



CREATING SPACES: MINDING THE GAPS

*A report supporting the work of
the Growing Faith Foundation*

Written by

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ABOUT US

Dr Graham Bright is the Project Lead. He is Director of Research and Senior Lecturer in Practical Theology (Youth and Community Work) with CYM. His PhD with Durham University focused on youth workers' life histories, motivations and practices.

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BACKGROUND

We have spent the last few months working with a primary school researching the ways in which their partnership with their local Parish Church has sought to grow faith with children and their families.

Our approach to this research was to Undertake a 'deep-dive' case study. which has sought to explore ways in which faith is grown in the spaces between school, home and church, and the role that each plays in this work.

Our primary focus has been to work alongside the Church's Youth Missioner and six young leaders of collective worship.



The relationship between School and Church has been developed in mutually beneficial and affirming ways over several years.

A photograph of three children running away from the camera on a grassy field. The child on the left is a girl with long dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and light-colored shorts. The child in the middle is a boy with short dark hair, wearing a light yellow t-shirt and blue shorts. The child on the right is a girl with dark hair, wearing a blue shirt. They are all running towards a line of trees in the background. The image is partially obscured by a white diagonal shape that contains text.

ABOUT OUR PROJECT

Our project was very focused on listening to the voices of children and young people. We did not see ourselves as the experts with all the answers but joined with the children as fellow pilgrims on a journey of learning and discovery. It was a joy to get to know them and this is one of the most important things we learned.

Creating the right types of spaces, built on mutual trust and respectful relationships, is the essential place to start in order to be able to have honest and meaningful conversations about God, faith, and 'big questions'.

WHAT THE CHILDREN TOLD US

Relationships really matter and make a difference ●

Time for our questions is important ●

Listen to the things that matter to us ●

We want to be part of a church where we can get involved and be more active ●


We want to live out our faith and make a difference in the world ●



"It's ok to be at different places in your faith at different times."

"God's by my side and I feel I can do absolutely anything."



A group of children, including a boy with glasses and several girls, are looking down at something on the ground in a grassy area. The image is partially obscured by white geometric shapes.

We need to create time and space for children and young people to be with God and to recognise him in the whole of life.

These spaces may be uncomfortable at times.

They are sacred spaces not to be filled with rigid curricular programs or simplistic answers but opportunities for wonder and encounter, exploration, worship, questioning, and lament - spaces created for God to fill.

WHAT NEXT?

- We need to find ways to ensure our children and young people have opportunities to build genuine relationships with others who can walk alongside them in helping them question, explore, discover and grow faith.
- We need to listen and learn with, and, from children and young people too.
- We need to be brave. We need to create spaces believing that God will show up and fill them. Too often we feel uncomfortable with the spaces we create for God; we rush to fill them. In doing so we limit space for God and stop faith from flourishing as it might.



The full report 'Creating Spaces Minding the Cap' is available here.