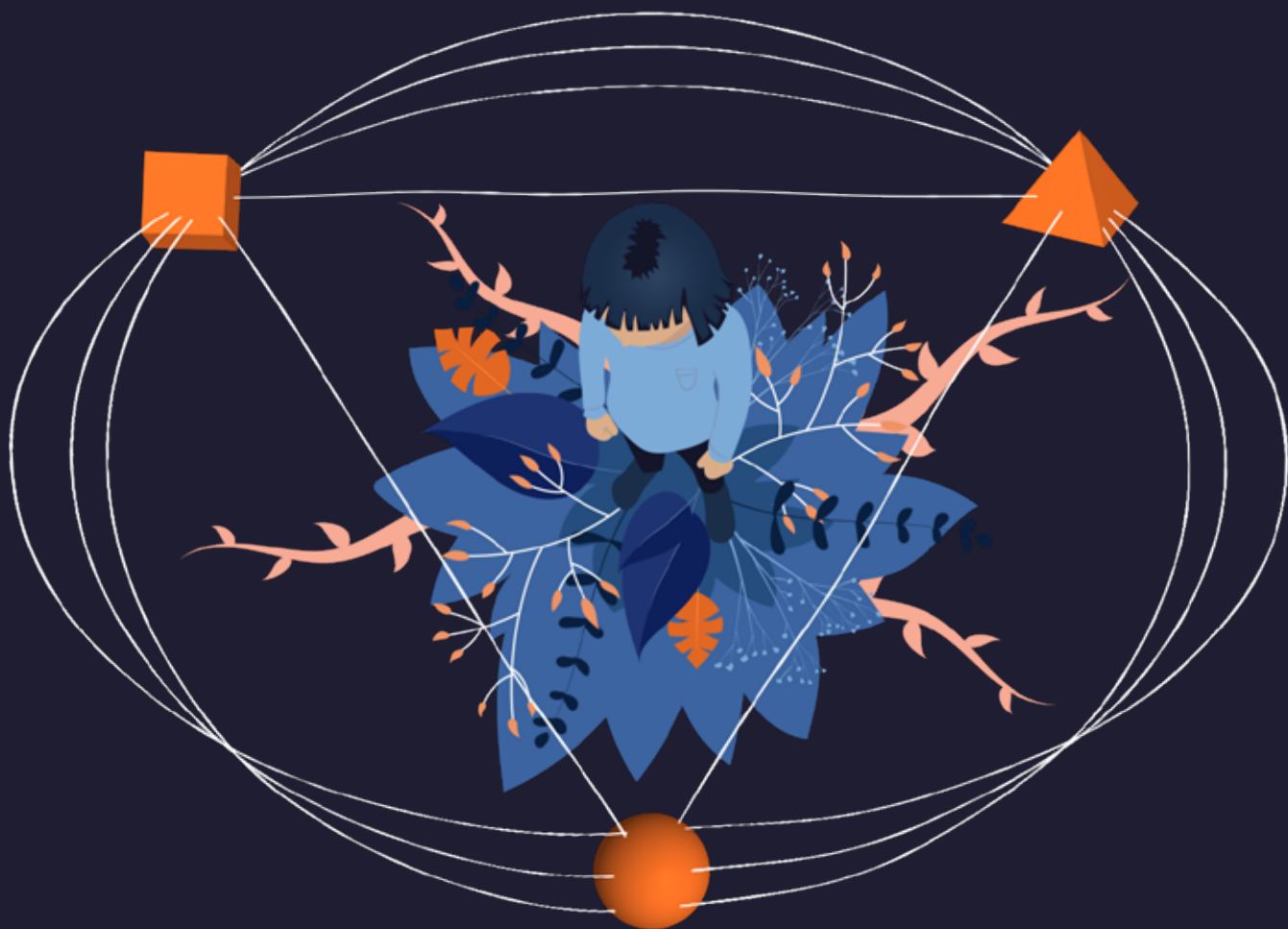


FAITH IN THE NEXUS



Spiritual flourishing in the words of the child Final report for young people

A Faith in the Nexus Study 2023

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National Institute For
Christian Education Research



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





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




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







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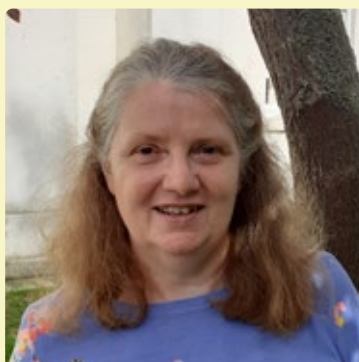
 Animations: <https://nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus>


Who are we?

The National Institute for Christian Education Research (NICER) is a University Research Centre at Canterbury Christ Church University.

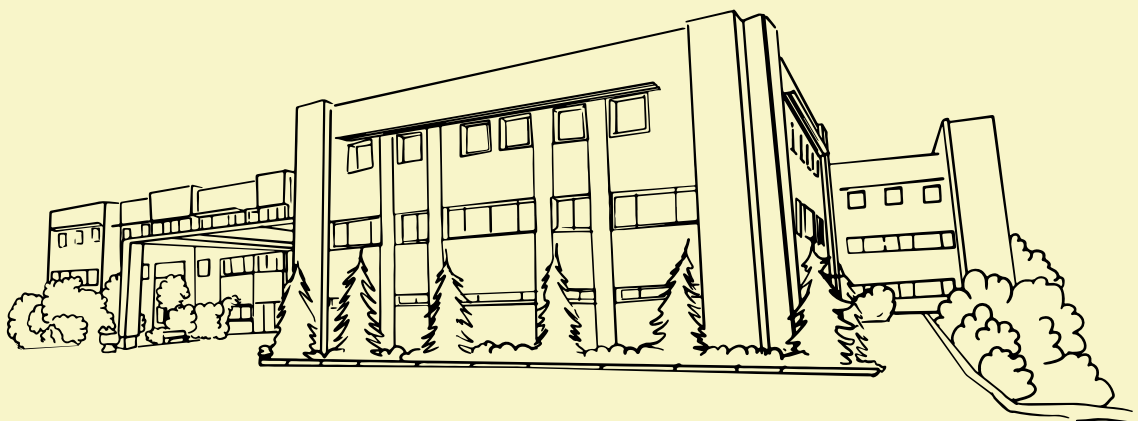
In NICER there is a team of researchers who are interested in finding out about and investigating Christian education.

Here are images of some of the researchers who work for NICER.



Sometimes their work involves visiting schools and finding out what spirituality and faith mean to the pupils, the teachers, and the families who belong to the school community.

Some of these researchers visited your school in 2023 and spoke to groups of your year 5 and 6 pupils, their parents, and your teachers.



Researchers visiting your school in 2023

When researchers from NICER visited your school, they spoke to small groups of pupils from year 5 and year 6.

We were given permission from their parents and guardians to do this.

We did not just visit your school, we also visited 6 other schools across the country.

As well as speaking to pupils, we also spoke to other people connected with your school:

- Parents
- Headteacher
- School Governors
- Priest or Minister

What did we find out?

When speaking with groups of pupils we asked them the following questions:

- What does it feel like to pray?
- What does it feel like to be in collective worship?
- When do you feel close to Jesus and God?
- What do you do about faith at home?
- Where do you go to reflect?

The pupils who we spoke with gave us some excellent responses that helped us find out more about young people and their beliefs. On the following pages you can read some of their responses to the questions above.

You can also look at our animations that include the voices of some of the pupils we spoke to responding to the questions listed above. It might be that you could watch them together with your family at home or at school with your teacher and class friends or in your church community.

Find our animations via nicer.org.uk/faith-in-the-nexus

What does it feel like to pray?

Well, we have collective worship, so in the hall and in class, and we're always talking about like God and how much he helps people. So, it makes me think about how much people appreciate him for all he's done. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

I kind of talk to God in my imagination, like in my thoughts. *(Year 5 Pupil)*

If you wanted to go outside you could in your head pray while you're doing an activity like swimming. *(Year 6 Pupil)*



I feel closest to God everywhere because he's always in our body and our hearts and we know that he's always going to be there for us. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

What does it feel like to be in collective worship?

Church is one of my happy spaces other than my bedroom like Peter said. But I always feel really comfortable at church, and I can express myself. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

On classroom worship we learnt about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And that really like helps me to know who Jesus is and what he's like. *(Year 5 Pupil)*

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. *(Year 6 Pupil)*



I feel closest to God at church because there's always candles that are lit and it just makes me feel like Jesus is present. *(Year 5 Pupil)*

When do you feel close to Jesus and God?

A few terms ago we went in the hall, and we put music on, and we laid down and we prayed to Jesus. And when I did that, I felt like I could actually hear Jesus talking to me. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

We have to say sorry. We have to hug it out. But with God, we can't hug it out, so we have to say a special prayer. *(Year 5 Pupil)*



Sometimes when I pray with my sister, I feel God next to me and her as well. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

You follow Jesus and you go to church to be present with him. *(Year 6 Pupil)*



What do you do about faith at home?

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. *(Year 6 Pupil)*



We all talk about what we feel because we've all got different religions because my mum, she's not sure, she's not sure whether she's Christian or not. She believes there is a God but she's not really a fan of Christianity, and my dad, he believes there is a God, but he just doesn't know what to think. *(Year 5 Pupil)*

Me and my mum and my dad and my sister – we all say our school grace before meals and then we eat. Then after that we say the Our Father. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

Sometimes when I pray with my sister, I feel God next to me and her as well. *(Year 5 Pupil)*

Where do you go to reflect?

Being alone 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 in my thoughts. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

I would just lie on my bed like a starfish, just lie on top of everything and the covers. *(Year 5 Pupil)*



I feel like, I know that God would still be there if I was watching it live stream but I'm like the space that, almost like the priest is closer to me and I don't know, I just, even like the bread and the holy bread and stuff like that. You're receiving God if that makes sense. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

Not really in my home but in the garden it's just a bit more peaceful. You can hear the birds and stuff. *(Year 6 Pupil)*

What did our researchers learn?

What you have read is only a small example of what year 5 and year 6 pupils from your school and the other schools said. As a research team, we listened very carefully to what they had to say about their faith and spiritual thoughts, beliefs, and experiences, and this is what we now understand:

- Young people have a voice and like to speak about their faith and spiritual lives when given the opportunity.
- Adults can learn about faith and spirituality by listening closely to young people.
- Spiritual and faith talk is normal for young people.
- Children speak of having a connection to God through Jesus, as well as through relationships with others and when they are surrounded by nature.
- Children's faith and spiritual lives matter deeply to them.

What are we going to do next?

The researchers were so impressed with the responses pupils from your school gave. We are going to share what we have learnt with as many people as possible. This will include:

- Parents.
- Other School Pupils.
- School Leaders.
- Church Leaders.

What could you do next?

Consider how you would answer the questions we originally asked some of your year 5 and year 6 pupils in 2023.

Our animations would help you with this. Each animation comes with a further set of questions for you to consider. You could watch them at home with your parents, in school with your teachers or in your church community with your church leaders.

A big thank you

All of us at NICER want to thank you for letting us visit your wonderful school and learn more about young people's faith and spirituality. What you shared with us was excellent and so clearly explained. We cannot wait to share it with others so they can learn from it too!



Acknowledgements

The research team gratefully acknowledges the support of the participating schools, pupils, families, governors, and church leaders, as well as the contributions and insights of the advisory group during the project.

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