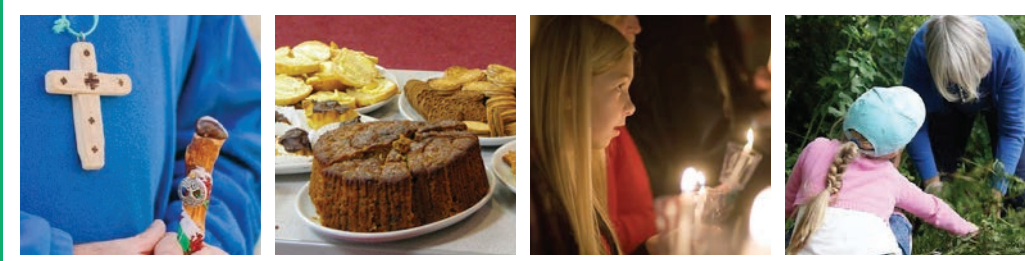


HUBS - A SIMPLE GUIDE



Right from the very beginning, the Christian faith has clearly involved people doing things together. Immediately after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the followers of Jesus were meeting together regularly to learn, pray, see God in action, worship, eat, share, care, and grow. They spent time in the temple, but they also lived out their faith in their everyday lives, and in relationship with one another. Being a follower of Jesus is not just about being found in a church building on a Sunday morning. It is about living out our relationship with God and with one another in our everyday lives.

HUBS are places of:

- Hospitality
- Understanding
- Belovedness
- Sharing

They are ways in which followers of Jesus can live out their faith, discover and grow, find support and encouragement, look outwards to others and upwards to God. They are places in which we can belong, give and receive, learn from one another, and grow together as we become more and more like Christ.

“ They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

Acts 2.42-47



DIOCESE OF TRURO
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

HOSPITALITY

God the Father is creative, generous, and hospitable. The world in which he has placed us is beautiful, abundant, surprisingly diverse and fruitful. Reflecting the image of our Father, we too are called to be generous and creative in our hospitality.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel are called to welcome the stranger, to offer them food and a place to sleep, to allow the poor to harvest the edges of fields, to set aside food for those who would otherwise go hungry. Abraham offered shade, refreshment, food and drink to three strangers by the Oaks of Mamre, and in doing so he entertained messengers from God (or was it God himself?!).



During Jesus' years of ministry, he spent time eating and drinking with others (to the extent that he was criticised for the company he kept, the food he enjoyed). But these meals were key to Jesus; for encountering people, engaging with them in the intimacy of shared food, encouraging and challenging, loving and including them. He fed great crowds, knelt to wash his disciples' feet, and established a meal of bread and wine by which we continue to receive from him today. Many of his resurrection appearances involve the sharing of food like bread, fish, and wine.

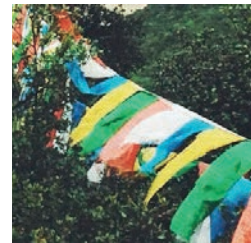
When we, as followers of Christ, meet together it is fitting that we offer this same hospitality. The symbolic meal we share in the Eucharist, is reflected in the coffee and cake, pasta and sauce, soup and bread we offer in everyday life. The simplicity and generosity of shared food is a means of rejoicing in and enjoying together the fruitfulness of God's creation, of growing together in love, and of sharing the stuff of our lives. HUBS are opportunities to give and receive hospitality. This hospitality involves being open and expansive in our approach to others and to God; being open with our hearts and ears as well as our homes. As HUBS grow together, so they can encourage others to share with them, and can look beyond themselves for other opportunities for hospitality (e.g. through foodbanks, messy church meals, or lunches for the elderly).

UNDERSTANDING

HUBS are places in which we seek to grow in our understanding. Understanding who God is, who we are, and how to live as followers of Christ. In other words, this is not just about learning facts, but living differently in the light of them. This is understanding with our heart as well as our head, our spirit as well as our brain. It is an understanding which transforms us.

John Pritchard writes about discipleship as 'living in God's way, in God's world, with God's help'. Finding out what this means is a life-long learning experience, and is so much more effective if explored with and alongside others. HUBS are opportunities for growing in our understanding of our faith and how to live it out. They are places where we meet with other followers of Jesus, deliberately seeking to grow in understanding, no matter what our age or our qualifications.

HUBS are places of questions and doubt, honesty and listening, sharing stories and learning from one another's experiences. They are places in which we read the Bible together, and wrestle with what it means for us today. We learn from Christians down the centuries, and learn from the life of the Church elsewhere in the world. Reading and discussing books together, exploring the implications of last Sunday's sermon, following a Pilgrim course together, sharing with those preparing for confirmation – all these are ways which HUBS can seek to grow in understanding. All the while, asking how we should live in the light of such knowledge, and seeking the help of God's Holy Spirit in our lives.



BELOVEDNESS

In HUBS, we meet together as God's beloved children. This is the most significant thing which defines us and unites us. God's love is revealed to us in bringing us into being, in giving his Son Jesus for our sakes, and in the promise of a new heaven and a new earth which God has in store. When Jesus was baptised, and when he was transfigured on the mountain top, God was heard to declare "This is my beloved Son". These words were hugely significant to Jesus throughout his ministry. We too are beloved of God.

HUBS bring together a diverse mixture of people. We may have little in common in our backgrounds, occupations or personalities – but the profound thing we share is that we are beloved of God.

“ See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are ”
(1 John 3.1).

This makes a difference to how we respond to each other:

“ As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ”
(Colossians 3.12).

That we are beloved of God, will also drive our response to God when we meet together. HUBS are, necessarily, places of prayer and worship. We may pray spontaneously, or using a set liturgy (like 'Compline' or 'Praying on the Way'). We may pray in silence, in words, or to music. We may pray the Lord's Prayer, other favourite prayers, or explore new ways of praying. We come before our heavenly Father saying 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please'. We come before him carrying with us those situations and people that lay heavily on our hearts. And we also come wanting to express our praise and worship for the love which God has poured out on us. Prayer and worship is a natural expression of love in our life as followers of Christ, we express our love of God and we are transformed as we do so. One of the great advantages of praying and worshipping with others, is that when we struggle through dryness or doubt, troubles or hurt, then we can rest in the prayer and worship of our fellow disciples.

SHARING

HUBS are places in which we share with one another – sharing food, prayers, worship, learning and the deepening of our faith. They are also places in which we share with God – listening to him, reading his Word, sharing our concerns and our thanks, our praise and our worship. But HUBS have another element of sharing too – that of deliberately seeking to share God's love with others.

HUBS do not expect to stay the same, but always seek to draw in other people, so they too can discover

God's love and become a follower of Jesus. HUBS will intentionally have gatherings which are welcoming to others, to which personal invitations are offered. Sharing food helps to break the ice, and some gatherings may simply be for getting to know new people, enjoying hospitality together, and making connections. HUBS will at times decide to share activities which will be attractive to those who don't usually attend – a film evening with discussion over pizza afterwards, a walk during which conversations can be shared, a book group which enables questions about meaning and purpose to be explored. If a HUB gathers enough new members, it will be appropriate to make use of material which allows the fundamentals of the Christian faith to be explored.

HUBS also seek to share God's love through acts of service. This giving to others is an expression of the love and generosity of God. It models the One whom we follow, who came 'not to be served, but to serve'. It may involve a litter-pick in the village together, or three members of the HUB serving as Street Pastors while the remaining members pray for them. It may involve half of the HUB going into schools through Open the Book, while those unable to attend help to make the props needed. HUBS can commit to Christian Aid collecting, taking turns to clean the village public toilet, or putting on a monthly coffee morning for those who live on their own. HUBS seek to share the love of God in word and action, for the sake of those who respond, and for the sake of those who do not.



HUBS are:

- made up of 4-12 Christian disciples who commit to discovering and growing together
- not dependent on clergy, but led and enabled by lay people, and always seeking to encourage and equip new leaders
- members from the same parish/benefice/cluster, or even place of work/interest group
- meeting weekly/fortnightly in a home
- deliberately seeking to draw in others, and so to multiply into two new HUBS.

Those familiar with the Diocesan 'Way of Life' discipleship material will have noticed that the four directions of journeying with God are reflected in the make-up and intentions of HUBS:

- Journeying WITH is the whole ethos of HUBS. They are places in which followers of Jesus can learn and grow, discover and support, give and receive together.
- Journeying UP comes from our awareness of being beloved children of God. In our prayer and worship we seek to enjoy God's love, and to love him in return.
- Journeying IN is what we do as we seek to grow in our understanding of who God is, and what it means to be his child in his world.
- Journeying OUT involves the sharing of God's love with those beyond us, through the sharing of our lives, and the ways in which we serve others.

Resources to help:

HUBS – An Introduction: www.trurodiocese.org.uk.

Holy Habits by Andrew Roberts

Living Faithfully by John Pritchard

Pilgrim Courses: www.pilgrimcourse.org

Way of Life booklet and courses:

www.trurodiocese.org.uk/resource-collection/way-of-life

Simple Guides: www.trurodiocese.org.uk/resource-collection/simple-guides

Praying on the Way: a form of prayer to use together or alone - www.trurodiocese.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Praying-on-Way-form-of-prayer.pdf