





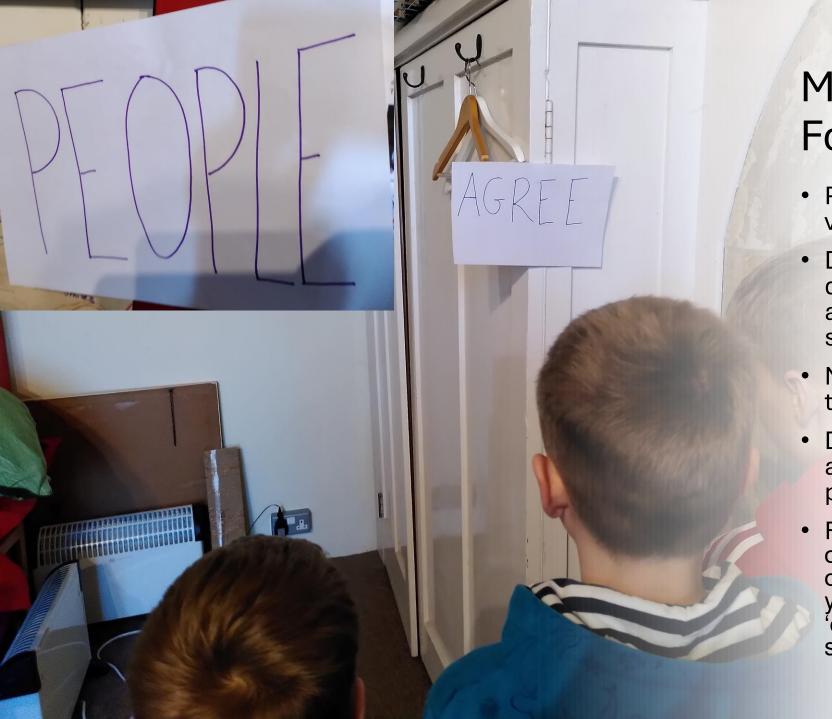
Our Context: All Saints' Haslingfield

- Part of team of eleven networked worshipping communities, 6 miles southwest of Cambridge
- Typical challenges of a rural Anglican church
- Average 35 worshippers, less than a quarter children and young people
- Thriving Sunday Club before Covid-19 where children were separate three Sundays a month
- Since Covid-19 we have been exploring 'being church all together most of the time', or a 'hybrid intergenerational model' through theological interest, and necessity
- Intergenerational services on 1st Sunday (All Age Worship) and 4th Sunday (inclusive communion)
- Age separate on 2nd Sunday (Sunday Club)
- Forest Church on 3rd Sunday afternoon (can be intergenerational but mostly families)



Intergenerational Church

- Much recent research and scholarship on this
- Requires a culture change within the congregation to accept children at the heart of the church worship, instead of age-separated groups
- All gifts valued and opportunities to serve; journeying together
- Needs to come from leadership



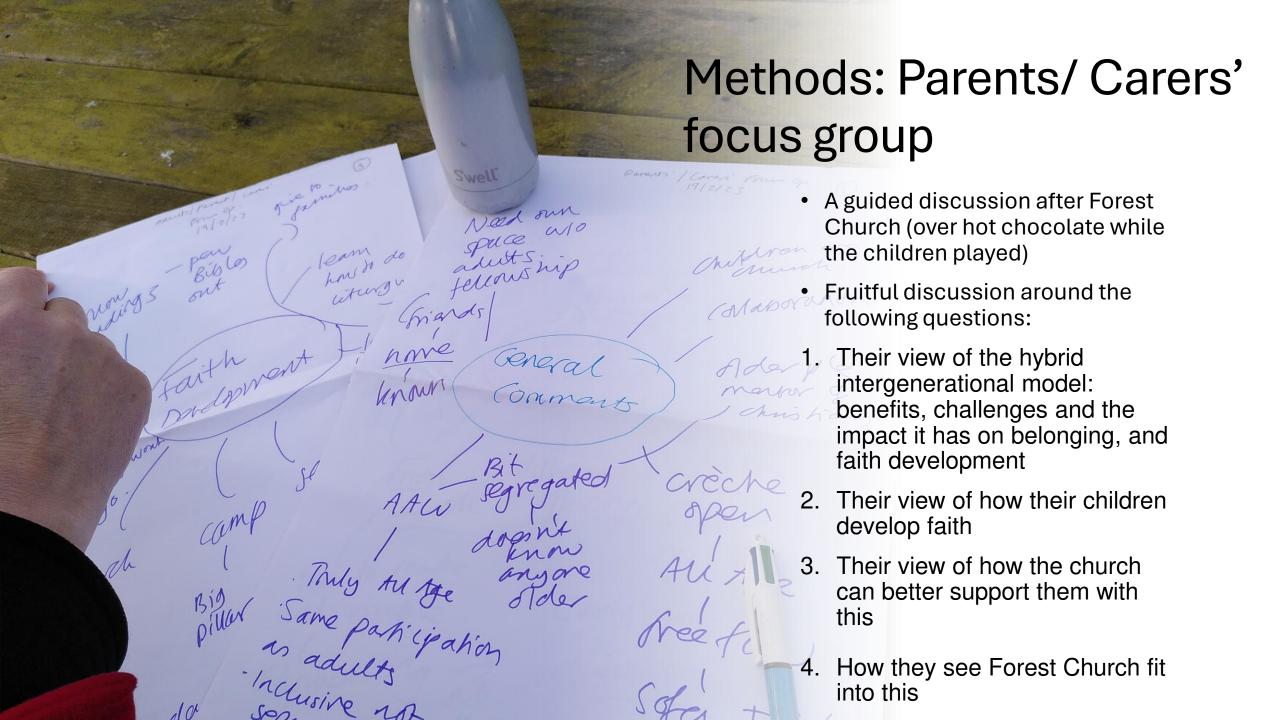
Methods: Children's Focus Group 1

- Priority to hear the children's voice first
- Done through series of questions that could be answered kinaesthetically (e.g. standing between two options)
- No need to talk unless wanted to; all can express an opinion
- Discussion was generated about why standing in a certain place
- For example, e.g. 'I feel like part of the church': stand at one end of the room, by the 'agree' sign, if you agree, the other end, by the 'disagree' sign, if you disagree, or somewhere in between

The questions that were addressed at this focus group included:

- 'I can serve at church' (agree / disagree / stand between)
- 'I learn about God at' (home / church / stand between)
- 'I pray to God at' (home / church / stand between)
- 'I worship God at' (home / church / stand between)





raith development of children and young people. We would love to have your views below. Thank you. Methods: Questionnaires for adult church family What helps you feel you belong in church? Questionnaires done online and on paper to ensure all What do you think helps the children and young people feel they below could access them act, that that at Raised awareness of the aims of 'being church together more often' o you have any memories of what helped your faith develop, or any Sought views and ificant in this? suggestions of church family Excellent uptake: about 2/3 to 3/4 of the adult worshipping community think of ways to foster dialogue across the generations in

raith development of children and young people. We would love to have your views below. Thank you. Methods: Questionnaires for adult church family What helps you feel you belong in church? Questionnaire for the adult church family What do you think helps the children and young people feel they belong 1. What helps you feel you belong in church? that that ast 2. What do you think helps the children and young people feel they belong in church? o you have any memories of what helped your faith develop, or any 3. Do you have any memories of what helped ificant in this? your faith develop, or any people who were significant in this? 4. Can you think of ways to foster dialogue across the generations in our church family? ways to foster dialogue across the generation 5. Have you ever been to Forest Church? If not, would anything encourage you to try it?



Methods: Children's focus group 2 (open questions)

- Important to finish with the voice of the children
- We wanted to give them the chance to express how they encounter God without leading questions or suggestions
- This presented a challenge with the variety of ages and needs of the children and young people; some had adult support

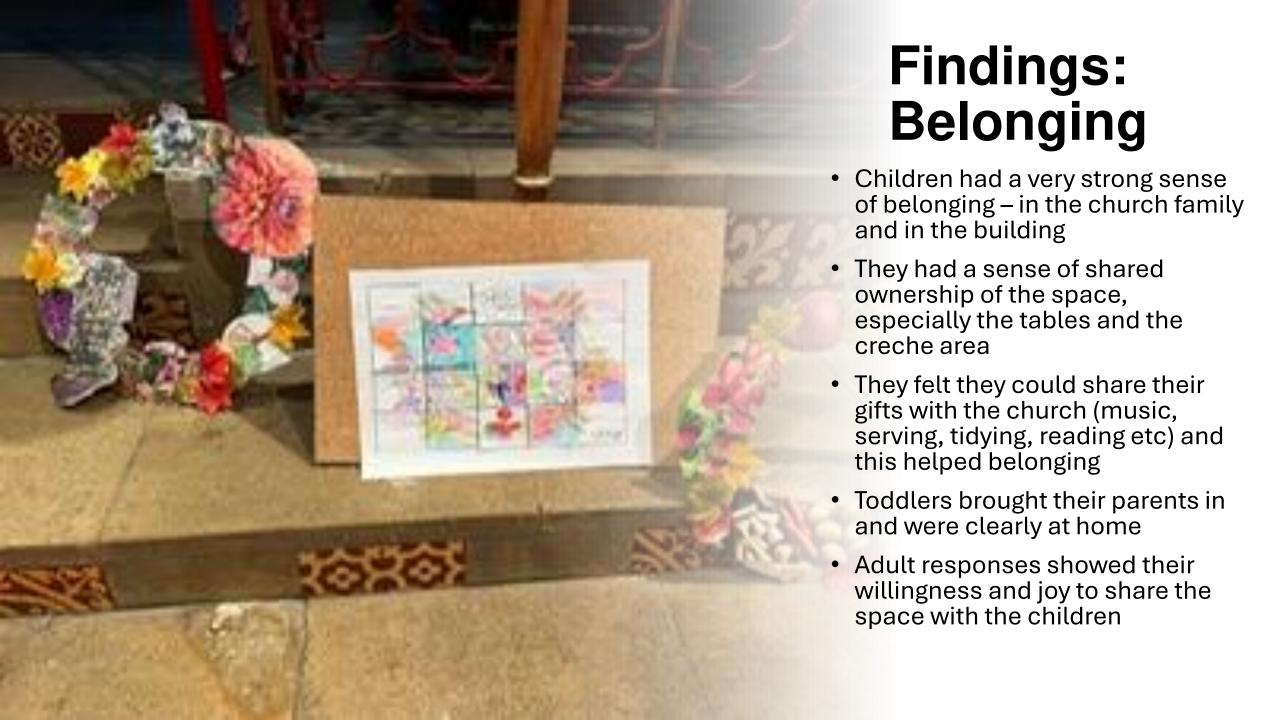
Question asked: <u>Please can you write down, draw, or get a grown up to write down......</u>

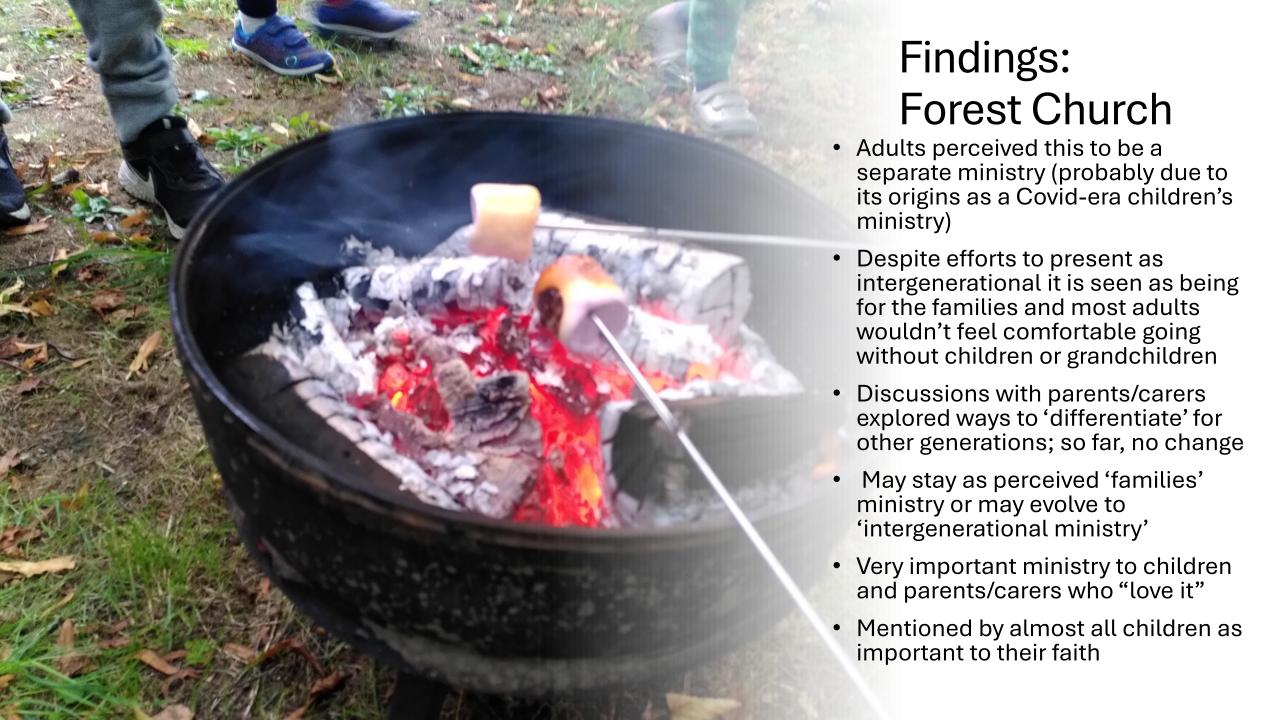
'What helps me to encounter (meet) God? How do I know him?'

I don't want to give you answer to choose from as I want the answers to come from you!

Think about services, and prayers, and other ways..... Try to give me detail if you can!

- The children then had the opportunity to respond however they chose
- Some wrote a list, some combined pictures and writing and others (especially younger ones) talked with an adult who wrote down or drew their ideas, sometimes creating a picture together







Findings: Faith Development of Children and Young People

- Children had range of views about connecting with God at home and church (mostly both in varying degrees)
- Answers were surprisingly 'symbol-centred' (candles, stained glass, communion including communion prayer)
- Also Forest Church, Sunday Club, friends, colouring, "appropriate songs"
- Appreciate tables during service to occupy hands while worshipping
- Expected music and Bible stories to feature more heavily than they did
- Found some hymn words difficult but didn't mention liturgy
- Older children and young people: external provision (camp and WCCYM)



Faith Development of Children: Adults' Perspectives

- Adults overwhelmingly supportive of children being in church most of the time
- Majority are happy that people are "tolerating noise" and "not tutting" as may have been the case in the past
- Adults offered to pray more strategically for children and young people and become 'ad-hoc spiritual mentors'
- Genuine interest in faith development; much reflection on what had influenced them
- "The welcome is important but actually just the feeling of the presence of the Trinity gives a sense of belonging" - shows importance of being in body of church, not separate
- Belonging comes through being welcomed by name and being given service materials (everyone, including children)
- Reflects the work already done as a congregation to be intentional in welcoming all ages

Belonging and Faith Development of Children: Adults' Perspectives

- Suggestions such as church picnics, meals and social opportunities were made: need to ensure that in such gatherings the ages do not automatically segregate
- More mixing taking place at coffee
- Most adults recognised the work we are already doing as a church community to include the children and young people and supported this, for example the discussion during the All Age Service gives the opportunity for genuine intergenerational faith sharing
- Some scepticism about how fully the 'young' can integrate beyond a superficial level
- Music is an important way of integrating into church and sharing gifts: the deliberate attempt to include musicians of all ages, which we do at two services a month
- They mentioned similar jobs to the children, for example reading and collecting books
- Very pleasing that the adults are so supportive of the changes that have been made to attempt to be 'being church all together most of the time'







Changes so far:

- Recognised need to better support families with developing faith at home, as part of the hybrid intergenerational model:
- Adapted our half termly family mailings to include not just service times / info - also resources to support faith development: offers to meet for support and signposting to other websites
- Some change at coffee time as some members of congregation make effort to mix more with children and young people (also important peer support time)
- Welcome by name for all; service materials offered to all



Future Plans:

- Explore setting up prayer box for church family of all generations to pray for each, and especially for children and young people
- Explore setting up a book exchange for families: faith-based books, Bibles and devotionals can be borrowed so families can try different materials and be supported in talking about faith at home if they wish
- On feedback from the adults, explore possibility of more tables for the traditional services as well as the All Age Service, to allow adults who prefer to access the service this way
- Intergenerational socials, recognising that peer support / age-separate social opportunities are also important





And finally...

Any adaptations to the pattern of services, or particular services, to better include children and young people may well make the church more accessible (for example to the unchurched of all ages, and others with varying needs, learning and faith styles, and neurodivergence

'Being church all together most of the time' gives the children a clear sense of belonging and does not hinder their faith development

Suggested reading:

Barrett, Ally, Preaching with All Ages: Twelve Ways to Grow Your Skills and Your Confidence (Canterbury Press, 2019).

Csinos, David M., *A Gospel for All Ages: Teaching and Preaching with the Whole Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022).

Farrant, Suzi and Philip, Darren, *Being An Intergenerational Church: Practices to Bring the Generations Back Together*, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2023).

GodVenture: https://godventure.co.uk/ for faith at home

Houston, Margaret Pritchard and Millar, Sandra, *Beyond the Children's Corner: Creating a Culture of Welcome for All Ages* (Church House Publishing, 2020).

Ross, Christine Lawton and Allen, Holly Catterton,
Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole
Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship, First
edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP USA, 2012).

Summers, Rachel, *Wild Worship: Discovering God Through Creation*, (Stowmarket: Kevin Mayhew, 2019).

