org.uk/new-worshipping-communities

or contact Kim Brown on

 kbrown@cofe-worcester.org.uk



Harvington Youth Project



Matt Cook

Harvington is a village located in a rural area four miles north of Evesham. St James the Great is Harvington's C of E church and is part of the ARCH benefice. The church has a small congregation on Sundays of between 10-20 people. However, they work together with Harvington Baptist Chapel as the steering group for Harvington's thriving youth project, which has been running for three decades and has 40 young people from the village attending every week.

Harvington Youth Project is open to all families in the village and provides mid-week youth provision during term-time. Matt Cook is the current Youth and Children's Worker at the project and started around six months ago. He runs youth groups three nights a week during term-time, for different age groups covering ages 7 – 18, grouped into first, middle and high school age groups. The groups all run for up to an hour and a half and only charge a nominal fee of £1.



Matt said: "Thanks to the support of my incredible team of volunteers, Harvington Youth Project provides a safe space for our young people. I always want to give every child and young person the best experience possible, so that they go forwards into adult life feeling that the church is somewhere they can turn to. I want them to think and remember that the youth group was always there when they needed it, or that people at the church were always kind. That's so important."

Matt is the only paid worker at the Harvington youth project so he really values being part of the diocesan children, youth and families' ministry network, facilitated by diocesan Programme Lead for Children and Young People, Simon Hill. Matt said: "It's always nice to be reminded there is wider work going on and a co-ordinated effort across the Diocese to raise engagement with children and young people. It's been really helpful for working out our aims and direction."

All of the youth groups are faith-based. Every week there is a bible story and discussion with the groups currently exploring the life of Jesus together, taking Christmas as the starting point and Easter as the end point.

Matt said: "It's very hard to follow someone if you don't know who they are, so we're going through the whole of Jesus' life, looking at all of the difficulties he faced and the trials and temptations he overcame. Hopefully at the end of it the young people can make an informed decision about whether Jesus is someone they want to dedicate their lives to."

To explore the possibility of having children and youth work support in your parish, please contact **Simon Hill**, diocesan Programme Lead: Children, Young People and Families, on:

✉ shill@cofe-worcester.org.uk



For more information

Call: 0345 777 3322 **Email:** churchteam@ecclesiastical.com

Facebook: Ecclesiastical

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