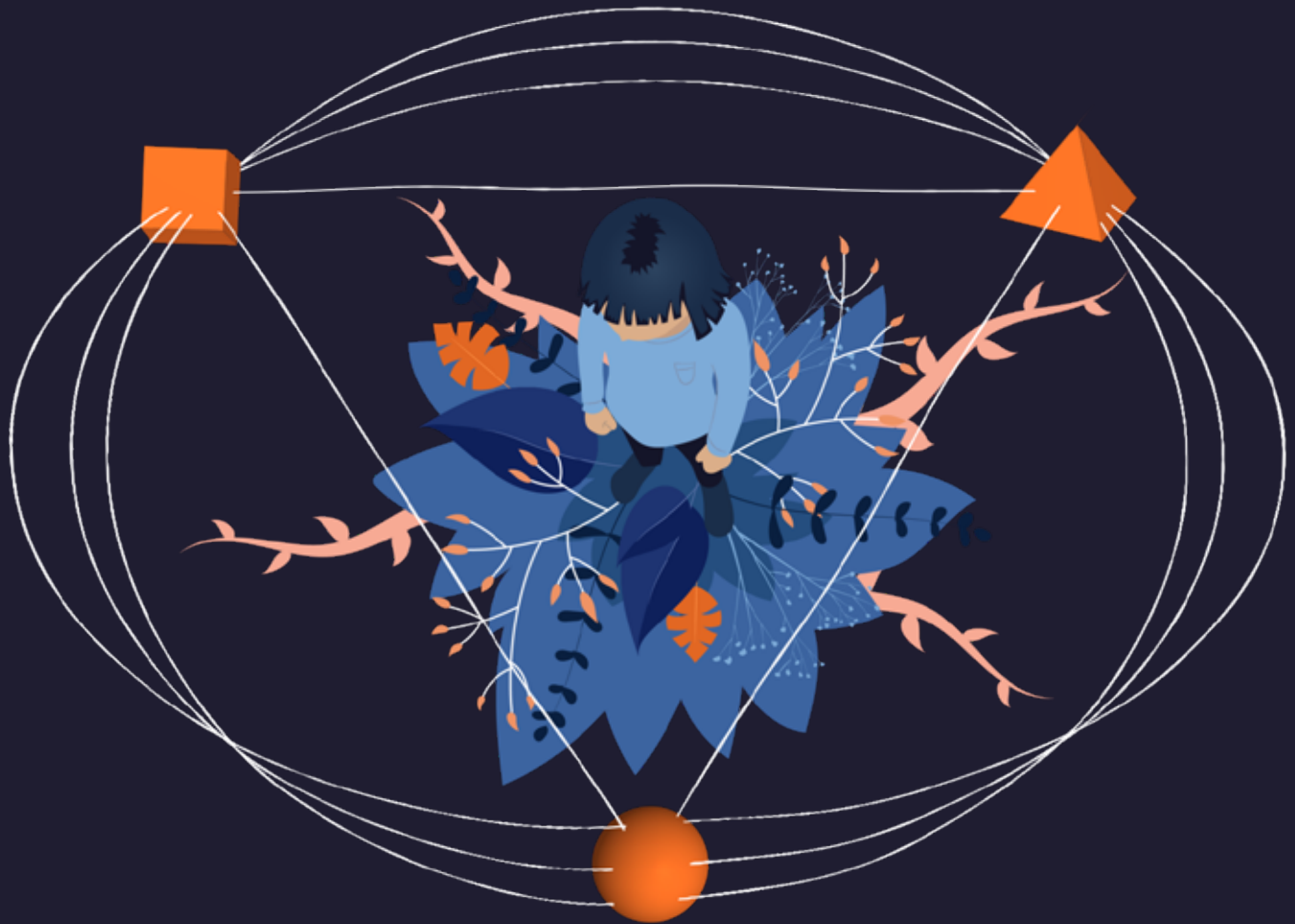


FAITH IN THE NEXUS

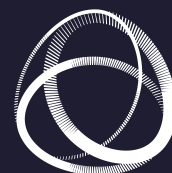


**Questions for discussion for children,
parents, schools, and churches**

Faith in the Nexus – Animation & Discussion

Mr Nick Taunt on behalf of the National Institute
for Christian Education Research

National Institute For
Christian Education Research



Canterbury
Christ Church
University

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, to aid the mission of church schools, universities, and Christian education in communities, to develop and improve religion and worldview education, and to 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.

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How to watch and discuss

When you use these animations as a stimulus for discussion, be aware that there are opportunities for people to disclose in a personal way that may require some care and sensitivity. How you introduce the animation will depend on your gauging how well the group knows each other and the extent to which they are likely to trust each other.

Watch the animation first (in class, as a group of parents, in a school INSET session or church group) without any comment. Then watch it again, asking the group to note down the children's words that seem particularly important to them. You may suggest they first make a word cloud on their own, or, if you do the exercise as a group, a mind map may help explore the deeper meanings of the words in a free discussion. Use the following questions to explore these words.

For each group, some Year 5/6 children's quotes from the animation introduces the topic, followed by questions (or a task) relevant to each of the audiences – children, parents and school/church.

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Think about...

How might you use these animations and discussions to change, improve, adapt, or strengthen what you currently do in class and school, at home and in church?

1. What does it feel like to pray?



Scan or tap to watch the animation
bit.ly/nexus-01

1. Several children say prayer is like talking to someone you can trust and rely on. Is it?

“It’s kind of like just you & God talking to one another, not having any distractions from your siblings or your parents or any family member or your friends.”

“Like you know it’s someone that’s actually listening to you and caring what you say. “You always know he’s going to hear you.”

Children

- If someone asks you what praying is like, what words would you use to describe it?
- What difference does it make to know you can trust the person you’re talking to?

Parents

- What can we as parents learn about prayer from our children?
- How would you describe to your child what praying is like for you?
- Why and how does trust play such an important part in the way we pray?

School/Church

Individual teachers/support staff:

- How do/might you help children to pray in school?
- How might prayer support a school culture of positive relationships?

School & Church leaders:

- In what ways do/might you model prayer to teachers & parents?

2. What do you feel when you pray about something bad that’s happened?

“If you’ve done a bad thing and you’re asking for forgiveness, you feel better, like a weight’s been lifted.”

“When I pray, it’s like a weight’s been lifted off my shoulders. I’ve shared and been open with God and it makes me feel I can share it with other people.”

Children

- What does it feel like when someone really forgives you?
- How can praying make you feel better, do you think? If you have felt like that, how would you describe it?

Parents

- a. What can we learn from our children about prayer when needing forgiveness?
- b. Do you find it surprising how much emotional burden our children carry around with them?
- c. How can we help them unburden themselves through prayer?
- d. How can we demonstrate confession and forgiveness in prayer to our children?

School/Church

Individual teachers/support staff:

- a. What part does/might prayer take when talking with a child who has misbehaved (e.g. by hurting someone physically or verbally, by lying or stealing, or being unkind)?
- b. How does/might prayer help in restoring relationships that have been fractured?

School leaders:

- c. Why do/might you want prayer to be central to your school culture? What steps might you take towards getting there?

3. How does praying change the sort of person you are?

"It keeps us calm and reminds us that God's always there for us, and that we can always rely on him and trust him. But as well as that, we must trust him and know (that) to forgive others and good Christians."

"When I'm praying, I feel happy because I'm praying to a very holy person. So, then I'm connecting with him so I feel like I'm special as well."

Children

- a. How do you think prayer might change the way you behave?
- b. What do you think the boy means when he says he feels special when he's praying to God?

Parents

- a. In what ways do you think prayer can help children develop as they grow up?
- b. How can we as parents encourage a child's prayer life?

School/Church

Individual teachers/support staff:

- a. What qualities do you think can praying help to develop in children?
- b. How might/do you encourage children in feeling 'joyous,' 'special,' 'calm,' 'happy,' 'trusting,' 'free'?

School & Church leaders:

- c. Many of the children's comments reflect their understanding of who God is. What picture of God's character do these comments give you? How close is it to the God presented in your school or church?

2. When do you feel close to Jesus and God?



Scan or tap to watch the animation
bit.ly/nexus-002

When do you feel close to Jesus and God?

"A few terms ago we went into the hall. We put music on, and we lay down... and we prayed to Jesus, and when we did that, it felt like I could actually hear Jesus talking to me and it felt really peaceful."

"When I'm in church it helps me because I know that I can pray whenever I'm in there and I can just be myself with God and Jesus."

"I try to pray every night in my bedroom for a while just to thank God."

"When I pray, I feel Jesus is by my side, so he's like encouraging you, helping you, like pushing you forward. When you're sad, he's like your encouragement and he can make you feel better even if you feel really, really sad. I feel I'm really connected to him and I'm special."

Children

- a. Can you think of a time when you've felt close to Jesus or God? Perhaps when you're on your own, or with someone special, or in assembly or church, or praying in a special way.
- b. If you can, what do you think this told you about Jesus?

Parents

- a. How would you describe to your child a time when you felt particularly close to God?
- b. The children in the animation are very open and ready to talk about Jesus; as adults we sometimes find it more difficult. What can we learn from our children about how we talk about God and Jesus?

School & Church

- a. It's not always easy to find the right words to describe a personal spiritual experience. How - and with whom - might you describe a time when you felt particularly close to God?
- b. The children in the animation are very open and ready to talk about Jesus; as adults we sometimes find it more difficult. What can we learn from our children about how we talk in the classroom about Jesus and God, whilst keeping within the bounds of professionalism?

3. What does it feel like to be in collective worship?

Catholic Version



Scan or tap to watch the animation
bit.ly/nexus-003

1. What does it feel like to be in collective worship?

“So, we started a new thing during assembly that when we say our school prayer, we put our hands out and the people next to you put their hand on top and it shows that we are all praying together.”

“I think the way we’ve said our Amens have changed because our normal Amen like just the old boring Amen is like, “oh yes just get on with day. I don’t really care.” But now, since we’ve said Amen energetically it’s like, “Yes I really agree with that” and “that this prayer means something to me and to everyone.”

Children

- What’s the difference between worship in assembly and praying on your own?
- Which kind of praying do you prefer? Can you say why?

Parents

- Children here like worship in the formal setting of an assembly. Why, do you think?
- How could the children’s comments about collective worship influence the way you pray together at home?

School/Church

Individual teachers/support staff

- Assembly worship seems to encourage children to be reflective. To what extent does reflection form a part of learning in class and school culture in general?
- How do you ensure that worship in assembly includes everyone?

School & Church leaders

- How does pupil voice influence the style of worship in your school or the celebration of Mass in your parish?

2. What does it feel like to be in Church?

“Church at Mass I prefer because it gives some time to think and in school there’s lots of stuff going on and in church it’s just nice and peaceful place to go.”

“My favourite thing of looking in church is when Jesus died on the cross to tell you how he gave us our lives.”

Children

- a. What does it feel like for you when you go to Mass?
- b. When sitting in church, what do you like to look at and wonder about?

Parents

- a. To what extent do we as parents give our children opportunities to experience the stillness they appreciate when they’re in church?
- b. How often do our children get the chance to just be still and think or reflect?

School

- a. To what extent do we give our children opportunities in school to experience the stillness they appreciate when they’re in church?

4. What does it feel like to be in collective worship?



Scan or tap to watch the animation
bit.ly/nexus-004

1. What does it feel like to be in collective worship?

“Assemblies are not making you do something that you don’t want to do; they’re including everyone, whether they’re Christian or not.”

“We have collective worship in the hall and class. We’re always talking about God and how he helps people. It makes me think about how much people appreciate him for all he’s done.”

Children

- a. What's the difference between worship in assembly and praying on your own?
- b. Which kind of praying do you prefer? Can you say why?

Parents

- a. Children here like worship in the formal setting of an assembly. Why, do you think?
- b. "It's not like they're pushing you..." How could this observation affect the way you pray together at home?

School/Church

Individual teachers/support staff:

- a. Assembly worship seems to encourage children to be reflective. To what extent does reflection form a part of learning in class and school culture in general?
- b. How do you ensure that worship in assembly includes everyone?

School & Church leaders:

- c. How does pupil voice influence the style of worship in your school or church?

2. What does it feel like to be in Church?

"When I'm in church, I just get to breathe, and have peace there."

"You can go there and think about God, and it's a very holy place... Church is one of those happy spaces, like my bedroom. I feel really comfortable at church."

Children

- a. What does it feel like for you when you go to church?
- b. What do you think the girl means when she says, in church, "I just get to breathe..."?

Parents

- a. To what extent do we as parents give our children opportunities to experience the stillness they appreciate when they're in church?
- b. How much do our children get the chance to "just sit there and think about God"?

School

- a. To what extent do we give our children opportunities in school to experience the stillness they appreciate when they're in church?

5. What do you do about faith at home?



Scan or tap to watch the animation
bit.ly/nexus-005

What does it feel like to encounter faith at home? Or What does faith look like at home?

“If we go on a trip in the car, like a trip longer than an hour or two, we always pray to have a safe journey.”

“My nan, she believes in God a lot, so every time there’s something going on at church, she always encourages me and my brother to go. I like that about her, how she encourages me to like God more. And she makes me think about what I’ve taken for granted and what I don’t actually think about, like saying thank you for everything that’s made in this world . . . She always makes me feel like I’m allowed to breathe and always be free.”

Children

- Who are you most likely to talk to at home about God and faith?
(Task for the group with teacher/leader: Draw a mind map on the board or a large piece of paper with this question in a circle in the middle.)
Mention one or more people for the teacher/leader to write on one side of the circle.
- What is it about that person that might make you want to talk with them about faith?
On the other side of the circle write down the qualities or characteristics (use single adjectives if possible) of that person or those people.
- Talk about each quality in turn. Which do you feel also describes what you are like?

Parents

Read the passage above about the child’s nan.

“So, it’s not all about the praying, it’s about understanding the Bible stories and the meaning of them. And sometimes it’s quite nice not just to pray but to have a holy sabbath day and just to connect with your family and friends and just have holy time with them and like to do different things to celebrate your religion.”

“I just like it to just have a moment to myself, and just let me ... think about all the things that have happened and let everything leave me and just think about what’s happening at that moment.”

- a. Some of the children we spoke to enjoyed speaking at length about their experience of faith at home. To what extent do their comments chime with your experience as a parent?
- b. What conditions do you try to create to encourage children to grow in their faith in God?

School/Church

"She always makes me feel like I'm allowed to breathe and always be free."

"If you grow up in a family that doesn't believe in God it's more likely you won't."

Individual teachers/support staff:

- a. What conditions do you try to create in your classroom to encourage children to grow in their faith in God?
To what extent are parents/carers welcomed to get involved?

School & Church leaders:

- a. On a strategic level, how are parents/carers involved in helping to create those conditions that encourage children to grow in their faith in God?
- b. To what extent do school policies and their practice reflect an environment where the growth of children's faith is central? Start with Discipline, Pedagogy, Homework...

6. What do you do about faith at home?

Catholic Version



Scan or tap to watch the animation
bit.ly/nexus-006

What does it feel like to encounter faith at home? Or What does faith look like at home?

“My mum and me and my sister before we go to bed we always pray.”

“My nanna, she went to church before my mum, and she brought my mum to the church and they grew up in the church together, they went to church almost every day.”

Children

- Who are you most likely to talk to at home about God and faith?
(Task for the group with teacher/leader: Draw a mind map on the board or a large piece of paper with this question in a circle in the middle.)
Mention one or more people for the teacher/leader to write on one side of the circle.
- What is it about that person that might make you want to talk with them about faith?
On the other side of the circle write down the qualities or characteristics (use single adjectives if possible) of that person or those people.
- Talk about each quality in turn. Which do you feel also describes what you are like?

Parents

“My sister and my father read the Bible. My father reads an online Bible as well. My sister and my dad share the same like mini-Bible. My mum doesn’t really believe in any faith, but she will still read the Bible with my dad and my sister. And I would sit in my room and pray.”

“Yes, sometimes, so me and my family we light the candles and we set them up on the floor in a line and we have the dog and cat with us, but we make sure they don’t go near the fire. And then we all sit there praying to Jesus.”

- Some of the children we spoke to enjoyed speaking at length about their experience of faith at home. To what extent do their comments chime with your experience as a parent?
- What conditions do you try to create to encourage children to grow in their faith in God?

School/Church

A child speaking about praying at home says...

“Me, my mum, my sister and sometimes my dad joins in even though he isn’t a Catholic. And we do prayers before we go to bed.”

Individual teachers/support staff:

- a. What conditions do you try to create in your classroom to encourage children to grow in their faith in God?
To what extent are parents/carers welcomed to get involved?

School & Church leaders:

- a. On a strategic level, how are parents/carers involved in helping to create those conditions that encourage children to grow in their faith in God?
- b. To what extent do school policies and their practice reflect an environment where the growth of children’s faith is central? Start with Discipline, Pedagogy, Homework...

7. Where do you go to reflect?



Scan or tap to watch the animation
bit.ly/nexus-007

Where do you go to reflect?

At home?

"I would just lie on my bed like a starfish, just lie on top of everything and the covers."

Somewhere else?

"There's this tree outside my house and I don't know why I just like climbing in it. It makes me feel happy and life the higher I go it actually makes me feel like I'm closer to the people that I've lost."

Anywhere?

"It's like where you feel comfortable, maybe like somewhere peaceful like where you can hear the birds chirping or like quiet noises."

Where you're on your own?

"By being alone it helps because sometimes when I'm alone...I don't have to talk to other people about how I feel, I kind of talk to God in my imagination, like my thoughts."

Questions for discussion

Children

- Where do you go to reflect or pray?
Task for the group with teacher/leader: Draw a mind map on the board or a large piece of paper with this question in a circle in the middle. Around one side of the circle, write all the places suggested.
- What's important or special about these places? How do you feel in your special place?
Around the other side of the circle write down the qualities or characteristics (use single adjectives if possible) of the places.
- Talk about each quality in turn. Which quality could you help make at home or in school or at church, or outside?

Parents

- Where do you go to reflect or pray? What do you find is special about this place?
- Several children spoke about being alone as a good 'place' to reflect. Are there opportunities and places that we can give our children to be on their own?

School/Church

Individual teachers/support staff:

- a. Where in your school/church are children able to reflect or pray on their own? How would you describe such a place?
- b. *“It’s like where you feel comfortable, maybe like somewhere peaceful...”* How are/might children be involved in creating such a place?

School & Church leaders:

- a. A school is a busy, vibrant, exciting, and sometimes noisy environment. How important is it to have a special place – a garden, a room, a corner – where children can reflect or pray?
- b. On a strategic level, how would you start the process of creating a place where children can reflect or pray? Who would you involve?

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