

growing faith



April newsletter

Dear Growing Faith friends,
Updates galore in this fast-changing world of Growing Faith, as we work with you to put children and young people instinctively at the centre. Please skim this newsletter prayerfully and share anything of interest with the right people in your own church, school or diocese.

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2024 Research Conference - be quick!



A TIME TO PLANT AND A TIME TO UPROOT

The Growing Faith Foundation
Research Conference 2024, co-hosted
by Ripon College, Cuddesdon

 29th-30th May 2024

 Ripon College, OX44 9EX



Our research conference will be taking place from 29th-30th May at Ripon College, Cuddesdon (near Oxford). We would love you to be part of the theological conversations around all things Growing Faith at this year's conference. Join Sarah Brush, Claire Dalpra, Matt Kirkpatrick and Victoria, plus our GF researchers for cutting edge thinking and reflection. For more details and to book, [click here](#) - but be quick! Places are limited, so register now to avoid disappointment!

Applications open for new Learning Hubs!



GROWING FAITH
LEARNING HUBS

APPLICATIONS
NOW OPEN!

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faith

The 2025 Hub Application Process is NOW OPEN! We are excited to be launching 12 NEW Growing Faith Learning Hubs in January 2025. Now is your opportunity to consider whether your Diocese, a deanery, a MAT, a church/school partnership or other iteration might become a suitable Hub. Read more about our existing Hubs on the website: [Learning Hubs | The Church of England](#) and to apply to be a Hub in 2025, click [here](#).

Research



A research update:

In a rural Leicestershire, Jonathan Dowman and the Launde Minster community are exploring how faith can blossom through relationships of loving service, that seek the spiritual well-being of all in our schools and wider community.

*"As part of this we are exploring **GOOD habits** of life and Christian faith. The GOOD habits being developed help us to, listen, to notice and to act.*

- Listen: we listen to the bible, to story, and to ourselves. What do we hear and what do we think God might be saying?*
- Notice: we give our attention to those around us and to the presence of God in the world. We seek to notice what is going on, how we feel and where God might be at work?*
- Act: action stems from listening and noticing. If God is speaking and we have heard, if God is working and we have noticed, how could we join in?*

These behaviours encourage children and households develop their own Holy Habits that build and deepen faith. The same principles and approaches are then being used at Evensong, Teatime Service, Brunch and when appropriate regular Sunday mornings. GOOD habits, shape our lives, give us direction, help us to work out our purpose, give confidence and build faith. We can hone deepen such habits, putting them into action in our schools, homes, churches and places of work."

The first ever Growing Faith Research Digest - coming soon!



Keep an eye open next month for the first exciting GF Research Digest, in which Emma Coy brings the results of our recent research projects into a coherent narrative to help stimulate thought and good practice.

New research projects starting September 2024



This year's fascinating new research projects include explorations of teenage boys and toxic masculinity, the role of grandparents, the GF nexus in a parish setting and GF on estates, plus a set of projects looking at the role of music in developing faith in cathedral, church, home and school settings.

Networks



Serving the Local School network

The second cohort of the Serving the Local School networks starts on 30th April – all are very welcome!

The purpose of this network is to:

- Provide **peer support** for people who are working in their local schools
- **Equip and empower** churches who want to serve their local school
- **Share** stories, ideas, resources and encouragement
- **Broaden horizons** of what is possible
- **Build relationships** and **regional support**

Please [read the brochure](#) for this network to discover more and find out how to sign up.

Parachurch network termly meeting

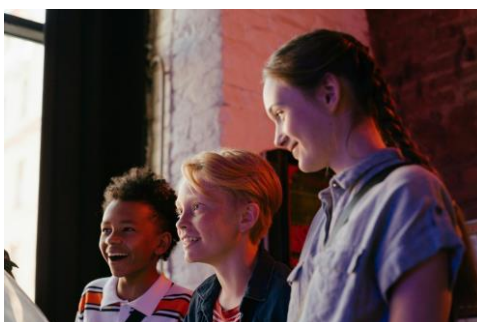
Our amazing network of 100+ parachurch organisations from across the country will be meeting on 7th May 11-12:30.

We meet termly to:

- **Increase understanding** of Growing Faith, the contribution their organisation currently and potentially makes through their work with families, schools and churches, and their confidence in sharing with those they encounter
- Explore **research** together and learn from others in the field
- Share their own work and disseminate **information** and resources to other organisations and directly to dioceses throughout the church of England
- Engage in critical **reflections** and **challenge** with one another

If you are part of an organisation which would like to be involved, please contact hannah.persaud@churchofengland.org. Further information on this can be found on the [networks page](#) of our website.

Growing Faith Youth Advisory Board



Exciting news! Our dream of a Growing Faith Youth Advisory Board is becoming a reality. Starting on Wednesday, 17th April, Tobi will be making monthly visits to two Growing Faith Hubs over the next three months. These visits will mark the beginning of our "Building Stronger Connections" workshops, where we'll establish the Growing Faith Youth Advisory Board for the 24/25 academic year. We're looking forward to meeting with some amazing young people and can't wait for them to come up with a much better group name!

NC25



After an inspiring day at our 'Growing Faith, Sustaining Hope' conference in February, we are excited to announce that the 7th Annual Church of England Education Office's National Conference 2025: 'Flourishing Leaders, Flourishing Schools' will take place on Wednesday 22nd January 2025 at Hackney Church

in London. Be sure to save the date and look out for more details in the next few months!

The Archbishops' Young Leaders Award



Looking for opportunities to connect or strengthen your relationship with your local school?

The AYLA is a great way for schools, home, churches and communities to connect together, as pupils look to serve their local communities. The Award supports children and young people to grow in leadership and character, and to discover what it means to be a servant leader, transforming communities through social action.

Keen to find out more? Come along to a free information webinar. Register for a place [here](#).

Easter Unlocked



Victoria Hutchinson, lay chaplain at Bishop Stopford School, Kettering, tells us about a fantastic interactive event to help pupils understand and connect with the Easter story. What inspires you here, that you could replicate in your context?

*"Easter Unlocked ran for three school days in the Main Hall and The Chapel, asking the question **Who unlocked the tomb?** It was for all forms in year 7 and 8 and 9 – they attended form by form (24 in total). They started in the **Cinema***

Zone where they were welcomed by me along with a welcome leaflet – they watched a 5 min Bible Project film based on Luke 24 covering the cross and the Resurrection. After working out an anagram as a form, they unlocked the entrance into the...

Activity Zone:

This zone had 5 stations and students were free to choose where to go. They all had interactive elements and each station asked a question

- The Pain of Betrayal and the garden of Gethsemane asked: How does it feel? There was a sensory reflective activity holding a stone and answering questions about how it felt and placing the stone and letting go: scriptures were available amongst the plants
- The Voice of the Crowd was a 'Would you rather?' station with fun questions and concluding with a big question : Would your rather have saved Jesus or Barabbas? The question asked: Who are you following?
- The last breath of Jesus asked: Was this man truly the son of God? The beautiful large cross with candles and Bible passages allowed for quiet reflection whilst the craft activity allowed student to fold paper crosses and write messages on the Cross to take home.
- The Hope of the resurrection was a code cracking activity which allowed students to find the right keys and codes to unlock lockers. In the lockers wee Bible verses and a big question including the last locker with a chest of keys. Students were invited to choose a key to take home as a reminder that only God could unlock the tomb. Students spent time looking up Bible references and finding answers to get to this point – all based in Luke 22 looking at the story of Easter
- The me God wants me to be: how do I unlock my potential was a chance to reflect on who they were and to look in the many mirrors and consider questions such as – how do you see yourself? How do you think God sees you? What are you good at? What do you enjoy? Has today raised any questions for you? Who will you ask – they were invited to write a letter to themselves answering these and other questions – they

addressed and sealed their letters and took them home with a plan to keep them and open them in the future.

*After the Activity zone, students moved to The Chapel and the **Contemplation Zone** – to a prayer corner, a music area with Easter worship music videos to sit and watch and reflect, to a last supper table with many paintings of The Last Supper to look at and consider with the question – Where are you sitting at the table?*

I hope this gives a flavour of the event. We saw 660 students over 3 days. Each session was supported by around four 6th formers and 3 outside helpers from various churches including St Peter and St Pauls, Christ the King, Hope Church, St Botolphs, St Mary's Burton Latimer. These interactions and conversations and moments were the significant part of the event and without this input, the event would have had a very different feel. One teacher commented on how peaceful she found the event (which is incredible given that 30 students were given freedom to roam the hall), but students engaged in incredible ways. What a privilege."

Latest episode of the Growing Faith Podcast



This month, Tobi spoke to Mike North, Children and Young People's Adviser for the Diocese of Sheffield. Their conversation explored not just how to hear, but how to really *listen to* the voices of children and young people, and implement deep-rooted

change as a result of their insight. We hope it contains some really valuable wisdom to assist in your own work! [Click here](#) to listen now.

Every blessing in your own ministry of culture change!
Tobi, Stephen, Hannah, Cheryl, Lucy, Elysia,
The Growing Faith team.

Other ways to connect:

Sign up to our [prayer support email](#).

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