

## Salisbury Diocese Community Hubs

### Vision

To build a network of Community Hubs across the diocese focussed initially on market towns and their surrounding rural areas. In developing this network of Community Hubs we are supporting the Diocese in the delivery of the core priorities for growth:

**Transforming Lives and Communities:** The hubs start at a point of working with and being with children and young people (CYP) of all ages (Under 5's, 5 –11s and 11- 18s) to create spaces for children and young people to belong, be agents of change through courageous advocacy, to flourish, taking seriously their emotional wellbeing and mental health and to engage in and explore questions of spirituality and faith in a way that is holistic, safe, understandable, and empowering. Enabling their voice and leadership capacity to be integral to, and at the core, of the process of change in their contexts, working in partnership with God, each other and those around them.

**Collaborative Leadership:** Bringing school and church leadership together in these communities to be the engine for change in collaboration with wider groups and organisations each contributing from their gifts, skills and resources. So that the people can transform their communities as they respond to the Holy Spirit in their local situation and that the hub activities are an authentic expression of church and mission in that place.

**Discipleship and Evangelism:** Being open to new ways of encountering God through the experiences lives and stories of CYP and learning with and from young people about this. Through facilitating ways for the local community to be with children and young people, listening to them and hearing how they encounter the world around them to learn from them and enable them to recognise the spiritual encounters they experience and how this impacts their spiritual growth and development. Together explore how this may be a first step to or an expression of faith and walk together as this deepens. Being open to change within our existing worshipping communities and imagining new ones.

### Context

This work has grown from a recognition of the need to more effectively serve the needs of children and young people in the Diocese and from consultation with them about what this would actually mean from their perspective to a joint piece of work, which is intentionally rooted in the ongoing growth of the collaborative partnership between Diocesan Board of Finance and the Diocesan Board of Education. Community Hubs began before the advent of Growing Faith, but has found further articulation in the language of Growing Faith. Creating a culture of *spiritual encounter, connected communities, imaginative practice* and the vision for instinctive engagement with children and young people alongside the Diocesan priorities for growth.

### Theology

Many children and young people are disconnected from formal religion, do not believe in God and have a negative view of religious organisations (Root A. 2017 *Faith Formation in a Secular Age* Baker, Grand Rapids). In consultation with children and young people in this diocese in 2017, this view was clearly reflected in their responses, for example they overwhelmingly felt that faith's main

contribution to the world was conflict. We also know, however, that this is something that CYP are not satisfied with. In recent work carried out by the National Church Education Dept young people said churches should be welcoming, inclusive, respecting, tolerant and kind (National Younger Leadership Groups, *What church would you like to see?* Report 1 - December 2020). It is into this context that the hub model can give us a different way of working and an opportunity to connect with CYP where they are, in their lived experiences through schools, churches, household and the wider community. Taking a holistic approach to need, an opportunity to explore their spirituality and giving them agency to bring about change.

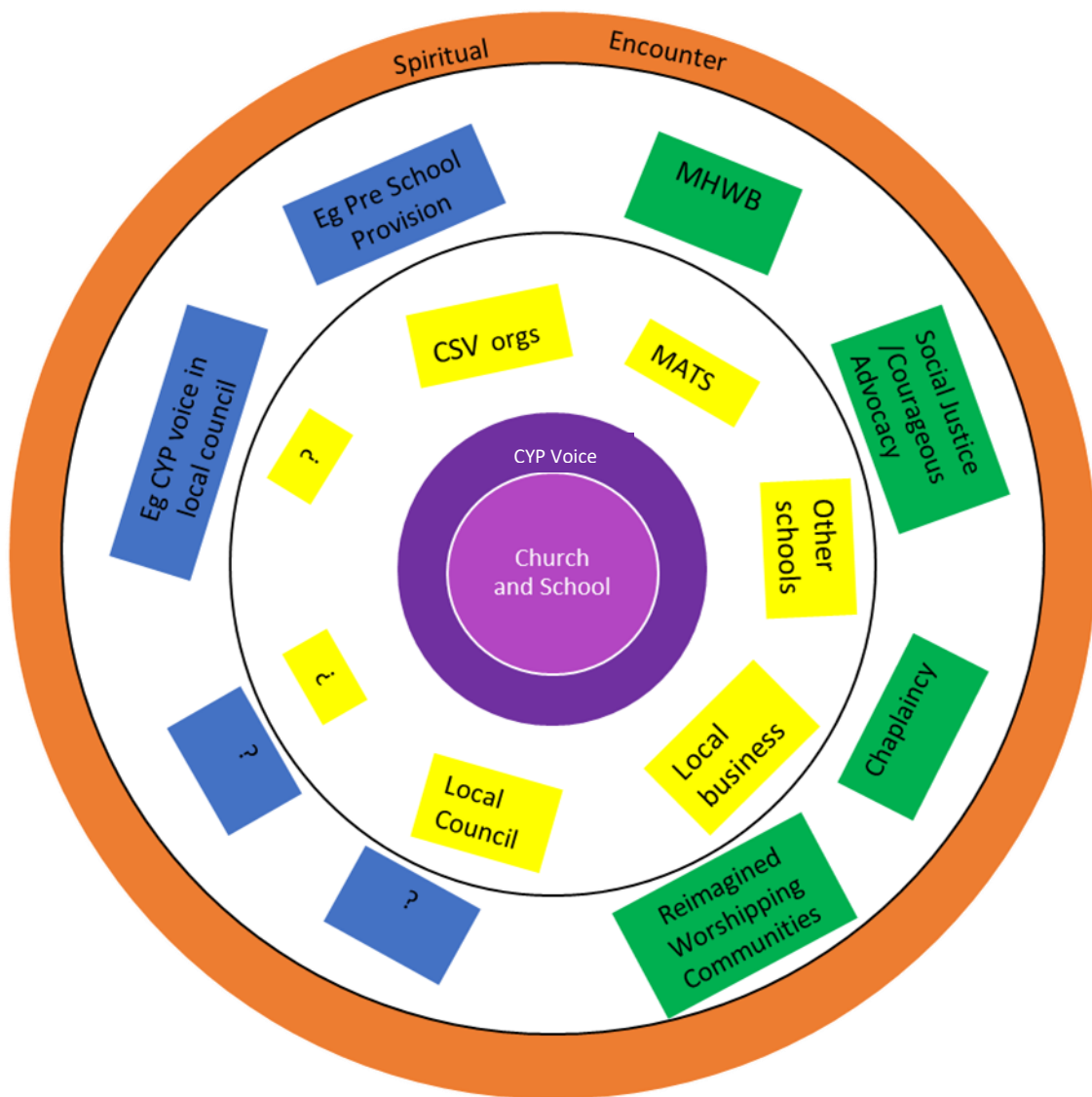
At the heart of the hub model is a Christological understanding. In the incarnation we see Jesus dwelling among us, meeting people where they are, spending his time on the edge and outside of the religious structures of the day, living out God's transforming presence in that space and inviting others to share in that. Jesus routinely ministered to physical, emotional and spiritual need all together to people from all walks of life, including children. Bringing about healing and challenging injustice and revealing God's love, compassion and challenge through these encounters. It is this that we seek to see in the work of the hubs. Expecting people to encounter the living God who is in and through all creation and responding to this and encouraging and enabling them to bring of themselves and be who they are in that space.

In the story of the feeding of the 5000 from John's Gospel (Chapter 6) we hear of a boy coming forward with what he can offer (5 loaves and 2 fishes) to try to help meet the needs of those around him, through bringing this to Jesus and being open to what God might do he becomes part of something much bigger. Through what the boy brings, the openness of the disciples to that offer even though they can't imagine what might happen and to the power of God the crowd, disciples and boy share in the abundance and power of God in that place. This is a good reminder of what can happen when we are open to the transforming presence of God and are open to others being so as well.

The hubs take us beyond just working for or with people to overcome problems to a place where we can be with children and young people in their experience, in their communities and in their need. Samuel Wells sets out 8 elements of being with: *presence, attention, mystery, delight, participation, partnership, enjoyment and glory* and this model is something that we will draw on to deepen connection with CYP as we more deeply adopt the hub way of working. (Wells S. 2015 *A Nazareth Manifesto* Wiley W. Sussex).

## **Principles and Learning**

The model has been informed by consultation with CYP from across the diocese, aged 5 -18. As a result of the consultations 4 key themes of work have emerged as essential components of diocesan community hubs. These have been identified by the young people themselves as being key in helping them to flourish. How these will be delivered, along with other areas of work that may form part of the hub, will be determined locally. (Depicted in the diagram below.)



Key

Leadership engine

Locally determined organisations

Essential components of hub work

Locally determined hub components

Consultation with children and young people is an essential first stage of drawing up a local vision for the hub, this allows CYP in the community to share how they experience life. Their hopes, dreams, worries, priorities and ideas. This needs to draw on CYP of different ages and backgrounds within the community. Starting with their perspective, places them at the heart of the hub and sets the way to give them agency in their community. This in turn enables the CYP and their community to flourish.

Creating a leadership team from across the churches and schools in the area, including those from surrounding rural areas in a market town context, is a key part of creating partnerships and embedding this as a different way of working, not just something else to do, both for mission and discipleship. This includes working with existing networks and organisations including multi academy trusts, collaborative team ministries, chaplaincy networks and CSV organisations. Keeping CYP voice at the heart of the model is key so other agendas do not overtake what they have said.

The hubs function at the intersection between school, church and household and their respective communities to build imaginative practice, enabling community change as well as providing opportunities for spiritual encounter. Community Hubs provide opportunities for the sharing of good practice as each hub seeks to embed and shape their own approaches which respond to their local context.

Key to the model's missional focus are: being open to, and discerning where, the Holy Spirit is at work in the community and joining in; being open to the possibility of spiritual encounter in a variety of ways and helping those we are walking alongside to recognise that and vice versa and being open to learning from each other

## **Outcomes**

**Culture** – create a diocesan culture which is characterised by listening to God, each other and context. In which children and young people are equally rooted at the heart of the mission and ministry expressed through their involvement in Community Hubs.

**Confidence** – increase the confidence of School and Church Leaders to work collaboratively to grow and nurture cross generational teams which instinctively and confidently work with and be with children and young people.

**Courage** – to share faith and connect discipleship to all areas of life. Reimagining what it means to be church and supporting the emergence of New Worshipping Communities in relation to context. Courage to be communities who are open to listening to how people have experienced spiritual encounter and feel confident in appropriately sharing Christian faith as a framework for understanding these experiences in the context of a living, loving God.

**Community** – growing sustainable communities that are shaped by trust, respect, safety, health & opportunity, aspiration & justice, education & wellbeing. In which children and young people impact and influence decision making both locally and across the diocese.

## **Indicators of the Outcomes**

The indicators act as a spotlight on the outcomes stated to help us to measure progress and should reflect the values of the work that we are seeking to achieve. Below are examples of indicators for each of the outcomes and the evidence we might use for this:

**Culture** – In each hub, areas of work have been initiated by children and young people, supported by adults in their community that respond to the local context and are enabling the community to flourish.

Evidence role descriptions of clergy posts that reflect the needs of the community as identified by CYP, stories from CYP of how they are impacting their communities and the change they are experiencing.

Time frame at least 2 child initiated shared decisions with adults are evident across the work of the hub by year 2 with increasing prevalence in subsequent years.

**Confidence** – Headteachers are able to lead the spiritual development of school staff which is enabling a greater breadth and depth of spiritual opportunities for pupils in schools. Church leaders have stepped into new areas of ministry, or have facilitated others to do so, that instinctively and specifically respond to needs identified by children and young people.

Evidence base: Head Teachers in schools involved in community hub work are able to articulate that they now feel confident and prepared as spiritual leaders. Clergy and lay leaders are engaging in delivery of support that meets CYP identified needs.

In years 1 and 2 of a hub key church and school leaders growing in these ways and in subsequent years this will include young people, and adults from the wider church, school and community.

**Courage** – Church communities in all hub areas can tell stories of how they are now being shaped and changed through engagement with children and young people.

Evidence base: stories of the impact of working with CYP from adults and CYP including stories of how both adults and children are experiencing spiritual encounters and how this impacts on them.

Time frame within 2 years of a hub being initiated we would expect to see evidence of this impact beyond the key leadership team to include people from, for example, the wider church community, school staff and community partners. The prevalence and depth of this impact increasing over subsequent years

**Community** By year 3 of a hub children and young people articulate the significant increase they have made to justice in their community.

Evidence base: baseline from Chub initial consultation, progress from case study cross referenced with a revisit to relevant topics from the consultation in conversation with children and young people. Engagement of other community organisations in response to CYP identified need.