

# The roots to grow, the path to follow, the wings to fly

*This picture, taken on 31st Jan 2024 beside the Wellbeing Shed, captures where we are: the bulbs we planted in partnership are starting to show themselves: we can't wait to see the flowers that are so clearly on their way!*



## The Working Group

The Northstowe Growing Faith Working Group is now operating as a sub-committee of the [new Northstowe Church Network](#) (a local ecumenical partnership of the United Reformed Church, Church of England, and Baptist Union of Great Britain) which was formally granted charitable status on 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024. It incorporates Pathfinder Church Northstowe.

- **Beth Cope** (Pioneer minister for Northstowe: Lead Minister of the new Northstowe Church Network and Chair of the Northstowe Youth Hive),
- **Stephen Dove** (Assistant Pioneer Minister for Northstowe),
- **Emma Whitbread** (Romsey Mill's Northstowe Youth Development Worker),
- **Charlie Philips** (RE and Collective Worship coordinator & Year 6 Teacher, The Pathfinder C of E Primary School)
- Ongoing input from the Year 5/6 **Worship Gang** (usually elected by their peers from a different class each half term)

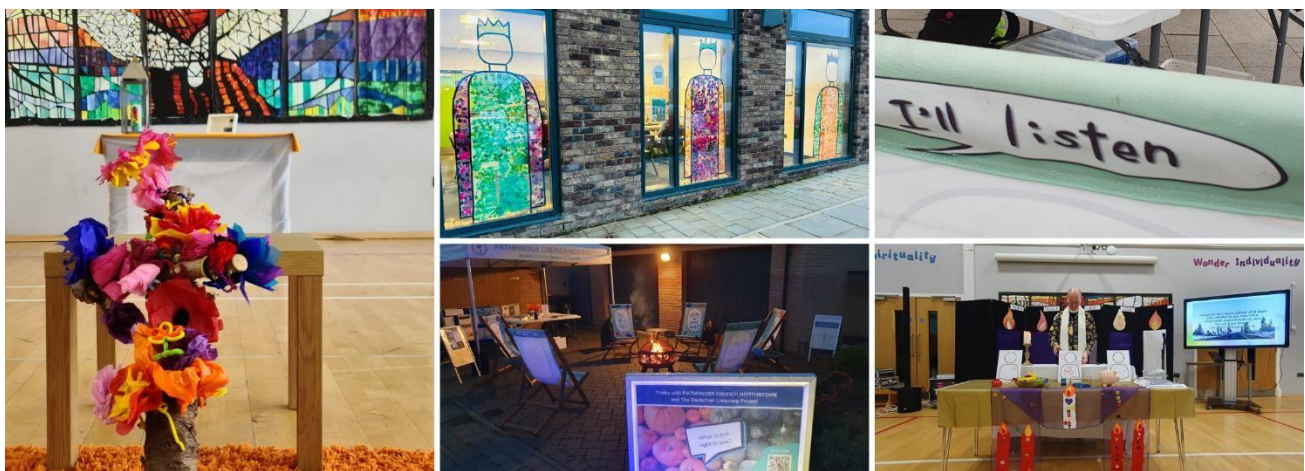
## Stephen's Report (school focused):

The first year of Growing Faith has allowed us to deepen our relationship with **The Pathfinder C of E Primary School**. From a trial basis in the academic year of 2022-2023 we have developed Stephen's presence in school to being two full days a week (Mondays and Wednesday from 2024).

This time is spent exploring **chaplaincy**, meeting with the Worship Gang, delivering collective worship and contributing to the RE curriculum. An increased presence within the school community has led to other opportunities for us to be involved in the **life of the school community**, for example the reception information evening, parents' evenings and contributing to Christmas carol concerts.

Alongside this we have continued to develop the ‘**Rooted Stations**’ – refining to assure they are usable in the best possible way.

In the next year we hope to bring to fruition plans for **cross curricular art and RE projects**, explore and develop our **outdoor spaces** (building the permanent labyrinth near where we planted trees, establishing a Rooted Garden, continuing to develop the Wellbeing Shed, and exploring options around the pond area) as well as discerning other partnership opportunities. In particular, focusing on the overlap between “church”, “school”, and “home” with more whole-family joint projects.



We are taking advantage of the potential expansion of the Northstowe Church Network to help Pathfinder Church to increasingly focus on their **connection** to The Pathfinder CofE Primary School. In the 2024-2025 academic year, Pathfinder Church Sunday preaching themes will follow a termly pattern focusing on each aspect of the Vision statement: *The roots to grow, the path to follow, the wings to fly.*

Beth and Stephen have benefited greatly from being part of the Growing Faith “Supporting your local school” national learning cohort. Stephen has similarly benefited from the Chaplaincy stream. Beth and Charlie will attend the National Church of England Education Conference in February.

### Beth’s Report (preschool, secondary, and community focused)

The Growing Faith project is about overlaps, which is where Beth has focussed this last year. Together with other members of the team, we have made a conscious effort to be visible in the community – for example, being in the Northstowe Hub cafe most Wednesday mornings, and taking the Deckchairs to intergenerational community events.

**Little Explorers (time for you, your child, and God)** has grown almost entirely through word of mouth. There is reasonable turn over as people return to work or children start preschool: we are consciously working through how to retain good links with graduates. The

cross-over with the school is important: both for the families, and the school-church links (as above). Little Explorers loosely follow lectionary themes, with space for worship, prayer, and deep conversation about faith, as well practical parenting and community chat. Starting Rite proved successful, as well as an excellent Parenting for Faith course, focusing on nurturing spirituality of young children. The team has grown to be Beth, Hannah M, Rachel and (time permitting) Becky, with Stephen stepping back to focus more on schools work. Little Explorers is now being recognised as a missional and worshipping community alongside Pathfinder Church in the Northstowe Church Network, with it being the primary church “home”<sup>1</sup> for 29 (13 adults 16 children) of the worshipping community.



Advocacy for **Northstowe’s Young People** remains a priority. As founder members of the Northstowe Youth Hive, we are in process of registering as an Association Model CIO that will ensure there is always one appointed trustee from the Northstowe Church Network. The new CIO will allow both young people and more community groups to become members, ensuring that good partnership working continues across Northstowe. The Youth Hive is not about running “a youth club”, but *“bringing together Northstowe’s young people from different cultures, faiths, sexualities, genders and backgrounds to have fun, develop, and make a difference”*. In addition, Beth continues to run a lunchtime club in Northstowe Secondary College (now partnering with Emma and with Romsey Mill), as well as supporting Remembrance and Festivals. This Christmas, she ran three Christingle services in the Martin Bacon Academy (special needs school) for the first time; they also produced a brilliant Wise Men window display as part of our Advent Windows. Beth is the regular Supervisor for the Northstowe Hub community cafe on a Wednesday afternoon (a significant place of “overlap”) during the open access Youth Club run by Emma.

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<sup>1</sup> I.e. number of regular participants exploring faith and worship within Thursday mornings and special whole-family events supported by Little Explorers, who are not also part of another expression of church. This does not include the core leadership team, as they are currently also all embedded in Pathfinder Church – but the hope is to continue to devolve this leadership.

**In the next year, we hope to further diversify the teams involved in leading the various activities.** Purchasing and setting up the Storage Unit has been key to this – giving wider access to church kit. We are also planning a **Yr 6 transition project** with the primary school to put street art on the side, linked to the primary school (and our Growing Faith Hub) vision of *“the roots to grow, the path to follow, the wings to fly”*

**We will also continue to share our learning.** We will participate in a Diocese of Ely training day in the summer. As chair of the Northstowe Youth Hive, Beth is involved in planning for an October workshop on the role of faith communities in supporting young people in new housing areas, working in partnership with statutory agencies such as the district and county council.