



Harrogate Deanery Synod

20th September 2023

St James's Church, Lackon Bank, Birstwith, HG3 2NG

Guest Speakers: Mr Theo Sheridan-Watts, Chief Officer, Wellsprings Together; Mr Adrian Cook and Mr Peter Smith, Consultants at Wellsprings Together.



Purpose of presentation:

To inform synod members about the work of Wellsprings Together in supporting Parish Churches and other faith groups.

Who are Wellsprings Together and what do they do?

Theo started by explaining that Wellsprings Together is a charity in partnership with the Diocese of Leeds, which exists to provide free additional resource to support faith communities in meeting social need and making a difference in their communities. It is not to be confused with Wellsprings Therapy and Training, Starbeck, which is a counselling service providing friendly and affordable therapy.

Theo informed that Wellsprings Together is a small team of people who are specialists in parish-based community engagement and are experienced in helping churches to take the next steps in faith based social action. Theo was keen to highlight the connection between Christian faith and the projects they are involved in. He stressed that their Christian faith is central to their purpose in that it:

- Motivates us to do what we do
- Forms and transforms us
- Shapes the type of work we do

A version of Theo's opening reflection can be found on:-

<https://www.livingtheology.cuf.org.uk/blog/churchgood>

Small Group Discussion

Theo asked members to break into small groups and discuss the following 3 questions:

- What are you already doing?
- What are your hopes for the future?
- Where are the needs in your community?

Feedback included, recognising that:

- There is a lot of building development in the Harrogate area, and it is difficult to know how to draw people into the life of the church.
- Rural loneliness, and dementia exist in an ageing population, and we need to find a way to reach this hidden need; either by encouraging people to come to church or by going to visit them in their home.

Three Streams

Following the discussion, Theo described the three practical ways in which Wellsprings Together Work with parishes

1) Fresh Start.

This stream is for those parishes who are either beginning to engage their community or looking afresh at their context and service. E.g., new clergy, move to multi-benefice, post Covid etc. Wellsprings Together work with the church for 6 months free of charge. They carry out a parish community audit which analyses the community needs, current buildings, and current volunteer capacity, and work with the parish to create a plan to think afresh how they can meet their social needs.

2) Next Steps.

This stream is for those with established work but looking to take the next step, i.e., to start something new or in need of specific support to develop an existing project. Wellsprings Together offer practical guidance and if needed, involve Wellsprings Angels, a team of experienced professionals who offer specialist skills to local social action projects over a defined period of time.

3) Sharing Together.

This stream is for those parishes who may not need particular support but are interested in sharing their learning with others. This recognises that there is a lot of expertise in the parish and involves working with these people to enable them to share their learning and stories in order to benefit the community and social activities.

Theo then handed over to Adrian Cook, to talk about Wellspring Angels.

Wellspring Angels

Adrian explained that Wellspring Angels was established in March 2022 to address a 'squeeze' between churches' ambition for social change and their ability to deliver this change due to the lack of skills or knowledge in areas such as: project planning, data management, human resources, finance, IT, problem solving, organisational development, business design and strategic planning etc.

Wellsprings Together's answer was to establish a diverse group of 10 – 20 senior consultants who have these skills and who can support churches through important and time-bound projects.

Adrian asked if any member of the Harrogate Deanery knows of anyone with relevant skills and experience who would like to become a Wellspring Angel or could help in the Huddersfield or Wakefield area, and if so, to please let him know. He stressed that Wellsprings Angels attract people because of the interesting projects/problems which need solving.

Small Group Discussion

Members were asked to break into small groups to discuss:

- What sort of project could Wellsprings Together add most value to?
- What skills would you like Wellsprings Together to offer you?

Feedback included:

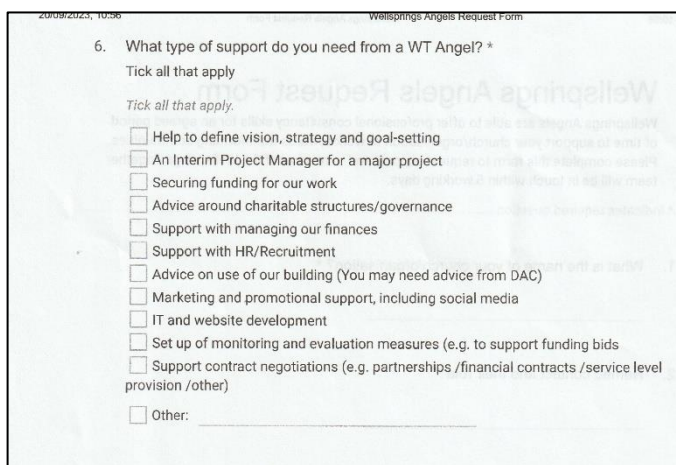
- Someone coming to work with the PCC to help shape their strategic planning meeting.
- Recognising that we have a tremendous amount of talent within our parish and needing help to make the best use of this resource.
- Helping develop life coaching skills. We have many people in our parish who have numerous gifts but no confidence to use them. There is a disconnect between what they do at work and their reluctance to use these gifts in church; helping mentor these people would be beneficial.
- Recognising that parishes are full of gifted, talented, and experienced people who do not want to get tied up in a long-term project. Helping to identify short term projects (2-3 months) which could involve these people without tying them up with 'everlasting commitments'.
- Acknowledging that we are at the epicentre of a new housing development and needing help to explore how we engage with these people, and how to integrate the 'swathes' of parishioners who have come to us from other churches due to closures or mergers.

Theo said that for those interested in working with new housing estate, **Andrew Norman** facilitates a group working in this area. Andrew can be contacted on andrew.norman@leeds.anglican.org

Adrian also drew members' attention to the Wellsprings Angels Request Form which asks parishes to specify the kind of help and support needed from a Wellsprings Together Angel.

Here is a link to both a request for an Angel or to sign up to be an Angel

<https://wellspringstogether.org.uk/initiatives/angels>



20/09/2023, 10:56 Wellsprings Angels Request Form

6. What type of support do you need from a WT Angel? *

Tick all that apply

Tick all that apply.

- Help to define vision, strategy and goal-setting
- An Interim Project Manager for a major project
- Securing funding for our work
- Advice around charitable structures/governance
- Support with managing our finances
- Support with HR/Recruitment
- Advice on use of our building (You may need advice from DAC)
- Marketing and promotional support, including social media
- IT and website development
- Set up of monitoring and evaluation measures (e.g. to support funding bids)
- Support contract negotiations (e.g. partnerships /financial contracts /service level provision /other)
- Other: _____

Adrian then passed over to Peter Smith to talk about Places of Welcome

Places of Welcome

Peter introduced the growing need for Places of Welcome by listing some of the issues currently facing people:

- Increase in fuel poverty
- Increase in overall poverty
- Increased isolation and loneliness
- Poor mental health
- Reduced wellbeing

Peter commended the excellent work that Sam Corderoy, Director of Netmakers, www.netmakers.org.uk has accomplished in spearheading the need for Warm Spaces. Peter said that Places of Welcome are similar but different to Warm Spaces and stressed that the two can comfortably sit together. Currently there are approximately 500 registered Warm Spaces and 65 active Places of Welcome.

Peter explained that the first Place of Welcome was a Wellbeing Café which opened 2018. He said that if you want to know more about the needs of your community, especially during the winter months, then open a Wellbeing Café or Space as they give you the privilege of serving and helping people in the community. Peter informed that a Wellbeing Café / Place of Welcome can be characterised by 5P's.

Places of Welcome – The 5P's

- **Place** – accessible and hospitable, open at the same time every week
- **People** – open to everyone and staffed by volunteers
- **Presence** – a place where people actively listen to one another
- **Provision** – free refreshments and local information
- **Participation** – sharing talents, experiences, and skills

He emphasised that these places provide people with somewhere to go. They bring people together in an inclusive way and help tackle loneliness.

Benefits of a Place of Welcome

They:-

- Provide an all year round presence
- Promote a strong ethos
- Encourage good parish participation
- Offer in-person support from Wellsprings Together
- Provide resources with faith perspective
- Are free

Peter suggested the following activities to engage people and give them something interesting to do during their time in the Place of Welcome. Offer-

- Arts and crafts activities

- Food
- Digital support i.e., using repurposed laptops
- Teaching digital skills e.g., photography etc.

Contact and Questions

Should you wish to find out more about any of the information discussed during the synod, please contact Wellsprings Together on:

- team@wellspringstogether.org.uk
- theo.sheridan-watts@wellspringstogether.org.uk
- placesofwelcome@wellspringstogether.org.uk
- Website: www.wellspringstogether.org.uk