

A very warm welcome back to the new academic year. Despite the summer break, the Nexus team have continued to produce further resources and plan for future events. We are delighted by the excellent response we have had to our new resources, and we thank all of you who continue to support us in our work. We feel very privileged to be part of such a dynamic and supportive network.

For your information, here are the download figures:

RESOURCE	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF DOWNLOADS
The Faith in the Nexus Report	Nov 2020 – Sept 2021	382
The Animation	Nov 2020 – Sept 2021	1,149
The PDFs	June 2021 – Sept 2021	613
The Parent’s Animation	June 2021 – Sept 2021	586

We are keen to hear from you if you have viewed or downloaded any of our resources: how has the resource informed or supported your work? *Please email [nexus@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:nexus@canterbury.ac.uk)*

The Nexus resources can be found via the following link:

<https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus>

Should you wish to have hardcopies of any of the PDFs, please contact us at [nexus@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:nexus@canterbury.ac.uk)

**WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?**

**FURTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

**PowerPoints to Accompany the PDF resources**

As you are aware, 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.

The feedback that we have received regarding these resources has been extremely positive and helpful. Several of you said that you would like to have an accompanying power point to use with the pdfs especially when presenting to a group of people. In response to this, we are pleased to announce that power points are now available for the following PDFS:

RESOURCES
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.

These power-points are available on request from [nexus@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:nexus@canterbury.ac.uk)

### Faith in the Nexus YouTube Episodes

Four YouTube episodes that focus on exploring Children's spirituality in a Christian context are now complete. The first episode explores what do we mean by spirituality? We reflect on an understanding of children as spiritual beings that underlies our research. It can be viewed via the following link <https://youtu.be/FaT3vv54WO8>

The second episode looks 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. This can be viewed via the following link <https://youtu.be/zHxd6gPkk8M>

The remaining two episodes will be disseminated throughout the autumn term. The YouTube episodes 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 third episode 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 YouTube episodes. We explain why we use storytelling animation to illustrate Nexus research findings.

### Further Resources to Come

We have been working with Kieran O'Brien to produce a new animation aimed at primary age children, that will form part of an assembly package for schools. More information on this will follow during the autumn term.

### THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY (IACS) CONFERENCE

Over 4 days in July, the Nexus team attended and presented at an excellent online conference hosted by IACS. It brought together researchers and professionals across the globe working in the context of children's spirituality and provided a pool of expertise and insight for all involved. Dr Ann Casson, supported by Ronni Lamont and Ann Pittaway, presented on children's engagement with reflection spaces and spiritual gardens. The evidence for this presentation was drawn from the main report and focused on the idea that children actively seek out times to think and reflect in such spaces. Having time to reflect when outside in the natural environment, whether when walking outside, in woods or on the beach, or sitting in the spiritual garden was emphasised by many children involved with the Nexus project.

The presentation was very well received, and we are delighted to be able to widen our network and reach with scholars on a global scale.

### **Faith in the Nexus: A Catholic Context.**

At our most recent meeting we launched some of the resources we have produced for a Roman Catholic context. Joining us for this launch was Kieran O'Brien, the director of Ministry. During the meeting we showcased our new animation created to support parent's and encourage them to walk shoulder to shoulder with their children on their spiritual journey. Kieran spoke about this presentation and the place of storytelling in nurturing faith and spiritual awareness. Ann Pittaway then presented the new pdfs entitled Faith in the Nexus and the Domestic Church and Sacramental Preparation. These resources can be found in the Church section of our Nexus Toolkit website page.



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

## **NEXUS SEMINARS**

### **Recent Seminar**

#### **Spiritual Leadership of Church Primary School Headteachers (Presented on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021)**

This recent seminar was led by Ursula Eisl (NICER intern) in conversation with Dr Ann Casson. It explored 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 shared 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 revealed 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.

*Past seminars can be viewed by following these links:*

- Let's Talk about Death (Presented by Dr Sabina Hulbert)  
<https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/nicer/lets-talk-about-death-a-faith-in-the-nexus-seminar/>
- Who are the Occasional Belongers? (Presented by Dr Ann Casson)  
<https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/nicer/who-are-the-occasional-belongers/>

### **Upcoming Seminar**

#### **Encouraging Faith-talk in the Home**

**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> September

**Time:** 2pm -3pm

**Led by** Ann Pittaway

This seminar will consider the key findings of the Faith in the Nexus report revealing children as initiators of faith and spiritual conversations in the home, and parents' responses to such conversations. Ann will use our new power-point resource that supports the pdf entitled, *Faith Talk at Home (Church & School)* to deliver the key findings and demonstrate how the resource can work with the pdf when presenting on this topic in a church or school context.

If you would like to attend this seminar, please contact us at [nexus@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:nexus@canterbury.ac.uk)

## 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: Encouraging Faith- talk in the Home

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2pm-3pm

Maximum 25 people.

Please contact [nexus@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:nexus@canterbury.ac.uk)

#### Catholic Consultation Group: Parent's perspective on faith-talk in the home

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 11am-12pm

Please contact [ann.pittaway@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:ann.pittaway@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:*

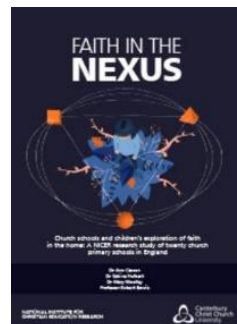
Date: Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 2pm-3pm – Making Spiritual Spaces in School

Date: Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021, 2pm – 3pm – Title to be confirmed,

*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](mailto:nexus@canterbury.ac.uk)**



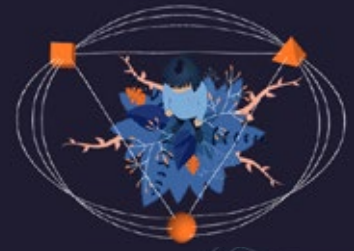
**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION RESEARCH**

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# 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 children develop a flourishing resilient spiritual life.

### THIS PROJECT OFFERS

- A strategic framework and concrete activities, which can help everyone 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 adults:** Help to reflect on their own spiritual needs in the safe and supportive network of the project community.
  - **For children:** 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 or church 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 children, 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 (September 2021 – July 2022); Regular newsletters highlighting online and downloadable resources and seminars.
- Opportunity to provide regular feedback and help shape resources for your needs. Published results will be sent to all participating organisations 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 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 organisation 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](mailto: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](http://www.nicer.org.uk)

For further information or any questions, please contact [gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk)