

## LYNN GOSLIN's story



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**Lynn Goslin** lives in a small village near the North Yorkshire market town of **Kirkbymoorside**, where she's a member of **All Saints' Church**. On the edge of the moors, it's a farming community with a little light industry, but most of the local economy is tourism-based. A bell-ringer and home group



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leader, Lynn retired from her work as a speech and language therapist in the spring of 2019. There are three home groups in a benefice of five churches. Each group has a different focus and a different mix of members (including a denominational mix), but they have all been pioneering users of the new HOLY HABITS group study materials...

### THE STORY begins...

Lynn was brought up in an evangelical church in Edinburgh, but as she got older she was introduced to Anglo-Catholic practice and now describes herself as 'a sort of Anglo-Catholic charismatic'. Her retirement coincided with vicar Mark Brosnan 'nudging' his churches into setting up home groups. She says:

'When we first started the home groups, Mark provided some study material. We used that for the first two terms, but it didn't entirely suit the needs of all three of our groups. One group in particular felt it was too study-based, and we wanted something that was a bit more relevant to our lives, which would help to develop our own thoughts.

'I chatted to a few friends, including [Holy Habits contributor] Sr Helen Julian, and she said, "I've just written some reflections for this - would you like to have a look at it?" And "it" was one of the HOLY HABITS Group Studies booklets. So I took it to the home group leaders' meeting and we decided to give it a try.'

The groups meet weekly, either in the afternoon or evening, and work in blocks of five weeks. They began working with the Fellowship group studies and will move on to Prayer.

'The three different groups are really very different,' Lynn explains. 'In hindsight, we should probably have had more of a discussion about whether they were Bible study groups or home groups. My group is very definitely a home group, by which I mean that it's not there primarily for us to do a Bible study in depth, but it's there for us to do Bible studies with a view to applying it in our lives, and also to spend time praying together, being silent together and eating together - so, actually, practising Fellowship!



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All Saints' Kirkbymoorside Festival of Light

'It's interesting that in this particular set of five sessions - the first time we'd used HOLY HABITS - I really felt that we gelled as a group in a way that we hadn't before. People were beginning to share personal information and also to discuss how we might develop things in the church... Relationships have definitely grown and deepened.'

Members of Lynn's group particularly enjoyed the questions in the study notes and found them 'very relevant and thought-provoking'.

'They've helped people develop their thinking, and people feel they're much more able to apply the Bible teaching to their own lives. They've also prompted a lot of discussion about the way we do things at church: how we

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welcome people – for example, greeting people – and how we deal with baptism parties and other visitors. I've observed the group becoming more vocal and a lot more self-reflective. Rather than treating the studies as a kind of distant, more cerebral process and just dissecting a Bible passage, it's been much more about what it means to us.'

But what does Lynn know about the other two groups' experiences?

'They are very different. One is very definitely a Bible study group... and the other group... is more disparate in its membership and includes some Methodists, some very charismatic members and some people who have very little knowledge of the Bible.

'It is harder for the other two groups. They're both based in outlying villages. For the more mixed group, it's great that it's attracted people from several different churches – but it makes it difficult for them to feed back, and so it's hard to assess the impact on the different churches. The third group is different again – it's a very spread-out, very settled, long-standing farming community, and they move around different members' houses, because it can be six or seven miles between them. Also, because they're doing something much more like Bible study, the group itself has gelled, but I'm not sure what the impact has been on the local congregation.'

For Lynn personally, what has been the most rewarding outcome of working with HOLY HABITS?

'Oh, there's so much to say! With HOLY HABITS, I was really looking forward to every week, which wasn't necessarily the case before. And it hasn't been like I was the leader – I hate the word 'facilitator', but really all I've had to do is start things off with prayer and silence. We do a little *lectio divina* with the passage, and then we go on to the HOLY HABITS reflection and the questions, so I've only had to steer things a bit – I'm really just part of the group and I love it. It has such a good feel about it, so I've loved that.

'I've loved the fact that people's needs are being met. Three members of the group have been recently bereaved – they've lost spouses – and in two of the group sessions people told their story about that and made connections with other people in an amazing way. People are really supporting each other in a way they maybe didn't before.

'The lady who hosts the meetings has been hosting ever since the beginning, but because of the Fellowship focus in HOLY HABITS we got around to talking about entertaining people, and she confessed that since her

husband died she'd really missed entertaining numbers of people. So we said, "Would you like to entertain us?" – so she hosted a lovely meal for the group last week and she loved it and we loved it, and we'll do that again.

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'I've started to take on a few more responsibilities in church, and other people from the group have helped me out. The group is like a little cell: as more of us take on new roles in the church, the group supports us as individuals, and that in turn has an impact on the life of the wider church. So I would say that as a result of studying HOLY HABITS in the group, we're all finding new ways to support each other and to contribute to the life of the church and the wider community.

'There's a kind of synergy between our group and other groups in the community. I remarried four years ago and my husband, who had not been a churchgoer, is very involved, along with one of the other men who comes to the home group, in a men's group called "Menzown", which meets once a month. I've never come across a men's group which is so lively, so engaged and so interested. Although it is a sort of church group, it's not very churchy, but within it there's a certain spirituality, and the home group has been supporting them and trying to encourage other men to join them.



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'I'm also working with children, and we're planning a big Festival of Light event for Halloween. People have been very helpful with that. It's really exciting – we're going to light up the church: I mean REALLY light up the church!

'The group is now linked into lots of things that are going on in the church and is supporting it in all sorts of practical and spiritual ways.' **EH**

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