

Press Release

Church Urban Fund launches new Growing Good Toolkit to equip church communities to grow new connections and make a bigger difference where they live.

The Growing Good Toolkit has launched: six free sessions for small groups that provide practical tools for churches who want to connect with and serve the needs of their local community this Lent.

It is estimated that churches contribute to at least 35,000¹ social action projects across our country that directly support their local communities, but many report having insufficient time and resources to meet rising need.

The Growing Good Toolkit is based on a three-year research project from Theos and Church Urban Fund that explored the relationship between social action, growth, and discipleship in churches across England. This research identified five common themes shared by churches that are growing faithfulness and fruitfulness: presence, perseverance, hospitality, adaptability, participation.

The Growing Good Toolkit includes six sessions of reflection, discussion, prayer, and take-away actions to help churches journey through Lent. Churches can use all six sessions over the six weeks of Lent or choose those that are most relevant to their context and vision.

The sessions have been purposefully designed to equip churches and faith-based groups to grow new connections, invite more people to participate, and adapt to make a bigger difference in their local community.

Most Reverend Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, said: *“This Lent, the six sessions of the Growing Good Toolkit – developed based on research from CUF and Theos - will help churches grow in faithfulness and fruitfulness.*

“From small and often unsophisticated acts of kindness, to the large-scale social action projects and campaigns for justice in which many of are engaged, [Growing Good] highlights the persistent presence at the heart of communities that so many churches represent. Those that reach out in loving service to build new connections, new partnerships, and new disciples.

¹ Church of England Mission Statistics, as reported in October 2020: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/more-17000-online-services-and-events-provided-church-england>

“Growing Good is also an effective toolkit for those churches seeking to be inspired and equipped to take action: churches who are aware of the multiple needs, yet also the wealth of gifts and skills, in their community; churches who are seeking practical ideas that can help turn their hunger for justice into concrete action, or churches looking to adapt creatively to the challenges and changes in their neighbourhood.”

Rachel Whittington, CUF’s Executive Director, said: *“We have been thrilled to hear how the Growing Good Toolkit is helping churches respond to the needs in their community, exacerbated by the pandemic. The sessions provide space to reflect on and celebrate the important work churches are already doing. But they also challenge people to see their community with fresh eyes. This is timely and relevant as we all consider how to move forward from the pandemic. How can we grow and deepen our connections with each other? How can we adapt to changing circumstances? The pandemic has challenged all kinds of assumptions – including who does the helping and who needs help. Growing Good provides a framework and the tools that churches need to reflect on the changing landscape and plan ahead.*

For over 30 years, Church Urban Fund has encouraged and equipped local churches to demonstrate the love of God through social action. It is our hope that this Lent, Growing Good will refresh our commitment to loving God through loving our neighbour.”

Churches can sign up to access Growing Good online at www.growing-good.org.uk

Ends.



Image 1: Growing Good helps churches reflect on hospitality and welcome



Image 2: Growing Good equips churches to invite everyone to be part of making a difference

Additional Information

- The Growing Good Toolkit has been piloted in 2021, with over 100 churches across England signing up to take part.
- Growing good is the practical application of the findings of the GRA:CE Report, a joint three year research project from Theos and Church Urban Fund. The full report is available here: <https://cuf.org.uk/uploads/resources/CUF-GRACE-Report-2020.pdf>

About Church Urban Fund

Church Urban Fund is a national social action mobiliser working with and through the Church of England to help build connected, hopeful, and flourishing communities.

CUF provides practical tools and resources to equip local churches to tackle a wide range of issues from homelessness, food poverty, loneliness and isolation, debt and financial insecurity, and strengthening relationships between people of different faiths and ethnicities. The CUF family also includes the Together Network, Just Finance Foundation and Near Neighbours.

Since CUF began in 1987, our belief in the power of relationships, belonging and community to change lives has remained steadfast. We are so grateful to the many donors, partners and volunteers working with us to help realise the great potential of faith in society.

For further information about Growing Good and the Church Urban Fund, please contact CUF's Communications Department on 0203 752 5655 or email media@cuf.org.uk