

THRIVE-ing

Multi-Parish Benefice Learning Communities

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As part of the Rural Hope Project the Diocese is investing in the CPAS THRIVE learning programme. As the Rural Field Officer for Dorset [RFO], I was able to spend a day with 6 rural multi-parish benefices undertaking THRIVE in the Bristol Diocese.

They were all half way through the two-year learning journey and all of them reported that it had been a positive and productive experience for them and their churches.

It's important not to see this as a 'course' where you simply turn up and are given a load of information on how to develop your churches. Rather this is a shared learning experience between churches and benefices over a two-year period. Yes, there is good solid input from the CPAS leaders, but it is not prescriptive. As anyone knows who ministers in rural parishes, one size does not fit all. Like a good tweed suit it has to be made to measure! The real creative process happens in the sharing of ideas between the benefices participating, sharing what has worked and not worked in their particular context. This coupled with the input from the CPAS leaders enables each church and or benefice to tailor its own programme for mission, outreach and growth.

So how does it work? Firstly, each benefice that signs up has to find six participants for the two-year learning journey. These should be a mix of ordained and lay. Six benefice groups then combine to form a THRIVE Learning Community. Over the two-year programme, the Community will meet together four times, looking at the following areas:

1. **Journey:** where have we come from and what is God's call for us at this time?
2. **Leadership:** how can we best support current leaders and grow new ones?
3. **Discipleship:** how can we deepen our journey of faith and share faith with others?
4. **Mission:** how can we show God's love in a hurting world in our actions and words?

In between these six-monthly meetings, benefices and churches look at a particular piece of work or project to undertake. This might be something missional like setting up a Fresh Expression such as Café Church, Breakfast Church or something more structural like how to get a benefice working together more effectively.

Participating benefices can then ask for support in their various projects from their RFO. This gives some extra capacity and support to clergy as well as bringing a fresh pair of eyes and some additional expertise to a project. The really good news is that this is all FREE and the diocese will even cover transport costs of getting to the THRIVE training hub meetings and lunch.



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The first Dorset THRIVE training launches in March 2019, with a second in Wiltshire on 14 June 2019. We shall also be running further training opportunities in both Dorset and Wiltshire commencing in 2020, so there will be time to sign up for these even if you cannot make this year's.

If your benefice is interested in becoming part of the THRIVE learning community, then please speak to your Archdeacon or your RFO: contact details are below.

RFO for Dorset: Richard Hancock, canonrick@icloud.com

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