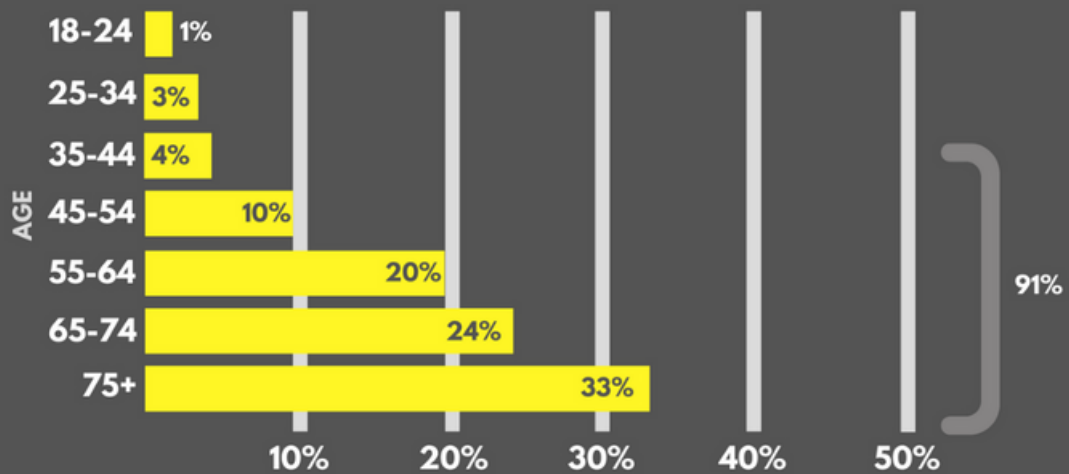


Children and young people's ministry



Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES ⇨ CHANGING LIVES

Anglican affiliation by age⁽⁸⁾

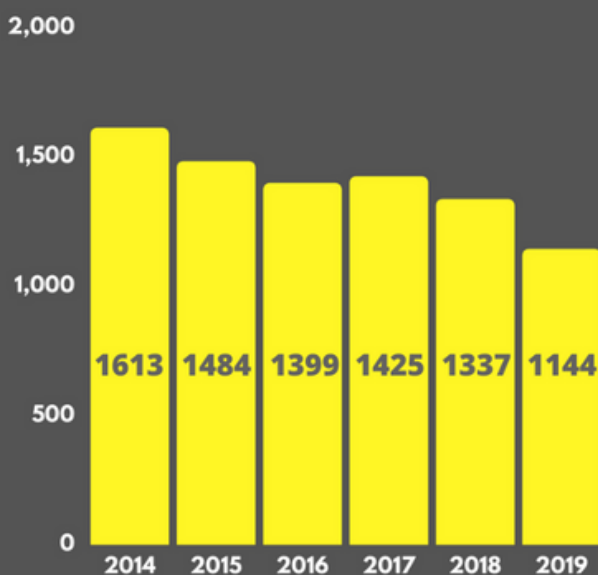


Traditional churches generally and the Church of England specifically have an aging demographic. The 'black hole' of 20's and 30's has increased over recent decades to become a felt reality for the majority of congregations. Many congregations are asking the question: where are the children?

91% of individuals affiliated with the Anglican Church are over 34 years old.

(8) Identity, behaviour and beliefs over two decades. 1_bsa36_religion.pdf (natcen.ac.uk)

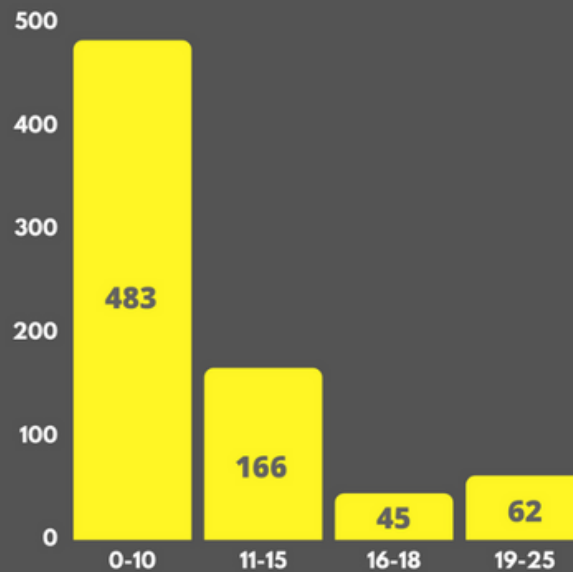
Under 16's Church attendance in Canterbury Diocese ⁽⁹⁾



The decline rate in under 16 attendance at Sunday services has been consistent pre-pandemic. Research by Youthscape indicated that the pandemic may have accelerated this disengagement and reduced children and young people's Sunday service engagement by between 30%-50%. This would mean that in 2022 it is likely that our under 16 church attendance has dipped below the 1,000 mark.

In a 6 year period we lost 469 Under 16 year olds.

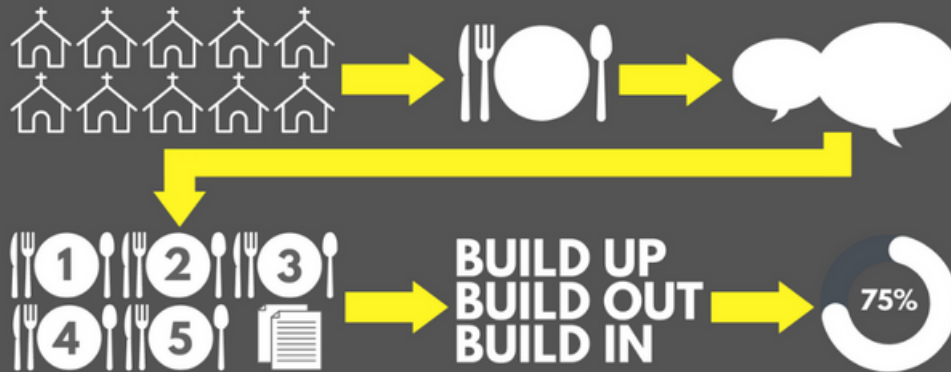
Age distribution in top 35 churches in Canterbury Diocese (9)



The data in the top 35 churches for regular (once a month) church attendance by age category paints a picture that other research has suggested. We lose a significant amount of contact and connection with children as they grow up into adolescence. If one of the goal's of children and young people's ministry is lifelong discipleship then a key age is 18. Young people hold a better chance of lifelong discipleship if they are still Christians at age 18. Unfortunately we are keeping contact with an astonishingly low number of children until they are 18 years of age.

45 young people between 16-18 years of age averages out to just 15 young people per year group. This means on average there are fifteen 18-year-olds in our top 35 churches.

Ys Launchpad



Youthscape have been running Launchpad for a number of years. It works with 10 churches that currently have no offering for 11-17 year olds. They are invited to a diner where the program is explained to them and they are given an opportunity to opt in or opt out of the program.

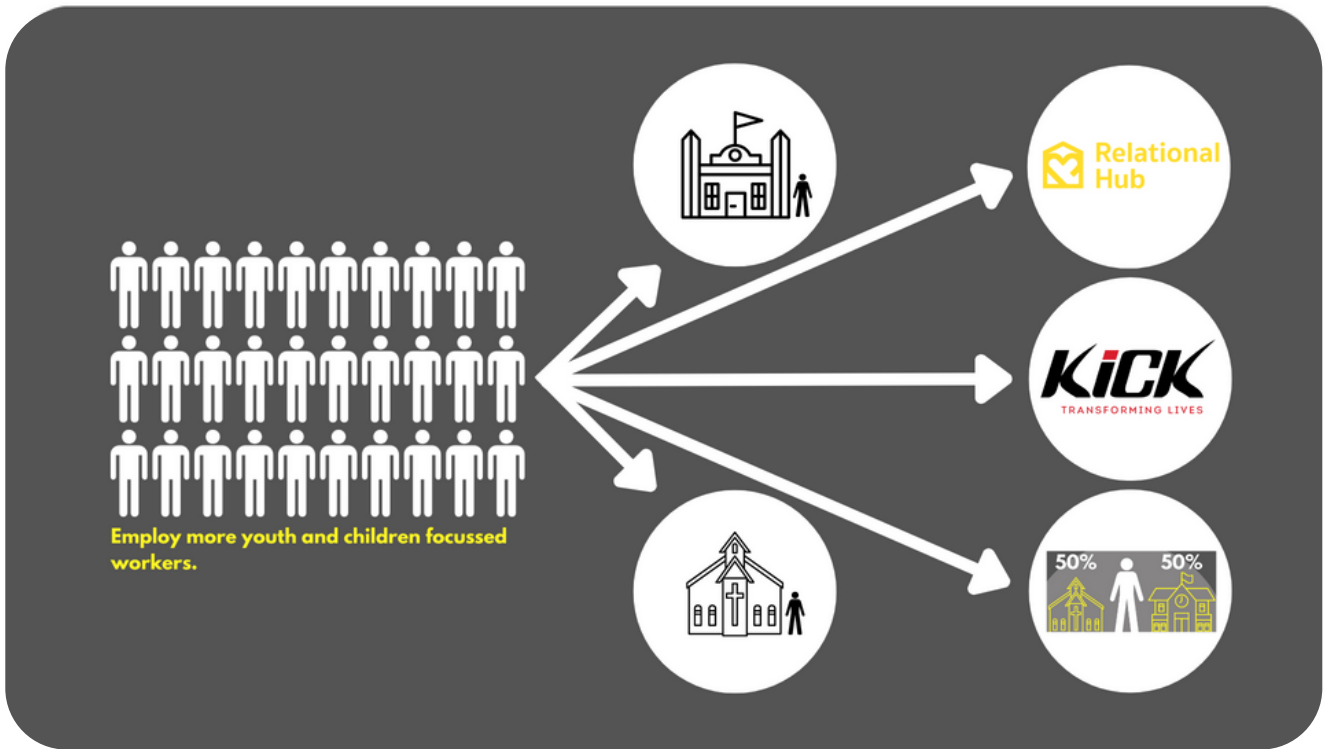
They are then visited in their parish to find out more about their context and to explore the potential opportunities for youth work locally. After these visits the participating church leaders attend 6 meals where the current context of youth ministry is explored. Three broad ways forward are then explored and offered: Build Up, Build Out and Build In.

Build up - This strategy involves building ministry around children as they grow up.

Build In - This strategy is about running ministries that will work with young people in the local community who are currently not connected to church

Build out - This strategy focusses on the 2-3 young people that may be attached to the local church currently and finding out what ministries would work for them and their friends.

75% of churches that engage with Launchpad successfully relaunch youth ministry in their church.



Research conducted in 2019 by ONE HOPE and Youthscape found that:

...the churches that paid a children, youth, or family worker had seven more young people attending compared with churches of comparable adult attendance that did not employ a paid children, youth, or family worker.

It is well known that putting a children, family or youth worker into a church that is not meaningfully committed to ministry with children and young people is not effective. So these findings are surprising bearing in mind that some of these paid children, youth and families workers will be doing ministry in less than ideal contexts. Therefore, it could be assumed that with the right preparation work and on going support (mentoring/training etc) placing children, family and youth workers in fertile ground could have a very positive effect on ministry with children and young people.

"Those who employ a youth worker are only half as likely to be declining as those who employ another type of paid worker"

If youth workers were placed in churches that have 'fertile ground' for youth ministry and were supported and invested in appropriately then the evidence suggests that this could be a potentially effective way forward.

"Youth workers work" -Brierley, 2011

(2)Francis, Howell, Hill and McKenna (2019) Assessing the impact of a paid Children, Youth, or Family Worker on Anglican Congregations in England. *Journal of research on Christian education*, 28:1, 43-50



What are some simple ways to make our church buildings and services more hospitable for children and families?

- Lego table at the back for older children
- Play area at the back with bean bags, books, toys, soft flooring etc
- Welcome card for parents
- Dressing up in the entrance way
- Revisit church service times and days (Sunday mornings are often busy times for families with extra curricular activities, consider moving a service to Sunday afternoon or Saturday)
- Involving children and young people in leading and serving, this gives them a sense of ownership
- Ensuring there is sufficient signage in the church for toilets. This makes newcomers feel like they have been considered and are therefore welcome.
- Footstools in bathrooms for sinks and toilets
- Busy bags available on entrance with colouring, puzzle, books, activity/sticker books, fidget toys, cuddly toys, vehicles etc.
- Ear defenders available for children who struggle with noise
- Changing table in the toilets with nappys, wipes and nappy bags available



Play and pray childrens corner



Parent welcome card example



What underpins a church that prioritises children and young people?

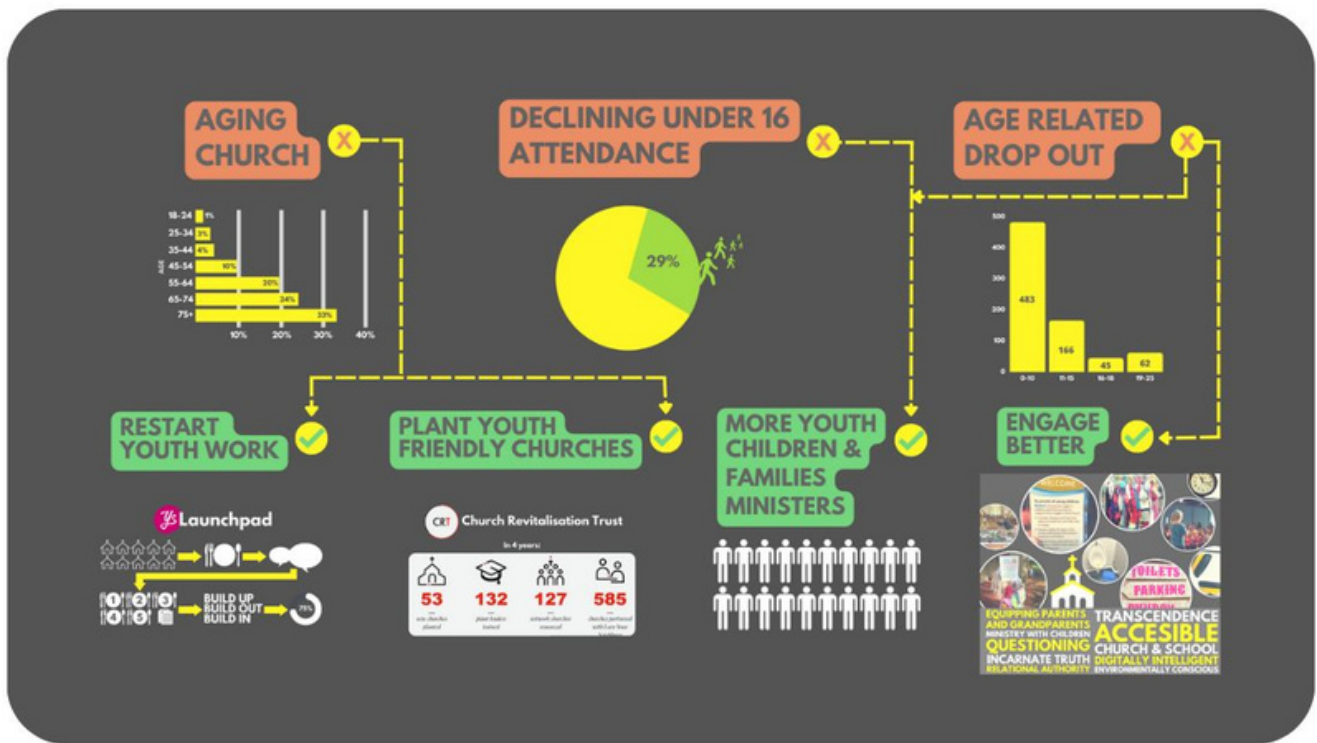
- Recognising the vital role of **parents and grandparents** in discipleship
- Ensuring that children aren't having ministry 'done to' them as passive spectators, but rather doing '**ministry with**' children so they become active participants and therefore develop a sense of ownership of their own faith.
- Faith and certainty are not the same thing. It is so important to allow time and **space for questions** to be asked and to not provide simplistic and easy answers but instead be comfortable with the exploration of faith even when sometimes this looks like 'not knowing'.
- Children and young people don't want to hear abstract truth claims they want to see **truth in action**, incarnated. They want to know the tangible difference that faith can make in their day to day lives. The best way to share this is by example.
- A focus on creating space for children and young people to experience God for themselves in **moments of transcendence** through prayer, quiet, sung worship etc
- Considering everything we do through the lens of how **accessible**/inaccessible it is for children and young people.
- Developing a relationship with your local school(s) (see pages below for more)
- Prioritising a **connection with nature** and the environment, both as a way of connecting with God and being environmentally conscious.



Relational Authority video

Equipping children to live with social media





Our 3 key challenges to doubling the number of children and young people being active disciples in our churches by 2023 can be summarised as:

- An aging demographic
- Declining under 16 attendance
- Age related drop out

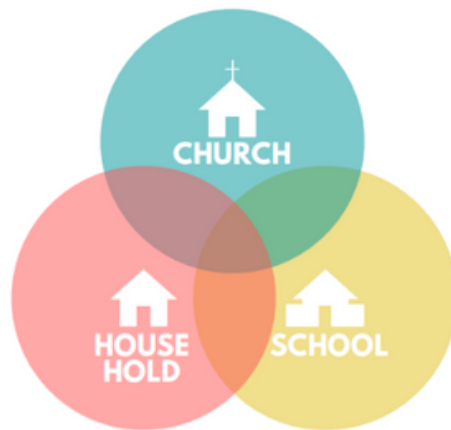
Clearly defining the problem allows for the possibility of finding relevant and effective solutions.

As a potential direct consequence I would argue that restarting youth work and planting youth friendly churches could address the challenge of our aging demographic. The decline of under 16's engagement with our churches could be solved in part by a well thought out strategy of placing specialist roles in various contexts throughout the diocese. This strategy of employing more specialist roles and the vision of engaging better through making our churches more hospitable environments for children and young people will help to improve the drop out rate and disengagement we see as children grow up within our churches.

GROWING FAITH

The House of Bishops have commended the Growing Faith Adventure which is a call for the renewal of hearts and minds so that it becomes **second nature to include and value children, young people and households in every aspect of Church life** for the lifelong formation of faith in the whole of life.

Growing Faith promotes a partnership between the three communities of **church, school and household** to enable the discovery, exploration and growth for all in those communities. The partnership is imagined as three overlapping spheres. What might be done in the overlapping sections of these spheres to help faith to grow?



Connected communities.

Christian faith is discovered, formed and grown in community. Connecting these three communities increases the opportunities for encountering Christ and growing faith with children and young people. Faith is nurtured through interactions between people, and further enriched when this happens across generations.

Spiritual encounters.

Faith begins and is sustained by encounter with the living God. Growing Faith is a lifelong pursuit that requires intentional spiritual practices, which include engaging in conversations about faith and expressing faith individually and together. Growing Faith seeks to create opportunities for these spiritual encounters through the partnerships between church, household and school and across generations.

Imaginative practices.

There may be a need for new practices to emerge in order to effectively grow faith in the context of these three spheres.

CHURCH AND SCHOOLS

*The relationship between church and school has a long and deep history. In the UK **1 out of 4 primary schools** and **1 out of 16 secondary schools** are part of the Church of England.*

There are 33,000 schools in the UK:

over 4,000 nurseries or ELC's

over 20,000 primary schools

19 middle schools

over 4,000 secondary schools

almost 500 independent schools

Over 1,000 specialist schools

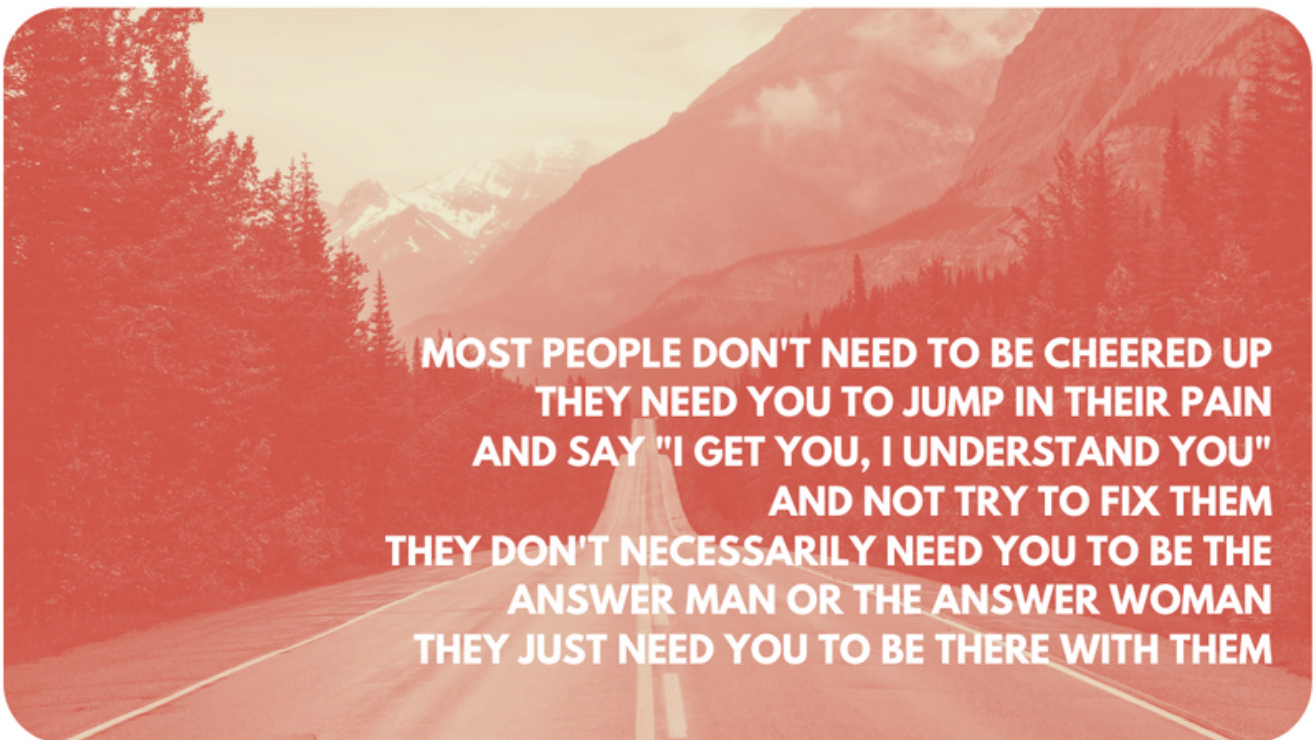
325 Pupil Referral Units

Flourishing church and school partnerships are based on safe, long-term, listening relationships that faithfully and lovingly serve all children, young people and families, without agenda.

BEING

It is not about more programmes or groups, being truly present means being there to listen, walk alongside, cry, laugh and share life with the people in your community.

Be Present...



Be incarnational ...

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.
John 1: 14 (MSG). Jesus set out the example of what it means to be... moving into a community and being actively present in the lives of those you live amongst. Come alongside and join with people where they are. Hold their stories and prayer requests in your heart

BEING

**Listen to me please, I need to talk to you;
Give me only a few minutes;
Accept what I experience, what I feel,
Without reserve, without judgement.**

**Listen to me, please, I need to talk;
Do not feel obliged to settle my difficulties,
Could it be that you lack confidence in my competence?**

**Listen to me, please, I need to talk;
Do not try to entertain or amuse me,
It would make me think you fail to understand the importance
of what I am going through.**

**Listen to me, please, I need to talk;
Do not feel it your duty to approve if I need to tell my story
It is simply to be free**

BEING

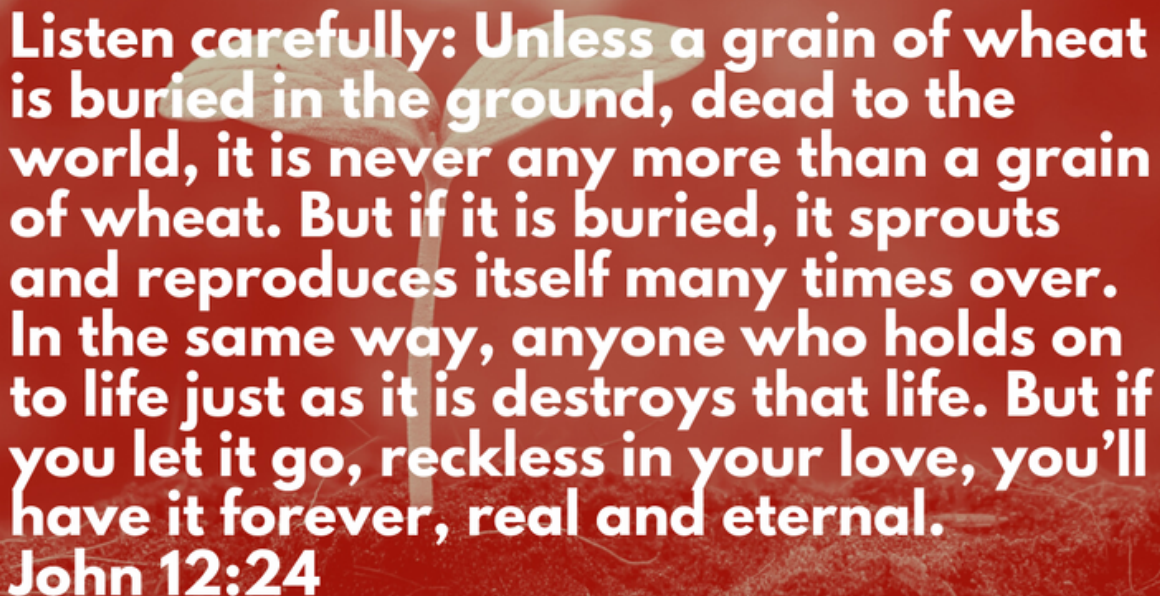
- 1) What does being not doing look like in your context?
- 2) What is God doing in your context and how can you join in?
- 3) How will you keep in step with what God is doing and not get in the way?
- 4) How will you come alongside people, so they trust you with their stories?

SERVING

Church isn't about getting people into a building, it's about getting the kingdom onto the streets.

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (Matt 20:28)

People can smell agenda from a mile away. We do not work with children and young people to solve the problem of church decline or to meet our needs as a church community. We serve schools for their good, not for our good. This is the gospel pattern. Life comes through service and even death. A seed has to be buried in order to create new life. In the same way, we give of ourselves not thinking about our needs but instead, being focused on the needs of others. This is where the life of the Church is.



Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.
John 12:24

GO → **SEE** → **FEEL** → **DO**

SERVING

1) What needs are there in your local school community?

3) How can you Go (leave your current reality and find new perspective), See (Expose yourself to other peoples lived experience), Feel (Allow yourself to be moved by compassion) and Do (Take action based on what you've seen and felt)?

MINISTRY WITH

There is a pattern in Jesus' ministry:

Watch me do it (Matt 4:19)

Do it **with** me (Matt 14:17-21)

Do it (Matt 28:18-20)

Jesus was intentional about empowering and releasing others into ministry. **Ministry with** is the pattern he gave us rather than **ministry to**. This is the same pattern we should following in ministry with children and young people.

MINISTRY WITH

Secure

Power with

Self replicating

Trusting

Selfless

Communal

MINISTRY TO

Insecure

Power over

Self reliant

Controlling

Selfish

Individualistic

TRUE LEADERS
DON'T CREATE
FOLLOWERS
THEY CREATE
MORE LEADERS
TOM PETERS

MINISTRY WITH

THE PINK ROOM

'One Sunday we planned a child-led service. We knew from the beginning that we weren't shooting for a sweet event with children's choirs and proud parents sneaking photographs. We wanted something different. At the beginning of the service, I talked about Jesus' respect for children in his kingdom, then announced that we were going to following children into worship.

I invited the children to join me on the stage for a story. My prop was a bag of cherries that we ate to find the seed in them. I talked about how Jesus taught that the kingdom was like a seed that a farmer plants and it grows into a huge tree that the birds live in.

We invited them to paint or draw their response on a huge blank canvas on the platform. While the children played and painted, the rest of us watchd, and learned, and sang our worship. During worship they blew bubbles, danced, some did cartwheels and the splits. Everyone smiled. Who hasn't wanted to do cartwheels on stage during worship?

In a flash, we knew what Jesus meant when he said, "The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

What silly fear is keeping us from rushing into His inner circle and doing cartwheels for His pleasure?

Let us more carefully consider the children who stand among us. Let us more thoughtfully listen.

These little ones are mysterious beings who, in important ways, are already living what you long for. When we go to church, we want so much for God to come and connect with us that we make sure to leave the kids in the pink room downstairs. That way we can pay attention. (Wouldn't want to miss the moment God finally shows up, would we?)

But Jesus flips the whole thing upside down, like He did those tables in the courtyard.

"My kingdom is already here," He says. "Check out the pink room."

-McKinney, This beautiful mess

MINISTRY WITH

1) In what ways are you doing 'ministry to' children and young people and in what ways can you do 'ministry with' children and young people?

2) What might ministry **with** look like in your context?

3) Is there any insecurity or pride that is stopping you from releasing responsibility to others?

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Collective worship in schools must be:

Inclusive

Invitational

Inspiring

Collective worship in schools is **invitational**, offering everyone the opportunity to engage, whilst allowing the freedom for those of other faiths and none to be present with integrity. All who wish to are actively engaged in worship, whether they are engaged in learning in school or at home.

Invitational language:

"If you would like to make this prayer your own, join me in saying...."

"I invite you to join in with this prayer/song..."

"As a school family our Christian values guide how we think about..."

"The Bible tells many Christians/helps some Christians to know..."

Collective Worship in schools, in recognising the collectivity of all participants, can make no such assumption that all have the same beliefs and values. It must be **non-confessional**.

Pupils and adults should be given the opportunity to think and ask questions. There should be space to **consent**, and **dissent**: to participate and to stand back; and to consider.

The metaphor of '**warm fires** and **open doors**' captures this idea. The warmth of the fire derives from the clarity and authenticity of the Christian message at its heart. There is no value to an encounter with a watered down, lowest common denominator version of faith. Importantly the door is open, all are welcome to come in and sit as near or as far away from the fire as they feel comfortable.



MINISTRY DISPATCH

MENU

FAITH
AT
HOME

INTERGEN
WORSHIP

YOUNG
PEOPLES
MINISTRY

CHILDRENS
MINISTRY

WORKING
WITH
SCHOOLS

ARTICLES
AND
RESEARCH

ONLINE
TOOLS

THEOLOGY

MENTAL
WELLBEING

Go to ministrydispatch.com for youth, children's and families ministry resources, training and links to research.



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