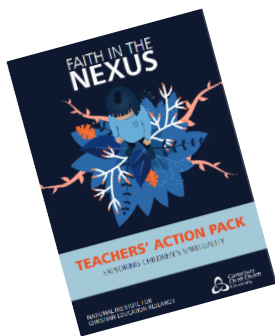


Happy New Year! In this issue we are delighted to launch our latest resource and accompanying animation created especially for a child audience.



Also included in this update is further information about a trial of the Nexus CPD package: a link to a conversation held with parents focusing on the opportunities and challenges of nurturing faith in the home; information about our Nexus seminars and an update of our new Nexus toddlers' project.

FAITH IN THE NEXUS: TEACHERS' ACTION PACK

A NEXUS ANIMATION FOR CHILDREN

Our latest animation has been designed for children (KS1 and KS2), to be a stimulus for further discussion on children's spirituality from a child's perspective. If you wish to use this animation as part of an assembly, you can find an accompanying assembly guide and PowerPoint at <https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus>

This animation can also be used as:

- part of collective worship
- classroom stimulus material
- part of philosophy 4 children enquiry



The purpose behind this is for children to reflect on what it means to have a spirituality, why they need help from others, and the importance of asking questions and remaining spiritually curious.

Recently, children in one church primary school were kind enough to trial the assembly and animation. Here are some of their responses:

This film helped me think about my questions and how different people think and it opened my mind. I also like the video colours and that it was a child as they would have the same sort of questions as me.

I liked many things about this film, but what I liked the most was its information. I think a lot about the world, questions such as: Is life a test or a chance?

The Headteacher, in her feedback stated:

The film was perfect to encourage the children to ask questions, many of them said things like, "I have always wondered, "Is it ok to ask? "I always wanted to know..." So, the questions were always there but they did not have the confidence to ask them. The idea of answers being a full stop resonated with them as they said they had been seeking answers; they realised that not having a definitive answer gave them the freedom to explore their own thinking further and therefore begin to formulate their own ideas and opinions.

Teachers' Action Pack Official Launch: Tuesday 8th February, 4:00pm – 4:30pm

You are invited to the official launch of our new resource. Dr Ann Casson and Ann Pittaway will present an overview of the animation for children and the assembly toolkit, with time for questions. Please contact Gill Harrison at gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk should you wish to attend.

PILOTING OUR NEXUS CPD PACKAGE AND SCHOOL FEEDBACK

The Nexus CPD package for use in schools has been developed and piloted in two church primary schools. The headteacher from one school kindly offered us some feedback of the changes they have implemented because of the CPD session.

We were inspired by the idea of a Spiritual Garden as one project we could begin. In order to see if this would be well received, we first developed a Remembrance Garden in the entrance to our school, which had for many years been a neglected, unattractive pond area.



The children responded to this well and laid down their prayers and poppies in a very respectful and prayerful manner. Parents appreciated the time and space and children felt comforted by having somewhere to reflect and think and pray together.

Following the success of this initial venture

We asked the children and staff what they would like in a permanent Spiritual Garden, if we were to set one up, that could be used for all families and the Parishioners. They came up with a huge list which included colourful plants, fairy lights, a waterfall, butterflies, wind chimes, a canopy, candles and many more. We put these ideas together and sent a message out to the Parish and parents together to ask if anyone wished to help us with this. We have had some offers of help so far and the children are eager to start as the designers in the Spring

Our next stage is to package this CPD toolkit to share with a greater number of schools through our existing networks.

Please contact us if you are interested in the CPD package at nexus@canterbury.ac.uk

FAITH IN THE NEXUS: A CATHOLIC CONTEXT.

We had an interesting online meeting in September 2021. We listened to a pre-recorded zoom meeting with a small group of parents from three different Catholic 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.

For those attending, the parents' views engendered a rich insight and conversation on faith formation through the eyes of parents.

You can listen to the conversation via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMxBGOBdZPY>

NEXUS SEMINARS

Recent Seminars

Storytelling and Spirituality

Kieran O'Brien, director of storytelling agency Ministry, led an outstanding seminar in November, helping us to connect the dots between storytelling and spirituality, and why our loss in storytelling relates to some of the most significant challenges we face today, including climate change, social inequality, and extreme poverty. The link to this seminar can be found via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saOKkaUHdeE>

Spiritual Leadership by Children in Church Primary Schools.

This very well attended seminar was led by Dr. Ann Casson with Dr. Anne Lumb, Diocesan Schools Adviser, Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham, Associate Lecturer at Liverpool Hope University.

The Nexus research found that pupil leadership opportunities in school, formal or informal, give children confidence and support their, and their peers' spiritual development.

This seminar explored the importance of recognising children as active agents in their spiritual development and the impact of pupil peer leaders when they are given opportunities to lead and develop worship time, prayer, reflection spaces, and care for others in church primary schools. It raises questions about children's role in faith development in the home and church.

Upcoming Seminar

Title: Nexus Seminar: How do church communities build relationships with the local school?

Date: 23rd February

Time: 2pm -3pm

This seminar explores the critical importance of connections between church and school. Faith in the Nexus research illuminated the significance of a positive relationship for church school families.

Positive relationships between church and school were characterised by invitational worship, the celebration of festivals, the minister's presence, and a sense of belonging and connection to the church community and building.

The powerful impact this relationship has on family faith life is often unseen. We consider how local churches establish, nourish, and sustain these important relationships.

If you would like to attend this seminar, please contact us via gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk

Past seminars can be viewed via these links:

Let's Talk about Death (Led 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? (Led by Dr Ann Casson)

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

Encouraging Faith-talk in the Home (Led by Ms Ann Pittaway)

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

Making Spiritual Spaces in School (Led by Dr Ann Casson, Ronni Lamont & Ann Pittaway)

<https://youtu.be/UryxVjZWBnA>

Storytelling and Spirituality (Led by Kieran O'Brien, director of storytelling agency Ministry)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saOKkaUHdeE>

Spiritual Leadership by Children in Church Primary Schools (Led by Dr Ann Casson and Dr Anne Lumb)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWKHTjigPqA>

EXCITING NEWS OF OUR NEW TODDLERS IN THE NEXUS PROJECT

Nexus Toddler project: Researching the spiritual flourishing of the youngest children

We have completed our 3-month scoping exercise for this project, and we are now in the process of writing a report outlining our initial findings, and moving into the next phase, in the summer.

The research project has two interconnected aims:

- To improve the understanding of the Spiritual Flourishing (SF) of the youngest children (2–4-year-olds) and its critical importance for wellbeing.
- To understand the provision for the SF of young children in Church Toddler Groups and to promote the prioritisation of the SF in the policies and practices of church provision for children.

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.

Nexus Launch: Teachers' Action Pack

Date: 8th February, 4pm-4:30pm

Please contact: gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk

Seminar: How do church communities build relationships with the local school?

Date: 23rd February, 2pm-3pm

Maximum 25 people.

Please contact gill.harrison@canterbury.ac.uk

Seminar: TBC

Date: 23rd March, 2pm-3pm.

Further details will be issued nearer the time.