

# “ THE COURSE WAS TRANSFORMATIVE ”



## CATALYST

*The Catalyst Class of 2024 from Exeter Diocese*

**Aiming to offer something fresh and highly accessible, Ridley Hall, with funding from the CofE's 30k Project, launched Catalyst in January 2024. Using a hybrid model of online and in-person sessions, the course aimed to both equip and connect those who minister to children, young people and families (CYPF).**

One year on, we are speaking to students and staff to see how effective the course has been and what difference this has made in local communities.



*Amy Fields led a Forest Church group for her local community*

Catalyst was developed to meet the needs of people who want to develop their CYPF ministry but perhaps don't have the time, the finances or the confidence to go into more traditional forms of higher education.

Dr Becca Dean from Ridley Hall said: "Catalyst is about encouraging people in CYPF ministry and recognising that they're already doing great things. We want to develop and celebrate the skills they already have and encourage them to be reflective practitioners who are learning as they go."

Whilst the Catalyst course is delivered by Ridley Hall, there are also local facilitators within each participating diocese. The result is that students are immediately part of a local group, that supports and encourages them in their learning journey.

Amy Fields from Southwark said: "Catalyst gave me the opportunity to network and learn alongside other Children and Youth Ministers in the Diocese and inspired me to want to learn more."

Steve Prescott, who currently works as a Youth Pastor in Staffordshire, said: "I have become more knowledgeable about what I do, and got to know some amazing people who were on the Catalyst course."



*Steve Prescott outside Ridley Hall*





*Dr Becca Dean with Anastacia Obeng*

Students are given the option of completing an end-of-year assessment which is a valuable opportunity to put everything they have learned into practice within their local context.

Anastacia Obeng, who works as a nurse and teaching assistant in London, chose to do the assessment and said:

"I stepped out of my comfort zone to do the presentation, which was nerve-wracking at first especially as I stammer a lot, but I really loved presenting it because I felt I was in my element, and this is what God wanted me to do.

"I have implemented new techniques such as youth participation in other places in the church. The youth in my church feel that the role they play benefits the running of the church, whether that be through being an altar server or writing sermons!"

Gillian Ashcroft, from Devon, chose to run a 'Bag Blessing' service which she wanted to make truly inter-generational - not just something for everyone in the service but everything for everyone throughout the whole service. She said:

"Although it was a 'Bag Blessing' service for the beginning of the new school year, it was also very much thinking about the 'bags' we carry, new bags we may have had to pick up (metaphorically) and what we (again metaphorically) need to carry in them. I had some lovely feedback from a variety of ages. It was really Catalyst that inspired me and gave me the confidence to do the service."



*Gillian Ashcroft*





*Greg Allan (top right) with the Catalyst Class of 2024 for Canterbury Diocese*

**Greg Allan from Canterbury decided to sign up for Catalyst having realised that his two older sons had left for university without being fully prepared for all the challenges a secular environment would bring. He was left wondering how he could better equip his two younger children and other young people in his church.**

**He said: "Catalyst helped me refine my vision for ministry, pushing me to question whether my methods were truly effective and producing lasting impact. Catalyst gave me not only renewed purpose but also a clear, actionable strategy moving forward. The course was transformative, challenging us to rethink youth ministry in today's secular culture."**



*Southwark Diocese, Class of 2024*

## IT'S BEEN WONDERFUL TO CHEERLEAD THIS AMAZING POOL OF WORKERS



*Dr Becca Dean*

The success of Catalyst is reflected in the encouraging numbers of students who have enrolled for the course. In its first year, 132 students from 12 dioceses enrolled, and in 2025 the course has proved even more popular with 152 students enrolled from 14 dioceses.

Dr Becca Dean explained the ethos was to encourage students to "have the courage to think bigger and bolder, and to really grow these ministries that they're already doing."

She added: "It's been wonderful to cheerlead this amazing pool of workers who maybe haven't had opportunities for training like this before. We get a lot of people in the field who don't think they're very clever and then find out they're really bright and they've got a lot to offer the world.

"It's so important to value and invest in our CYPF ministers and it's fantastic to see just how much of a qualitative difference this investment makes to how they feel about their job, how it encourages them to try new things and how it enthuses them in their ministry longer term."



### Want to find out more?



You can find out more about the Catalyst course here



Watch a short film here