

FAITH IN THE NEXUS UPDATES



Our Faith in the Nexus report continues to be in demand. From November 2020 – April 2021 it has been viewed 440 times and downloaded 352 times.

We are keen to hear from you if you have viewed or downloaded the report: how has it informed or supported your work? Please email nexus@canterbury.ac.uk

The full report and accompanying animation can be found by following this link:

[Faith In The Nexus \(nicer.org.uk\)](https://nicer.org.uk)

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

Our New Nexus Toolkit

Faith in the Nexus Animation for Parents.

Our animation is ready and has a guide, *Exploring Faith in the Nexus* to accompany it.

The animation recognises that all children have a spiritual life that drives them to seek meaning and purpose in life. Often in this search, children turn to their parents with big questions about things such as the origin of life, the existence of God, and life after death.

We acknowledge that being confronted with such questions can be daunting for parents and can leave them feeling inadequate to offer a response. Thus, our main message through the animation is one of reassurance and encouragement.

Parents are in a unique position to stand alongside their child and explore with them. To just “be” with your child, to share the journey of discovery and curiosity with them is powerful and offers an experience that will encourage your child to be spiritually curious, setting the foundations for them to grow stronger in their spiritual life.

You can find the animation on our website <https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus/the-nexus-toolkit>

CDP Poster- Booklets.

We have designed a series of PDF poster -booklets that are evidenced- based drawing on the main findings of the Nexus report. They include conversation starters, and questions for further thinking, reflection, and discussion.

On our website <https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus/the-nexus-toolkit> you will find the following categories for the poster-booklets, or you can dip into the complete collection:

FAMILY RESOURCES	SCHOOL RESOURCES	CHURCH RESOURCES
Faith-talk at Home. Bible Encounters. Reflection Spaces. Children's Conversations about Death (home).	Faith-talk at Home (Church & School). Bible Encounters. Spiritual Wellbeing & Leadership. Reflection Spaces. Sense of Belonging. Children's Conversations about Death (School & Church).	Faith-talk at Home (Church & School). Bible Encounters. Spiritual Wellbeing & Leadership. Reflection Spaces. Sense of Belonging. Children's Conversations about Death (School & Church). Sacramental Preparation. Faith in the Nexus & the Domestic Church.
ANIMATION FOR PARENTS		
Animation & Booklet.		

An Invitation to View our Faith in the Nexus Resources.

This month we are showcasing online the available Nexus resources developed from the research findings. These include a short animation with a PDF guide for parents. Kieran O'Brien, the director of Ministry, will be joining us. Kieran has been working alongside NICER to create a range of animations and storytelling resources to help promote the findings of our Nexus research. In addition to creating animations, he also specialises in storytelling training and spirituality and has worked on many videos, reflections and educational resources related to the Christian faith.

For more information, see our upcoming events schedule at the end of this newsletter.

Faith in the Nexus Podcasts.

Four podcasts that focus on exploring Children's spirituality in a Christian context are currently in production and will be disseminated through the NICER website in July and through the next academic year. The podcasts consist of a conversation between Dr Ann Casson, Nick Taunt and Kieran O'Brien who explore the thinking behind the animation that accompanies the main Nexus report, ([Faith In The Nexus \(nicer.org.uk\)](http://Faith In The Nexus (nicer.org.uk))). Their conversation also enters into a wider debate about the nature of children's spiritual development within the Christian faith tradition.



The first episode explores what do we mean by spirituality. We reflect on an understanding of children as spiritual beings that underlies our research.

In the second, we look at how we can help children's spirituality flourish. We reflect on the different ways adults interpret their role and consider the value of exploring alongside - shoulder to shoulder.

The third podcast explores how we nurture children's spirituality in today's world. We consider how adults can enable children to seek meaning from a place of confidence.

The final episode explores spirituality and storytelling. It takes a different approach to the previous podcasts. We explain why we use storytelling animation to illustrate Nexus research findings.

Faith in the Nexus: A Catholic Context.

Our last meeting focused on the Nexus and the Domestic Church, and what we can do to support the family in the transmission of faith. During this meeting we shared our animation for parents, and we were delighted to welcome Margaret Wickware (Catechist focused on parent-led catechesis, Bayswater parish, Westminster Diocese), Martha Flavell (Open the Book Training and Development Officer-Northeast) and Ronni Lamont (Author of Faith in Children (2020)), who each contributed their invaluable ideas and views on effectively supporting the Domestic Church.

For information about our next meeting and focus, please see the upcoming events section at the end of this newsletter.



NEXUS SEMINARS

Recent Seminars

Let's Talk about Death (Presented on 8th June 2021)

Death is inevitable, but is often hidden away, talked about in whispers. Finding the language to talk with children about death is challenging, whether in the home or in school environment. It's often easier to assume that children are not ready nor interested in learning about death, than to proactively prepare oneself to explore the issue together.

In this seminar discussion Dr Sabina Hulbert presents empirical evidence supporting the claim that primary school children are indeed expecting parents and carers to engage in these conversations when they return home from school. It was a first-class event bringing together diocesan directors of education, church leaders of children's ministry and academics interested in the research area of children's spirituality.

You can view the recording of this recent seminar by following this link:

<https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/nicer/lets-talk-about-death-a-faith-in-the-nexus-seminar/>

Who are the Occasional Belongers?

This recent seminar led by Dr Ann Casson draws upon some key findings from the Faith in the Nexus report that considers the diversity of expression and understanding associated with a sense of belonging and connection.

The main Nexus report found that where a strong, active relationship between church and school was perceived, then there was more evidence of faith-related activities at home.

In this seminar, Dr Ann Casson considers:

- The different ways in which people belong to church.
- The value individuals place on this connection with church.
- Different in kind, not strength of belonging.
- The importance of recognising where people are and acknowledging that perhaps for many that is where they want to stay.

You can view the recording of this recent seminar by following this link:

<https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/nicer/who-are-the-occasional-belongers/>

Upcoming Seminar

Seminar title: Spiritual Leadership of Church Primary School Headteachers

date: July 7th 3-4pm

Ursula Eisl (NICER intern) in conversation with Dr Ann Casson

This Faith in the Nexus seminar explores the role that headteachers play in shaping a church school culture that allows for spiritual growth in children and facilitates children's exploration of faith in the home. Ursula Eisl shares her findings from an analysis of the head teachers use of language to portray their school's role in facilitating the children's exploration of faith. How such language is framed and communicated is vital for church school leaders. The data reveals considerable variation in the language that church school headteachers employ to express their vision for a school culture that fosters growth and helps promote a community of inclusivity.

Are you Interested in Joining our Nexus Research Evaluation Project as part of the NICER Research Community?

The Nexus Research Evaluation Project (a funded initiative) is an opportunity to share the Nexus resources and further develop a network of practitioners, build a picture of best practice, and support school, church, and home to help pupils develop a flourishing and resilient spiritual life.

If you are interested, please see full details below.

Upcoming Events.

Seminar: Spiritual Leadership of Church Primary School Headteachers.

Date: 7th July, 3pm-4pm

Maximum 25 people.

Please contact nexus@canterbury.ac.uk

Catholic Consultation Group: Nexus Resources for a RC context and the work of Ministry.

Date: 8th July 2021, 11am-12pm

Please contact ann.pittaway@canterbury.ac.uk.

Please note that this meeting has been extended for a wider audience, interested in resources for a Catholic context, so please contact Ann Pittaway if you are not usually part of this group, but would like to attend in July.

An Invitation to View our Faith in the Nexus Resources

Date: 12th July 2021, 1:30-2:30pm

Please contact nexus@canterbury.ac.uk

It is planned to continue the Nexus seminar series in the next academic year 2021-2022. Here are some dates for your diaries:

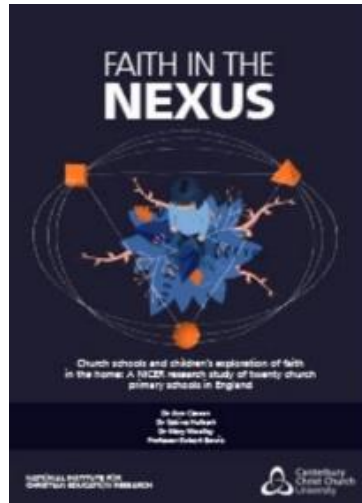
Date: 22nd September 2pm-3pm: Faith-talk in the Home.

Date: 20th October 2pm-3pm: Spiritual Spaces in School.

Further details will be issued nearer the time.

If you would be interested in finding out how a Nexus resource could support your work or have suggestions of your own, please do contact us.

For general enquiries, please contact: nexus@canterbury.ac.uk



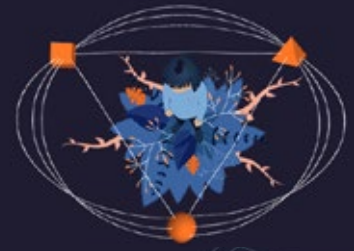
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION RESEARCH

Canterbury Christ Church University

nicer@canterbury.ac.uk / www.nicer.org.uk



FAITH IN THE NEXUS



AN INVITATION TO BE PART OF THE NEXUS RESEARCH EVALUATION PROJECT AS PART OF THE NICER RESEARCH COMMUNITY

The Nexus Research Evaluation Project (a funded initiative) is an opportunity to share the Nexus resources and further develop a network of practitioners, build a picture of best practice, and support school, church, and home to help pupils develop a flourishing resilient spiritual life.

THIS PROJECT OFFERS SCHOOLS

- A strategic framework and concrete activities, which can help everyone in school explore how spiritual well-being supports mental health and resilience.
- A one-year structured CPD (Continuing Professional Development) opportunity to identify spiritual practice activities that best support the flourishing of a child's spiritual life.
 - **For Staff:** Help to reflect on their own spiritual needs in the safe and supportive network of the project community.
 - **For pupils:** The opportunity to talk openly about when they feel most comfortable asking 'difficult' questions and trial different approaches to developing faith and spiritual life.
 - **For Parents:** A chance to try out different approaches such as the 'standing shoulder to shoulder' approach that encourages them to listen and explore together.
 - **For other key stakeholders in school such as governors, local church community:** An opportunity to explore their contribution to the spiritual well-being of the local community.

THE BENEFITS

- An opportunity to become a member of the NICER research community collaborating with researchers in identifying and sharing best practices in Christian education and informing future NICER research projects.
- Open access to evidence-based resources such as
 - animations, staff CPD resources, research blogs to support the exploration of faith, spiritual development, curriculum, and character development within your school community.
 - materials for use with students, parents, and other key stakeholders
 - online podcasts, video presentations on key topics including spiritual development, teacher education and development, and religious education.
- Monthly online networking opportunity for staff (September 2021 – July 2022); Regular newsletters highlighting online and downloadable resources and seminars.
- Opportunity to provide regular feedback and help shape resources for your school community needs. Published results will be sent to all participating schools and acknowledge all individual participants by name.

HOW TO JOIN THE NICER RESEARCH COMMUNITY

The NICER Research Community (NRC) is our new way of working with schools, advisors, and other external partners. It is an initiative to support and engage the school in research-led professional practices in the areas we work in. You will join the NRC to participate in the Nexus Research Evaluation Project. We will send you a letter confirming that your school or educational institution is part of the NRC, which you can display.

I would like to be part of the NICER research community
and participate in the Nexus research evaluation

School/Organisation:

Key contact:

Email address:

Date:

If you are interested in staying up to date with NICER's other research projects and receive an occasional email about other activities and events we run, please tick this box.....

Save your completed form and email it to **gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk**

FURTHER INFORMATION

What is the Faith in the Nexus?

The 'Faith in the Nexus' research used the word 'nexus' to mean the connections between home, church school and the local church community. We researched how church primary schools, working with churches and other key groups, helped children explore faith in the home. It involved 20 church primary schools, a cross-section of Anglican and Catholic schools. We interviewed 187 pupils and 267 adults (parents, staff, local clergy, and other interested key groups), and 1002 people completed an online survey - 730 pupils and 272 adults. <https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus>

ABOUT NICER

The National Institute for Christian Education Research NICER is a University Research Centre at Canterbury Christ Church University. It undertakes research to inform the contribution of faith to the public understanding of education, aid the mission of church schools, universities, and Christian education in communities, develop and improve religion and worldview education, and support the work of Christians in education and leaders in education. It uses qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research approaches in that work. It has developed novel approaches to investigating school ethos, character, and curriculum in Christian Schooling.

NICER receives funds from charities and other grant-making research bodies, supported by the University's commitment to the centre. NICER collaborates with specialists from other leading institutions, schools, and research centres, including institutions of other religions and worldviews, across the country and from around the world. It acts as a hub to promote international Christian education research at the highest level through seminars and conferences. For more information about our work and to download recent reports visit our website www.nicer.org.uk

For further information or any questions, please contact gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk