

Welcome to our autumn newsletter. We are excited to share with you what we have been doing this term. Our monthly seminars are proving to be very successful, and we are encouraged by all the new people signing up to attend them, you are all very welcome to our expanding Nexus community. We also continue to be delighted with the overwhelming response we are getting to the various Nexus resources now available. Thank you all for your continued support of our work.

For your information, here are the download figures:

RESOURCE	TIME SPAN	NUMBER OF DOWNLOADS
The Faith in the Nexus Report	Nov 2020 – Nov 2021	442
The Main Report Animation	Nov 2020 – Nov 2021	1,376
The PDF Resources	June 2021 – Nov 2021	841
The Parent's Animation	June 2021 – Nov 2021	800

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*

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

Also available are PowerPoints to accompany the PDFs. These are especially helpful if you are presenting the pdfs. Please contact us at nexus@canterbury.ac.uk to request them.

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN DOING?

FURTHER RESOURCE SOON TO BE AVAILABLE

A NEXUS ANIMATION FOR CHILDREN

Our two Faith in the Nexus animations are proving to be very successful. Our first one was created to accompany our main Nexus report and our second one was made with a parental audience in mind. They can both be viewed via <https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus>

Following the success of the parent's animation, the feedback we received suggested a further animation for children. We are pleased to say this is ready and soon to be available as part of an Assembly tool kit.

FAITH IN THE NEXUS PODCASTS.

Our series of four YouTube episodes focusing on an exploration of children's spirituality are now available. They 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 \(nicer.org.uk\)](https://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. 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 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. Here is the link https://youtu.be/WT_YnvMLDQc



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 the Nexus research findings. The link to episode 4 is <https://youtu.be/UVfbePSI5Ws>

FAITH IN THE NEXUS: A CATHOLIC CONTEXT.

We had a very interesting meeting in September. We listened to a pre-recorded zoom meeting with a small group of parents from three different parishes, engaged in conversation with Ann Pittaway. They discussed their thoughts on:

- Parents as the primary teachers of the faith to their children.
- Their perception of parish and school support in nurturing faith formation.
- Their views on family – led catechesis.

Those involved with the discussion kindly gave their consent for Ann to show the recording at the September meeting and one couple even joined us to help take the discussion further. For those attending, the parents' views engendered a rich insight and conversation on faith formation through the eyes of parents.

Ann Pittaway is hoping to have a similar conversation with some parish priests to gain an understanding of their views on the above points. For more information on this please contact Ann via ann.pittaway@canterbury.ac.uk

NEXUS SEMINARS

Recent Seminars

Encouraging Faith-talk in the Home

This seminar in September, led by Ann Pittaway, considered 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 used 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.

Our recording of this seminar can be found

via <https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/nicer/encouraging-faith-talk-in-the-home-meeting-recording/>

Making Spiritual Spaces in School

Dr. Ann Casson, with Ann Pittaway and Ronni Lamont, led this seminar. Drawing on the findings of the Faith in the Nexus we considered:

- How children interpreted and used the outdoor spiritual spaces to benefit their spiritual well-being.
- Children's explanations and interpretations of how and why they used the spiritual garden, and how they integrate reflection practices encountered in school into the home.
- Children's interpretation of these spaces as a calming space or sacred space to reflect on worries and concerns.
- The value children placed on these spaces for their spiritual health.

A pre-recording of the presentation can be found by following this link
<https://youtu.be/UryxVjZWBnA>

Past seminars can be viewed via 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

Storytelling and Spirituality

Date: 17th November

Time: 2pm -3pm

Led by Kieran O'Brien

Storytelling and spirituality go hand in hand, as it is within sacred stories that we find the space to discover deeper answers to perennial questions such as 'who am I?', 'what is my purpose in life?' and 'how do I deal with suffering?'. But in our over-analytical and hyper-rationalistic age are we losing our deeper understanding of the implicit nature of stories and storytelling? And if so, how can we create an authentic spirituality that resonates with children and young people that we work with?

Kieran O'Brien, director of storytelling agency Ministry, will help to connect the dots between storytelling and spirituality, and why our loss in storytelling relates to some of the greatest challenges we face today, including climate change, social inequality, and extreme poverty.

If you would like to attend this seminar, please contact us at nexus@canterbury.ac.uk

EXCITING NEWS OF OUR NEW TODDLERS IN THE NEXUS PROJECT

TITLE: Nexus Pre-school study: investigating the spiritual needs of young children in faith based (and secular) pre-school settings

Toddlers in the Nexus is a 3-month preliminary phase enquiry, commencing in September 2021, to test the case for, and design a larger research project to investigate young children's spiritual needs and church toddler groups. At the end of the preliminary enquiry and consultation phase, options for a significant study will be developed.

The intended outcome of this first phase is to produce a PDF (booklet) report, including a research digest and a mapping of the current situation regarding toddler groups and children's spirituality, and outlining the next steps for the Nexus research project.

If you are interested in finding out more about this project and/or wish to be informed our progress, please do contact us at nexus@canterbury.ac.uk

Upcoming Events.

Seminar: Storytelling and Spirituality

Date: 17th November, 2pm-3pm

Maximum 25 people.

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: 8th December, 2pm-3pm, Encouraging pupil spiritual leadership in school and church.

Date: 19th January, 2pm-3pm, Focus TBC

Further details will be issued nearer the time.

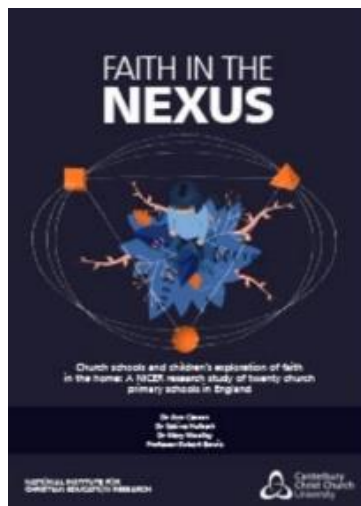
Are you Interested in Joining our Nexus Research Evaluation Project as part of the NICER Research Community?

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.

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



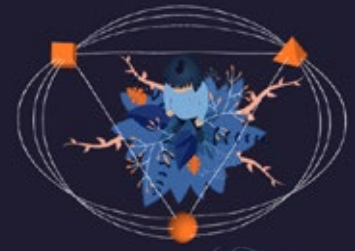
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION RESEARCH

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 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**

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