

Discovering treasure in life's scars



Kintsugi Hope is a charity based in the UK striving to make a difference to people's mental wellbeing - and has already partnered with more than 40 Baptist churches. One of them is King Street Baptist Church in Thetford, Norfolk. Minister Sally Sago explains how the partnership is working.

Why did you decide to partner with Kintsugi Hope?

As a small church we had been praying about our outreach and asking God to show us where he wanted us to work in meeting a need in our community that no one else was meeting locally. Our answer came in a series of unconnected 'God-incidences' beginning at the end of 2019 before the word 'pandemic' and 'lockdown' were fully understood!

The concept of Kintsugi as an art form, the mending of broken vessels with golden glue, applied to human lives, really spoke to us. After speaking with others who were already partners or working for the charity, we began to pray as a leadership team before asking the church to support a partnership with the charity. By this time it had become increasingly obvious that many were struggling in lockdown and that mental health was a big issue.

The values, organisation, accessibility, standards and training of this faith-based charity made it an easy decision and provides the opportunity to walk alongside others and so fulfils a missional, discipleship and relational approach that we felt called to pursue to meet the need around mental wellbeing.

What's happened so far?

We began our partnership in July 2020, trained two leaders and started our first course on Zoom in September with nine people from our church. We produce a set of notes each week which we email or post to attendees to keep and help build their tool kit. After the first course, the group wanted to continue and they meet on Zoom every fortnight to catch up, chat about their tool kit and generally share together. In February 2021 we began a second group of 10, still on Zoom. This time there was a mixed group of non-church, another church, our own church and a few people who wanted to do the course again.

We have more people expressing an interest and so it is hoped that, in the Autumn, we will open a Wellbeing space/café once a week in the church building (which is in the middle of town) for those having done the course

and for anyone to 'drop in'. We intend to start a third group, possibly this time face-to-face and a new leader who has completed the training.

What kind of issues are people sharing?

Issues range across the subjects covered; depression, anxiety, panic attacks, shame, unforgiveness, perfectionism, stress and real-life struggles with lack of self-esteem and self-worth. These are often difficult and painful to share. Some things are not shared but there is an acknowledgement and respect for unspoken experiences within the group. The course is grounded in week one in honesty, and it has been

a privilege to be part of the groups. For many it is a time when they can share how their faith has or has not helped them in their struggles. The myth that Christians are perfect and should not struggle, is well and truly exposed as unrealistic and untrue.

Any general reflections on how people have responded to the course and being part of the group?

The response has been overwhelmingly positive. There has been much laughter as well as some tears. Comments at the end include; 'I am stronger', 'I am more relaxed', 'I understand more

than when I had counselling', 'it really helped me', 'I am not so critical', 'I didn't know I had a problem with...'; 'I am much more self-aware', 'The tool kit is really useful', 'I am grateful for friendships', 'I felt safe to share'.



Sally Sago is the minister at King Street Baptist Church in Thetford, Norfolk, a church which is partnering with Kintsugi Hope.

Read more online

Our journey with Kintsugi Hope – Earls Hall Baptist Church: www.baptist.org.uk/earlshall/kintsugi



Kintsugi Hope factfile

'Kintsugi' (金継ぎ) is a Japanese technique for repairing pottery with seams of gold. The word means 'golden joinery' in Japanese. This repairs the brokenness in a way that makes the object more beautiful, and even more unique than it was prior to being broken. Instead of hiding the scars it makes a feature of them.

Kintsugi Hope was founded by Diane and Patrick Regan OBE after a series of operations and events that took them to the brink; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. They faced illness and loss in their family and community.

They wrote a book and produced a DVD about their experiences.

Through opening up about their struggles they realised how many people have felt alone in theirs, and the great need for each of us to be vulnerable, open and honest when life is hard.

The charity wants to create a movement of Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Groups.

A Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Group is a safe and supportive space:

- For people who feel or have felt overwhelmed.
- Providing tools for self-management.
- In a facilitated peer mentoring style setting.

And the charity believes this can be done through the Church. "The Church is in every community across this country.

It will outlast government schemes and is committed to people's wellbeing – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Kintsugi Hope Groups work in communities through the local church with an attitude of humility – not to judge, fix or rescue, but to come alongside and love one another. We are all broken in some ways and we can all learn from each other."

It has seen its wellbeing groups quadruple during the pandemic with more than 25 per cent of attendees being from outside the church. The charity is now operating in partnership with almost 300 organisations, the majority of which are churches, including 46 Baptist churches.

Find out more: kintsugihope.com