Multicultural Children's Ministry and its effect on child spiritual, social and educational development

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Abstract

Multiculturalism is a topic of growing interest within the wider church. Despite this, there is little research being undertaken into the effect it has on children within a multicultural children's ministry. This dissertation focuses on the impact of multiculturalism on the social, educational and spiritual development of children within a church children's ministry. These research aims were met through a comprehensive literature review and through empirical data collection using a combination of action research and ethnography methods. The findings firstly underlined that culture impacts every part of our lives and the interaction between cultures that are similar and different help individuals to develop. Secondly, that keeping multiculturalism in mind during curriculum development provides an enriching environment for children to engage with in an appropriate way. This dissertation provides recommendations of further research and development into a wider reaching and longer lasting curriculum that could be adaptable to any context and cultural diversity.

Keywords: multiculturalism, church, children, curriculum, development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Culture is a broad subject that affects all aspects of our lives. It affects grand issues like how we see ourselves, how we interact with the world around us and what biases we inherently adopt due to our upbringing. "Culture provides the materials from which individuals and groups construct strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986). In other words, culture has an overarching impact on all the choices we make in life. Dewey (1938) describes this as people living in a series of situations. "Different situations succeed one another… As an individual passes from on situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts." (pg44) The differences and similarities we find between people groups are primarily based on these diverse situations we each have faced and changed us for better or worse. When a group of people have had a similar experience or 'situation' then a common bond is formed - creating its own culture.

This is true for a large population who have learnt to do things a certain way over numerous years but also a small group who have a common bond over something as simple as their food choice or religious affiliation. Within each of these cultures, there are shared values and beliefs – things that are accepted and those that are not. Boundaries are created and upheld. In this sense then, culture is something we are taught, and we learn. Bonner (1980) states that it is "The transfer of information by behavioural means." (pg204) Culture is not something we are born with. It is something that we adapt to and because of.

Yet today more than ever before, we live in a confused culture where what is 'good' and 'right' are not commonly held values. Stetzer, (2018) agrees that in the past in the UK, there has been "certain standards influenced by our Judeo-Christian worldview that have been perceived as the "right" thing to do and that "good" people would do."

In the shrinking world that we live in, our well confined cultures have intermingled so much that the clear-cut boundaries no longer exist – creating a multi-cultural

community. A place where many cultural influences impact individuals at the same time. Cultures that may agree on the foundations of right and wrong or important and non-important, but also those that have fundamental differences and that wage war between themselves.

This then, leads onto defining the place church has in this situation. A core belief of Christians is that of welcoming in the stranger (Matthew 25:42-45) and reaching out to those who are 'lost' (Matthew 28:18-20). It should, therefore, be a place that is well versed in crossing cultural boundaries and embracing multiculturalism – but that is simply not the case. In fact, it is only recently that the issues faced by multicultural churches such as blending different needs and backgrounds are coming to the fore and there is a focus on it. Yancey (2003) agrees by stating that churches can have a harder time creating multiracial - or multicultural - congregations as in other secular places because there "we are not expected to have "fellowship" with anyone", whereas in church we "accept members … as "our brothers and sisters in Christ"" (pg27) Whatever differences we may have are not able to be avoided but must be embraced and accepted. Anderson, (2004) agrees, "The Christian church may have to relate differently and endure certain costs in order to achieve multicultural unity." (pg24)

1.2 Research Focus

These concerns over something so essential as embracing diversity and difference in the church warrants an investigation on how well this is being done within my context. More specifically, how something as fundamental as culture affects different aspects of a child's life. Although much research has been done into child development by well-known researchers such as Dewey, (1916), Erikson, (1963), Fowler, (1995), little is focused on the impact of multiculturalism on it.

Even down to the youngest member of a church, there is a need to embrace the cultural variety that exists - and then teach others to do the same. Anderson (2004) encourages us to look at this diversity as the true expression of the family of God. "When the members of the body of Christ realize that they need each other racially and culturally to express the body's gifts and to serve God and others, they will move beyond the transformation of the mind to the 'transformation' of the body" (pg148)

With children comes the challenge of development, that what is age appropriate, but also the opportunity to effect change from the outset. There needs to be a balance between the focus of encouraging children to develop in spiritual, social and educative ways but to also allow the influence of their culture or cultures to impact the way they see the world for the better. Anderson, (2004) asks "What would it be like if churches around the world were known as places of such great love that the boundaries of culture, class, and color were shattered?" (pg 20) The children of the church would more readily be the agents of this change, rather than adults.

How then can child development fit within the framework of cultural diversity? If all things are affected by culture, and in following multi-culture, do these two things work together or do they cause more harm? Church can become a place where faith and culture find a new reality - a place that, in some ways, creates its own culture – but an ever changing and fluid one. Where the influence of the various outside cultures reacting and interacting with each other, allows for an expression of education that is unique.

As Dewey, (1938) points out about the process of learning, "We have to understand the significance of what we see, hear, and touch. This significance consists of the consequences that will result when what is seen is acted upon." (pg68) This means that we cannot allow our children to just experience multi-culture from the outside looking in, but to provide for them an experience and allow them to use what they have learnt to build their own opinions. Only then will there be a multicultural ministry.

Dewey continues by saying "The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other." (pg 25) This means, therefore, that while providing an elaborate experience for children on a Sunday morning may seem like the most effective strategy to teach them about multicultural faith, this may indeed backfire. A mis-educative experience would be harder to rectify in the future causing a disinterest in pursuing personal faith.

In this balance is where multicultural children's ministry should find itself. Between providing an age appropriate, authentic expression of multiculturalism and providing an

education that allows a personal faith to grow despite the outside influences pressed upon it.

1.3 Overall Research Aim and Individual Research Objectives

The aim of this dissertation therefore is to gain an understanding into ways multiculturalism may be affecting the development of our church children, with a special focus on faith formation. With this as the focus, then the following objectives of this research are to:

1. Clarify what multicultural children's ministry is.

2. Identify the ways children's spiritual, social and educational development is affected by the immediate cultural climate.

3. Design and implement a Children's Church curriculum to engage with multiculturalism in an appropriate and positive way.

4. Critically assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.

5. Formulate recommendations for future development of an appropriate multicultural children's curriculum.

Without the clarification of what I have meant by the term 'multicultural children's ministry', this could lead to confusion when coming to analyse results further on (objective 1). Following this clarification, the research currently being undertaken within this topic needs to be examined and identification of ways it can affect children's development must be explored (objective 2). The theories gathered can then be put into practice with a trial curriculum (objective 3), which then can be analysed for its effectiveness and weighed against the theory (objective 4). Once completed, recommendations can be made regarding the future of creating a more comprehensive curriculum if appropriate (objective 5).

1.4 Outline Research Methods and Timescales

Unlike traditional research, this project requires a certain level of development prior to the empirical results collected. The development of the curriculum comes first within the timescale, using basic information gathered from surveys by the children that it will

be catering for. These surveys will investigate the needs the children themselves have identified as being of importance within a children's ministry. Once gathered, the literature review will expand my knowledge on the issues facing the development of this type of curriculum and the appropriate topics can be addressed and considered.

Although there will be preplanning involved with the development of this trial, there will also be an element of action research, as there is scope for further development as the 4 weeks progress. How the earlier weeks go will impact the development of the later ones. Only by responding to the successes or failings of the session once completed can any adaptation be catered for. The combination of theory, through the literature review, and practice, through the empirical research, will lend itself to a wide, but detailed look at this topic.

I will be aiming to create a curriculum that strives to encapsulate some methods to embrace the multi-culturalism of our groups while still looking at how different learning styles work better for the diversity we engage with. It will be evaluated on how much the children have learnt about the series and how the children and adult volunteers feel about the style of teaching delivered over this time. These results will be gathered by informal interviews with these groups and individuals. A short survey will be taken from parents on how they think their children have responded to this curriculum.

A more detailed look at the research methods and the justification for using these methods will be found later in Chapter 3.

1.5 Value of this research

Multicultural Children's ministry is a topic that is not well researched, yet it is becoming more commonplace. This research, both in the format of the curriculum itself but also by analysing the results, will expand the academic knowledge we have on this topic in relation to children. It will benefit those who are in a similar context as there would be wider awareness of the importance of crossing the boundaries we have placed ourselves in.

Within my own setting this research will enable a greater understanding of the needs of the children, volunteers and parents. With this comes the ability to enhance the

sessions, whether the full curriculum style is adopted or not. Knowledge can only better the impact the children's ministry has with those in its care.

With further development, a curriculum could be developed that can be used in other contexts, for example, those who are searching for ways to be more intentional with their multicultural impact, whether this is exclusively for children's ministries or not. Knowing how these two topics interact can have wide reaches across many ministries. For example, an all age expression of multicultural ministry or parenting courses.

1.6 Outline Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a background into the study of culture and multiculturalism and how the church in general is affected by it. It follows on to explain the focus of this research in regard to children's ministry. The overall research aims, and outcomes are outlined and the importance of such are discussed. The research methods are mentioned along with the value this research can provide for the future.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will reflect on some of the points of views of if and how culture and multiculturalism affect child development within the realms of education, relationships and faith development. A brief look into learning styles and the methods used to teach children will be researched along with other strategies could be useful going forward with the curriculum development.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

This chapter will explore the research methods used in obtaining results that can be analysed. The various methods - surveys, action research and ethnography are explained and justified. The systems of data collection are clarified, and the reasons why explained. This leads onto the framework by which the data will be analysed. As the reliability and the validity of results are important in a study such as this, the limitations of using these methods will be discussed. The potential problems that come from this research are also raised.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter summarizes the findings of the empirical data in the format of cycles of action research. These findings are then analysed in relation to the information gathered from the Literature Review and discussed with previous cycles in mind. This is then followed by a detailed analysis of the research a as whole and concludes with a summary of the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter provides what conclusions can be drawn from the results. It starts with an overall view of the results. Recommendations are given based on these conclusions and mentions some self-reflections discovered through the course of this research.

Chapter 6: References

This chapter includes all sources referenced in alphabetical order by author surname. A Harvard system of referencing is used.

Chapter 7: Appendices

This chapter includes the raw data collected during the research. It includes survey/questionnaire questions and results, images of creative brainstorming alongside the common themes raised, basic curriculum session outlines, notes of personal observations against detailed curriculum outlines, group leader feedback, images of children's personal reflections and attendance data.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Multicultural children's ministry is a subject that has not been well researched. Although it may be somewhat of a niche market at present, I believe that as the world grows smaller (i.e. globalization and social media) we may find that this becomes more common place and almost expected from the church. By understanding the challenges and benefits of multiculturalism, the church will become a more accessible and welcome place for everyone to attend. Lam (in Sanders and Wishard Guerra , 2016) agrees "we need to develop new approaches to working with issues of diversity that go beyond static, territorial, and state-bound categories to address the multiple kinds of intercultural transactions that characterize our collective lives in the contemporary era." (Pg 215)

The term 'culture' or 'multicultural' is an ambiguous one so let me explain the terms in the context of this research. The dictionary defines multicultural as "of, relating to, or representing several different cultures or cultural elements" (www.dictionary.com, n.d) In itself, this doesn't sound like a term of contention, yet the word "culture" has such a variety of meanings that it can allow for a difference of opinion and confusion. Cole (2003) states that "it has long been recognised that culture is very difficult for humans to think about." (pg8) Culture is unequivocally linked to who we are. Our identity is explained only in relation to the culture, or cultures around us. Baldock (2010) agrees by saying "all of us operate in a number of cultural spheres... which give us ways of deciding how we live our lives and to seek significance for ourselves." (pg11) Consequently, it is only through the interactions with other cultures alien to us that we can explain it. Following on from this, multicultural therefore, would be these 'alien' cultures interacting against and with each other, impacting how we relate to one another and with time, affecting our own cultural identity.

In this brief literature review, I will strive to examine if and how culture affects learning, relationship formation and faith development in relation to the churches formal children's ministry on a Sunday morning. The outcome is to create a tailored curriculum

or at least a template for the church to use on a week by week basis that takes this knowledge into account.

It's fairly well recognised by developmental theorists that as an individual grows, they can be grouped fairly broadly within developmental stages (babies, toddlers, preschoolers, early childhood, late childhood, adolescent etc.) This has very little to do with background, social standing, environment, cultural heritage and access to education. Within broad stages, a child passes from one developmental milestone to another and they can all be attained in a wide variety of situations and settings. Yet theorists like Piaget, Erikson and Vygotsky, who have focused on development, have shown how there is an important relationship between development and the social context an individual is in.

Piaget looked at how individuals are active learners from birth. Always receiving data about the surroundings and placing it into mental categories. He believed that everyone goes through the developmental stages in the same order but there are outside influences that affect the rate of development, that there is "the existence of important cultural variations in thought processes." (Cole, 2003, pg 86) Stonehouse (1998) states "The actualization of the child's developmental potential is enhanced or retarded by the richness or poverty of his or her social interaction. (pg 85) What surrounds the child therefore has a deep impact on their development.

Similarly, Erikson (1963) looked at how development and social context were linked and their interaction. They work together to allow an individual to shape their view on life. He theorized that in each stage there are new challenges and development of new capabilities that change how an individual sees themselves in relation to the world around them. Stonehouse (1998) agrees "Relationships with family, friends, and community powerfully influence our development throughout life." (Pg 45) If an individual is surrounded by a supportive social network then there is a higher chance that they would transition through the stage positively.

Of these three theorists, Vygotsky was different in that he posited that as an individual matures, the impact of the community plays a central role in the process of development. So much so, that in his theory there are not well banded, age graded

stages, rather he states that this can vary across cultures. He goes on to argue that social learning is a predecessor of development. Only through interaction with one's context can one learn. (Vygotsky, 1981) This is somewhat opposite to Piaget and Erikson as they argue that learning first leads to a greater interaction with one's context.

Perhaps then, this can explain why certain ethnicities have higher educational attainment (see Dept. for Education, 2018 for statistics), or others have stronger family relationships or more families from certain cultural backgrounds attend church more regularly. Surely there must be some correlation between the culture of the child and what milestones they achieve early, or thrive in. Culture must have some impact on determining how a child learns, interacts with others and develops a personal faith. Cole (2003) agrees that "performance within stages would vary as a function of the value a culture placed on the conceptual content of the particular task used." (pg89)

As a large church in urban London it would be easy to describe the demographic as multicultural. At the last count there were 72 different nationalities attending the church regularly. This means that there is a dynamic that is somewhat unique to this setting, a place where cultural differences are thrown together with the one overarching similarity – that of faith in God. In this sense, that creates its own cultural community. Rogoff (2003) usefully defines a cultural community as "a group of people who share goals, beliefs, and every day practices and often a racial or ethnic identity." When we come together as believers it creates its own community – a place where one is accepted because of the similarities, no matter the differences between culture, background and social standing.

Yet these differences are not something that can be or should be ignored. Learning from other cultures, ways of life and social contexts should only ever be a positive experience. If we take Piaget's assumption, then only by adding more information into our mental compartments are we truly to develop and grow.

2.2 Culture and Learning

There is a growing interest in research looking at multiculturalism and learning within mainstream schools. Much of this can be transferred to the church – especially in regard to the children's ministry, as in some ways it is similar. School has been seen as one of

the first new cultures to rival that of the child's family culture. Trilling (1966) states that "The family is the conduit of cultural influences, but it is also the bulwark against cultural influences." (pg 112) Once a child is spending time away from the confines of the family unit then outside influences are expected. This correlates to that of the church also. Whereas school takes up an immense chunk of time and the influence is almost expected, church for regular attending families becomes another place where different cultures are witnessed and assimilated.

Howes (in Sanders and Wishard Guerra , 2016) agrees that every child comes from their own cultural background and when placed together in a care giving setting there can be a clash of cultural expectations. Not only from the children, from the adults also. "The practices of care giving and beliefs about care giving derived from the caregivers' home cultural communities may be the same as or different from those of the home cultural communities of the children in the child care." (Pg 9) This means we're not only looking at the culture of the children within the ministry but also that of each of the adult volunteers and consider how these interact.

Dewey (1916) follows on this theme by stating: "The culture of the organization is set by the style of the manager, teacher or leader, rather than the methods employed to transmit knowledge." By following this logic, the cultural setting therefore, is determined by the teachers/leaders rather than the children. Those in positions of power will use their cultural background instinctively, within their knowledge base they know what to expect and how to act. Schultz and Schultz (1993) commented that as teachers "We continue teaching with blind disregard for learning because it's how we were taught." (Pg 30) They will also engineer a mean culture that they are able to relate to. Olssen (2004) agrees "that schools embody a particular cultural capital – that of the middle classes – which they use and expect all children to use in the same manner." (pg 15)

This can prove problematic for those cultures which are very different from that of the mean that has been established. Different cultures have been proven to learn in different ways (Cole, 2003).

2.3 Culture and relationships

It follows on therefore, that culture would have an effect on the peer relationships within a group also. "Because child care classrooms contain individuals, dyads (child-caregiver, peer friendships, and playmates), and at least one peer group, these interactions between children and caregivers and among peers, as well as the tone the caregivers set for the entire group, all contribute to the social and emotional climate of the classroom or program." (Howes, Phillipsen & Peisner-Feinberg, 2000) When a mix of cultures is present in one group then each group will find its own culture, something that is fluid and alive. It is an amalgamation of the cultural backgrounds of the individual members but overarched by that of the leader. "With enough time together, children develop social interactive practices and styles that are particular to that peer group." (Howes in Sanders and Wishard Guerra , 2016, pg 10)

Children are adept at finding similarities between themselves and others. Yet many researchers have also noted the trend of homophily - children having a tendency to gravitate to that which is familiar including ethnicity and gender (Bigler, Jones & Lobliner, 1997). Chen, French and Schneider, (2006) agree that "cultural values and beliefs, particularly those pertaining to developmental goals and socialization practices, may affect the function and organization of peer relationships." (Pg 3) For children, it can be a challenge overcoming that which is unknown. But it is the perfect time for an adult – parent/teacher/leader, to show what true multiculturalism looks like in a multifaceted approach across social and emotional boundaries. Being in close proximity to someone with a different cultural background can only lead to greater understanding and growth.

A theory that has only recently become more in focus out of Vygotsky's theory is that of a sociocultural learning theory. Schoen in (McInerney, Walker and Liem, 2011) describes it as "a philosophical approach to understanding the way individuals behave and learn in social contexts, that has spawned a distinct approach to research and theory development." (pg 11) The focus has moved away from the behavioural skills and mental structures of the individual to people's activities within their social context (Packer, 2001). Ford and Forman, (in Green and Luke, 2006), say that this means

participation becomes more the focus of learning rather than test results and performance assessments.

In this development theory individuals have to engage fully if their participation is to be authentic. Vadeboncoeur (in Green and Luke, 2006, pg 264) agrees that "Learning is the individual mastery of joint mental action mediated by cultural artefacts." If there are challenges with peer relationships, then interaction within the group may not be efficient and according to this theory leads to a lower level of learning. Schoen continues to say that outside social elements have a direct impact on the education of an individual. A positive or negative peer relationship would therefore affect the quality and effectiveness of learning.

However, can a version of sociocultural theory be applied to a children's church curriculum? Is there merit in using this style in developing a learning space for children to explore their faith and develop their relationships within the group? It would lead on to having a more informal style of teaching where each child takes on responsibility for their learning which may prove impractical for those very young.

2.4 Culture and faith

What then about faith development? Fowler's (1995) theory of the stages of faith is very similar to that of Erikson's. Each stage is a building block that must be laid upon each other to proceed. In Fowler's case, this was to grow a deeper and more mature faith rather than a physical and mental development as with Erikson. But if culture and social context have such an impact on individual development, perhaps there is a correlation also with faith development.

Many researchers (for example Csinos (2011), Beckwith (2004), Stonehouse (1998), Withers (2010), Nye (2008)) have looked into the effects of spiritual development on children and the importance we should place on nurturing this early in life. This challenges our thinking to see every individual as being on a faith journey no matter how young and able to build a relationship with God. While there would be a general faith development growth as a child age, this is not always the case. How then does a children's ministry cater for the variety of spiritual depth within a certain age group?

One way to remedy this is to follow the Old Testament directive in Deuteronomy 11:19 (The Holy Bible, NIV, 1983) of each parent taking the lead of the spiritual formation for their children. However, many parents worry that they cannot adequately disciple their children and so look to the church to do it. Indeed, Stonehouse (1998) states, using Erikson's research, that "the faith of the parent, or lack of it, impacts children."(pg 64) A parent has a vastly greater influence on a child's development than the church, or another social context, ever will have. "The spiritual development of any [child] depends very largely on the home and general background. If there is a vigorous spiritual life in the home, the school and the parish, the child ... will assimilate it." (A Scheme of Training for Church Children, n.d. Pg 10) It leads on, therefore, that there is a need to train up parents alongside the children. As soon as parents are secure in their faith then they will be more willing to take the lead with their children.

2.5 Learning styles

There has been a significant amount of research done developing theories of learning styles. When considering a new style of teaching these theories need to be explored. Theorists like Kolb (1984) and his experiential learning cycle builds on the work of developmental theories but expands on the process by which each stage is achieved. The preference of the learner is taken into account as this determines where on the cycle they are most likely to start the learning process and the ease of which they do so. However, Weinstein, Sumeracki and Caviglioli, (2019) argue that in controlled experiments there is no proof that matching a learning style overall helped students learn. The cycle is a whole process and to reach the next stage, it all needs to be completed. They continued to say that "a better idea would be to teach to students' non-preferred styles, in order to strengthen their weaknesses." (pg 36)

This is not to say that a learning environment shouldn't have a variety of styles. A traditional school-like setting is now outdated and irrelevant for churches. "Though we may engage our students passively in some reading and listening to teachers, their understanding and applications of God's Word will really take off through actual and simulated experiences." (Shultz and Shultz, 1993, pg106) Faith is something that needs to be lived out not just taught. Engaging various methods of teaching allows this to be explored more fully. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory (1999) could come into

effect here as he posits that everything should be taught in varied ways to accommodate the various types of learners.

More research needs to be done which is larger than the scope of this literature review. Theories of analytical verses relational learning in regard to culture can be taken into account. Hale-Benson (1982) states that there is such thing as a "Culture conflict", which can occur "when the child is using a learning style [at home] that differs from the analytical learning and behavioural style reinforced in the school." (pg39) Jarvis (in Olssen, 2004) posits that there are also 4 different types of learning along a scale of non-learning to reflective learning. He expands to say that different cultures allow a range of freedom along this scale and that leads to a variety of abilities of individuals to reflectively learn – what he suggests is the primary way that an individual develops.

2.6 Future Curriculum Development

So, with all this in mind, what would a curriculum look like? From past information in my setting, the children have asked many questions about the basics of Christianity. What do Christians believe? How should they live if they call themselves one? What is the story of the Gospel? More than likely they know the answers to these questions but there is a desire to really ponder over them. A desire to change head knowledge to heart belief. Yet Shultz and Shultz, (1993) note that "Helping our people think requires a paradigm shift in how we teach." (pg93) It is not an easy task to change how things are done and what the teachers/leaders are used to. It will require each of them to move away from their cultural norms and embrace that of the group instead.

What then can be learned from the different cultures that would help the church to disciple their children more effectively? There is the wealth of information and insight we have with such a multicultural group. Utilising this knowledge to create a place where cultural differences are explored and revered can only enhance the faith journey within the child's personal culture outside of the church and will make it more alive to them. Seeing faith lived out in different aspects of real people lives means it's a tangible, relatable faith, not just knowledge of the sake of knowledge.

Does it need to engage the vast varieties of learning and teaching styles to ensure all children are engaged and developing to their fullest capacity? Dewey (1902) stated over 100 years ago the same dilemma we face today:

> *How and in what ways can we, as an intellectual and scholarly community, revisit, rethink, and reformulate research in response to the significant and unprecedented educational challenges of new cultural, economic, and social contexts?*

Culture is an ever-changing commodity and if we believe as such then we need to be open to change also. "This dynamic nature of cultural communities provides opportunities for professional development to change the practice and activities in the classroom" (Howes, in Sanders and Wishard Guerra, 2016, pg4). Dewey knew that a traditional schooling was not what was efficient for the students, but it was something that people were used to and expected. Wells (in McInerney, Walker and Liem, 2011) agrees that "While the overall goal of schooling is admirable... the actual practices through which schooling takes place are, in important ways, at odds with the practices beyond school for which they are intended to provide a preparation." (pg90) The same can be said for church "schooling" in that the style and formation does not correlate with that which is lived out on a day by day basis.

With cultural diversity also comes the challenge of the vast array of learning style and preferences. An idea to overcome this and empower parents/home culture would be to change the traditional dynamic – in which the church partners with the parents in discipling their children, not the other way around. By encouraging and equipping parents, then there is another way the cross-cultural barrier is breached. The parents would be the primary source of information and faith development and as there is a shared culture, hopefully a clearer message. What that looks like exactly is unclear but will be explored during the progression of the curriculum. Although the advances of social media and instant messaging have made the world feel smaller, it can be used to our advantage in this case.

Future research would investigate how a curriculum based on this information could be tailored specifically for a church. If spiritual growth is an individual journey that is

affected by the social context then using information from children, parents, the church leaders and the wider church congregation will lead to an overarching view of the church culture as a whole. Within this then, more exploration into what this church culture should look like, the cultural parenting styles, learning styles and peer and teacher/student relationships can be researched to find or formulate a curriculum that meets the needs of those it is striving to cater for.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

This project by its very nature requires that numerous techniques of gathering information are undertaken. The research objectives are a progressive process that is linked - one affecting the ones to follow.

1. Clarify what multicultural children's ministry is.

2. Identify the ways children's spiritual, social and educational development is affected by the immediate cultural climate.

3. Design and implement a Children's Church curriculum to engage with multiculturalism in an appropriate and positive way.

4. Critically assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.

5. Formulate recommendations for future development of an appropriate multicultural children's curriculum.

While steps 1 and 2 have been initially explored and somewhat completed with the literature review, this knowledge will lend itself to further the subsequent steps. Objective 3 will therefore be a combination of this knowledge along with the empirical data from the initial survey results collected. While this will give shape to the trial of the 4 weekly sessions, with the first session completely formulated, an element of action research will modify the later sessions. This will lead into objective 4 as assessment will be a continuous process. At the end of the trial the curriculum will be assessed as a whole, continuing the process of objective 4, by the children, volunteer leaders and parents.

The ability to look at my own context allows a freedom of observation while not skewing the results by an outside force. The overall aim being able to adapt what works within my own context to fit a wider demographic. This means that while the literature review will guide my thinking to the design and implementation of the curriculum, the overall results will be from the responses to it. The data I collect will be from the impact the curriculum would have on the people who are part of it. Only a personal reflection from these groups of people would indicate if the curriculum is of any use.

This chapter will detail the methods used and the justification of them. It will elaborate on the approaches used to collect data and strategies that will be in place to analyse the results. The limitations of this research will also be mentioned. Potential problems will be looked at with the scope of some of the problems being solved throughout the research. Future potential problems will also be mentioned.

3.2 Research strategy

There will be three main strategies used throughout this research to collect empirical data, that of surveys, action research and an awareness of ethnography. All have a place in determining whether the curriculum developed is appropriate and of a benefit to the target audience.

Surveys are an effective way of gathering data in a short space of time. They aim to capture a vast array of information from multiple sources that can be analysed quantitatively and therefore be acted upon. It can provide a representative view of a group. They can be in the form of questionnaires or interview and both have a place in receiving a different type of information. Defranzo, (2012) outlines 4 main reasons to conduct a survey. Firstly, as already stated, the ability to gather meaningful opinions, comments and feedback and secondly, the ability to discuss what has been researched. Only through the accumulation of appropriate information can a broad picture be developed and discussed. Thirdly, receiving objective information. By having a conversation with friends about a particular topic will elicit a completely different set of results to that of an unbiased survey. This information unhindered by personal biases will lead to conclusions based on the reality of the group rather than individual personal preference. Lastly, the ability to compare results. Surveys provide a snapshot of the opinions of the target audience at a specific time. They can be used as a basis on which to work from and to look back on when future research is conducted.

Although there is some scope to receive qualitative data through surveys, by way of interviews and comments received during the process, there is no opportunity to observe people during the times when the research is most important. This leads to utilizing other research methods alongside.

Action research is a flexible process. Dick (2002) states that by use of action research "the understanding allows more informed change and at the same time in informed by that change." Action research is a cycle that spins continuously with new information effecting change and that change creating new information as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Action Research Cycle

It is a process that allows the researcher to interact with the target audience and work alongside to investigate issues and to reach conclusions. While there is a certain detachment of the researcher, the level of cooperation that can be attained can mean that the results are more realistic and achievable.

Kolb (1984) used this cycle as a basis in relation to a learning process, which in a way, is what action research is. As one observes and reflects upon an action, they create new knowledge and understanding, which once processed is ready to act upon once again. So, in fact, it is not a stationary cycle, but one that changes and adapts to the new information such as in figure 2.
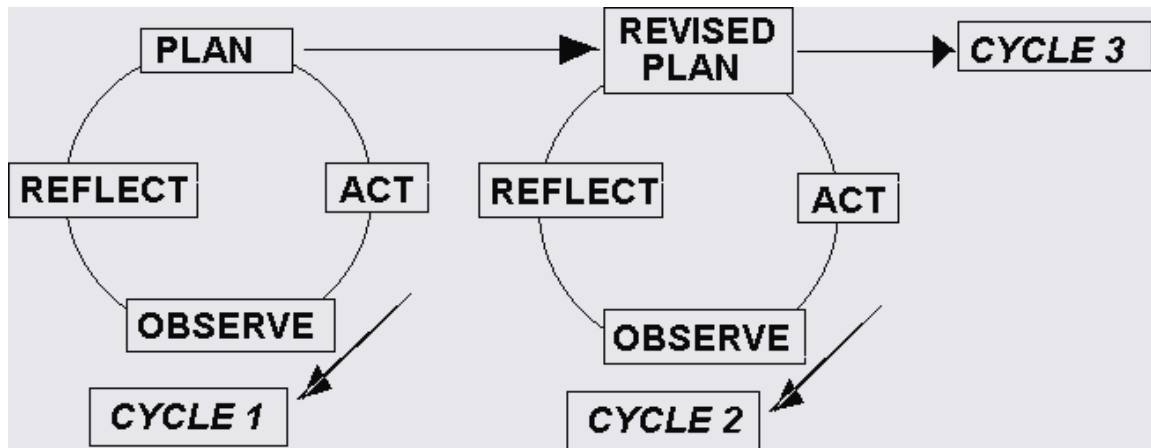
Figure 2 – Expanded Action Research Cycle

It follows therefore, that other methods such as completing surveys and undertaking ethnography can come under the heading of action research. Surveys provide clear identification leading from the planning stage to the acting stage. It is the initial empirical research input, together with the theoretical knowledge from the Literature Review that starts the process off. The ethnographic data can be placed under the heading of observation.

However, although there is a link between these methods, there was a need to separate them within the scope of this research. Without the differentiation between 'observation' and 'ethnography', the element of cultural studies could be lost. By applying the practice of ethnography alongside action research, the data can be systematically ordered to delve deeper into the cultural meanings behind the results collected "allowing the culture to speak about its views and perspectives." (Huddle, 2018)

Ethnography is the study of people in their natural environment (Biggam, 2017) or in other words, it is a study of culture with the aim being cultural interpretation. It recognises the importance of observation and personal interpretation of data collected. Hoey, (2018) recognises that there are two distinct ways in which ethnographic research can be undertaken. That of an emic perspective – where the observer is amongst the culture and data is collected within the cultural frame of analysis, and an etic perspective – where the culture is observed from afar and there is no interaction between researcher and researched.

The vast difference between the methods is determined by the interaction the researcher has and how this reflects in practice. While etic research is applying theory onto a culture with no ability to put it into practice, emic is quite the opposite. It involves participant observation, where theory is challenged, and meanings can arise during interaction and thus be of more use in effecting change within a culture if that is what the research aims to do.

Ethnography requires a long-term participation. Only by spending a significant time immersed in the culture can you have a reliable assessment of the views and opinions expressed. This research is interested in observing the interactions between people in this rather unique situation of multiculturalism within the faith sector. Without long term observation only superficial results can be established.

The interaction of researcher within the group will lead itself to an element of action research, which will be used to change and improve the developing curriculum. While similar in some ways to ethnography, action research aims to act upon the knowledge received rather than study and interpret within the cultural frames.

With any research method, there will be limitations. The combination of these three methods may well help with this but it is pertinent to be aware of the downfalls that they may have. A survey collects data quickly, but it also confines itself to a moment in time. A person's temperament, or emotional state in that moment will determine the answers given without scope of discussion or explanation of the answer, it may miss the detail needed to give understanding to the answers given. They usually contain closed questions which mean "the most important limitation of surveys has to do with internal validity." (Medicine.jrank.org, 2019) In other words, if the right questions are not asked, then the wrong answers, or inconsequential answers will be retrieved which has no bearing on the research topic.

Surveys, by their very nature, contain leading questions. From the outset of a title or general field of study mentioned, the questions guide the participants in their thought process. So, while there are a variety of answers, only those with an interest in the subject matter will take the time to think through the survey as a whole and answer

appropriately. Those without the invested interest may well become bored and answer simply to complete the task, skewing the result.

If action research is the interaction between researcher and target audience, then both participants would have their own biases and focus on what would be important and relevant during the process. The issue of objectivity comes to the fore if the researcher is invested in the results. There would be the temptation to only include results that lead to a positive outcome and this can lead to a dilemma over how valid the results truly are.

3.3 Data collection

This research will be undertaken at Streatham Baptist Church in South West London. The children's church meets weekly on Sunday morning with an average attendance of 40-60 children aged 2-11 years. As mentioned in the literature review, at last count the church has 72 nationalities that attend regularly and while this is not a measure of true multiculturalism within the church, it shows the diversity of the congregation. Therefore, in a study of how culture affects children's development, a culturally varied environment is a prerequisite.

When working with children, the developmental ability must come into account. Therefore, while the proposed curriculum will span the age range of 2-11, the data collection will be confined to the age grouping of 6-11-year olds. This includes the feedback from the children during the sessions. Personal observations will primarily be limited to this age grouping also. However, to provide a clearer picture of the curriculum from the leader perspective, all the leaders will be informally interviewed following the session.

While there is merit in extending this research to include all the age groups, the ability to gather information either written or drawn allows for a more reliable sample. Rather than relying on retrieving verbal information from a group of young children that must be recorded immediately, other sampling techniques that collect data simultaneously are of more value.

Convenience sampling was used in this project for both the location and the target audience. It is convenient as the researcher is employed at the church and has weekly interaction with the subjects. This access means that random sampling is not required – the children's groups provide an opportunity to gather data from the whole group that will be affected by the curriculum. This type of sampling will be extended to include the adults, both the volunteers and the parents, in order to provide a broader point of view and a multifaceted perspective that can be analysed.

The initial stage of this research will be achieved via surveys done with the children and the volunteers during normal sessions on a Sunday morning pre the intended trial period of Easter (April 2019). This will be in the form of simple questionnaires and anonymous comment collection finding personal opinions. Without the preliminary feedback from the target audience, research may not be investigating the issues and concerns that are present. Instead, it would be based solely on the researchers own opinion and assumptions leading to misdiagnosis of relevant research topics.

The children are asked to fill a brief questionnaire about their own opinions on the state of the children's ministry while the adult volunteers are asked to provide any positive or negative comments. The main reason for this difference is the time available to lend to this activity for the children – the questionnaire is quicker and provides a greater range of information whereas the volunteers would be allowed freedom to express in their opinion, the particular themes the children's church faces, both positive and negative, without the researchers bias and without the time constraints.

With this data collected, and with the information from the literature review in mind, the first steps in curriculum development can be achieved. The combination would lend itself to exploring the primary aims that the curriculum strives to achieve within the boundaries of the research objectives. As the method of action research is being adopted, the structure beyond the first week of curriculum does not have to have the detail as the first, this can be added after the initial cycle is complete. However, at a minimum requirement, there must be the general outline throughout the series and the overall goals to be met by the end of the curriculum.

Once the structure is in place, however loosely, a second child survey in the form of creative brainstorming is used during the first session to introduce the subject and to ascertain the knowledge of the group. Being creative at this point, rather than expecting another structured questionnaire to be filled in, allows the children to interact with the subject in a fun and more appealing way. "Successful brainstorming activities encourage all kids to participate without focusing on correct or incorrect responses." (Frost, 2017) This will provide a foundation off of which the depth of understanding and breadth of knowledge can be assessed.

Following on from this, much of the data throughout the trial run will be collected from observation of the sessions with the children while implementing the curriculum. This will be in the form of notes of personal observation and informal interviews with the adult volunteer leaders at the end of the session. As the development of the curriculum will be somewhat fluid, a certain flexibility is required to allow for action research. As each week passes, and with feedback from the leaders on how each session went, there can be some scope to edit the week after. Observations for the sessions and the informal interviews with the leaders are a key method in ascertaining whether the styles, content and subject matter are being effective.

During the last session of the trial run, a second set of creative brainstorming with the children will assess the level of learning throughout the trial. While this empirical data may not provide a great understanding into the reality of each of the children's developmental growth, in combination with the insights from observations and input from the adult leaders, a three-dimensional perspective can be reached.

On completion of the curriculum trial, a survey will be given to the parents of these same children, finding their reactions, observations and opinions. While there is some crossover between the adult volunteers and parents, the survey will gather data from the range of familiarity the parents have had with the trial – those that may be present every week through to those who do not help. The survey, in the form of an emailed online questionnaire, will ascertain what the parents have experienced and more importantly, their opinion on what their children have experienced.

For reliability, some information on attendance numbers and regularity of attendance will be retrieved from the registration data collected on a monthly basis. While the curriculum should aim to provide for all attendees, knowing the frequency and regularity of the children during the trial will help with the validity of results. A child who attends every week will have a greater chance to learn than one who has only visited once. It follows then that the effect, if any, of the new curriculum would be more prominent in those that have attended the majority of the sessions.

3.4 Framework for data analysis

Following the structure of action research, the study will comprise of 5 cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (refer to Figure 1 pg20) These cycles will reflect the progression of development and knowledge as the process evolves. The first cycle begins with the initial data collection and literature review material merging to create the curriculum. From this point, a subsequent cycle will begin with the input from the set week sessions and the observations and opinions of it. This will repeat for each of the week culminating with the overall analysis on completion of the trial and the added input from the latter survey responses.

An important part of this research is to learn from the data as it is received so then it can be acted upon before new data is collected. The comparing and contrasting between empirical data and the findings in the literature will be a continuous process. In this case therefore, analysis of data will accompany each cycle rather than a structure of receiving all empirical data at once followed by interpretation and analysis. Figure 3 is a diagrammatic summary of this process.

The design of the questionnaires will be split between the themes of multicultural ministry and that of good practice within a children's church. This will assist in the analysis of the research objectives in providing a wealth of information from both sides of the interacting themes. Without exploring opinions of learning styles or content, then a study of multiculturalism in that context is irreverent. Similarly, researching the ways multiculturalism impacts children without combining it with methods to explain and expound it appropriately could lead to miscommunication. These two themes in this context are irrevocably linked and should be discussed in relation to one another.

Cycle 1			
Collect Data (Child questionnaires and adult opinion poll)	Describe data	Analyse data (in relation to L. Review)	Develop Curriculum

Cycle 2			
Collect data (observations of week one, volunteer feedback, brainstorm data)	Describe data	Analyse data (in relation to Lit. Review)	Develop Curriculum week 2

Cycle 3-4			
Collect data (observations of week's session, volunteer feedback, brainstorm data, parental feedback)	Describe data	Analyse data (in relation to Lit. Review and previous weeks data)	Develop Curriculum week 3/4

Cycle 5			
Collect data (observations of week's session plus volunteer feedback)	Describe data	Analyse data (in relation to Lit. Review and previous weeks data)	Curriculum assessment and Further recommendations

Figure 3 – Data Analysis framework Summary

3.5 Limitations and potential problems

With any type of research like this, time is going to be a limitation. This trial was for 4 weeks which is such a small length of time within the scope of a traditional curriculum series. Although some curriculums would plan a thematic or Bible book based series that lasts a month, this is rarely used in isolation. Children, and adults, are creatures of habit and a different style of curriculum can take some getting used to. For more accurate results to be collected then this trial should extend for a longer period. Another time

constraint was that of actual input time. In this context, Children's church lasts between 1-1.5 hours per week. This restriction means that the changes made were perhaps not noticed as greatly than when a curriculum is trialled over a significant length of time. This can also be acerbated by the issue of attendance. Children's church is not compulsory, and the responsibility of attendance falls on the parents. It would be an incorrect assumption that the children trialling this curriculum would be present for the entirety. With that in mind, an action research strategy, where knowledge and opinion is based on previous actions there would be an inconsistency of data influences.

A potential skew in results is of the time of year this curriculum was trialled. By focusing on the Easter story, there could be a vast difference between a story as well-known as this compared to another time of the year focusing on perhaps a lesser known part of the Bible. Yet, I did it this way intentionally. The curriculum should be accessible to all our children – from those who are new to church and those who have been attending their whole lives and know the bible stories well. This curriculum must span not just the age range, or multicultural aspect of these children, but also the depth of bible knowledge they have across the board.

While personal observation is appropriate within the strategies of action research and ethnography, this too has its limitations. Primarily, it is impossible to be in two places at once. A personal observation can only focus on one group or conversation at a time. This would provide reliable data but only for a specific group. In research such as this, where children are divided into age-banded groups, personal observations can only be made of one group during the session. Other observations and opinions must be retrieved from outside contributions which diminish the quality of the data.

Another potential problem of personal observation is that of personal bias and objectivity. With a project that takes place within employment, the problems associated with access to the target audience are alleviated yet there is scope that this access may impact the results. Personal relationships between researcher and target group works in favour of building rapport and cooperation but it can lead to concerns over reactions to opinions and feedback. With this in mind, and to minimise the effects, all questionnaires will be taken anonymously allowing for freedom to express view without repercussions.

Within reason however, personal observation in this scenario requires some sort of bias on which to work from and compare results with. The personal opinion of the researcher blends with that of the target audience and the research attained through the literature review to provide a base line analysis. This then is expounded through further research. The researcher must be aware then, that these biases exist and may shift during the process of action research – for themselves and the target audience.

This chapter has provided details of the research strategies that will be used and the framework of analysis of collected data. It explained some of the limitations of these strategies and potential problems to be aware of. In the next chapter, the data collected by these strategies will be described and analysed.

Chapter 4: Findings: Description and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discloses the results for the surveys, action research and ethnographical research described in the previous chapter. It is helpful to remember at this point that this research intends to achieve the 5 objectives set out previously. Objective 1 and 2 have been explored primarily through the Literature review. The empirical research therefore has a special focus, but not exclusive focus, on objective 3 - design and implement a Children's Church curriculum to engage with multiculturalism in an appropriate and positive way, and objective 4 – critically assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.

As outlined previously, the research has been accumulated through various cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The data collection initialises the cycle with input from the children attending the children's ministry and the volunteer leaders. Next, the data is analysed in relation to the literature review to design the curriculum. Following this, data is retrieved from each of the trial sessions on a weekly basis, analysed against previous knowledge and developed into a new framework off which further research can be carried. At the end of the trial, the total accumulation of data will provide a full assessment and analysis of the whole curriculum.

For clarity, the findings are grouped into action research cycles. This way it is clear at what stage the data collection and analysis has reached and the progression from one to another. The raw data evidence can be found in Chapter 7 – Appendices and will be linked to the relevant stage of research as they are described.

4.2.1 Findings and Analysis: Cycle 1

This cycle includes the data from the children's survey of multiculturalism (Appendix A) and the survey of the volunteers regarding the positives and negatives of the children's ministry (Appendix B). It will be analyses against the research garnered from the literature review with the outcome being the design of curriculum.

Of the 35 children asked about multicultural observations, the results provided a clear majority for all questions. The children are aware of some of the issues of

multiculturalism and have strong opinions about it. Appendix A provides the complete data collected by this questionnaire while figure A.2 (below) provides a clear visual representation of the opinions held over these questions.
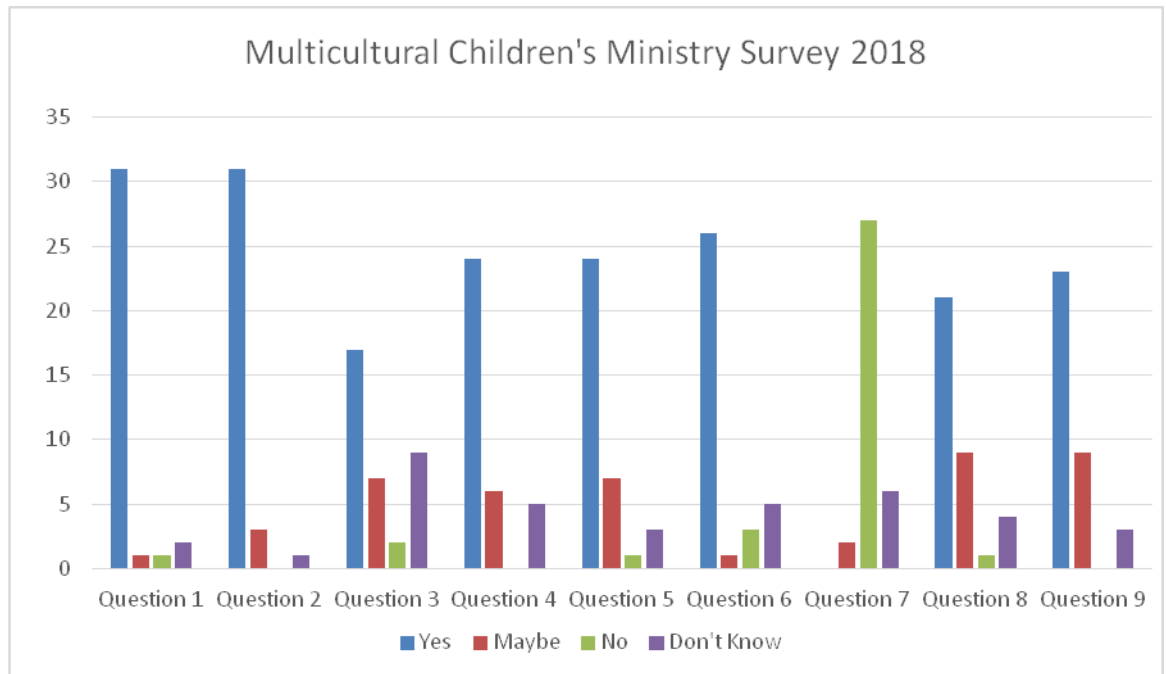
Figure A.2

There is almost a unanimous vote for 'yes' in the first 2 questions providing an insight to how the children view the church and its relationship with multiculturalism. Question 4 – whether the church celebrates these cultures adds another dimension to the same theme. These questions provide a broader view of the whole church. The results identify that the children are aware that the church is diverse; they feel that people are welcomed regardless of their background and diversity is something that is positive. In their opinion, the church is a place for all people; that it is achieving an inclusive community and there is a value in this.

Question 6 – "I am aware of the cultural differences within my children's church group" directs opinions away from the main church to that of the children's church along the same theme. 74% answered yes to this question which continues the idea that children recognise diversity and it is not just in observation of adults but with children their own age.

These results correlate with the research that children are aware of cultural influences due to the fact that they operate in many cultural spheres (Baldock, 2010). The interaction between these spheres allows personal identity to be formed in relation to those around them.

Questions 5, 8 and 9 relate to the opinion that culture provides an added dimension to learning and relationship building. The children recognised that stepping out of what they know and learning about other opinions and lifestyles, in this case within the children's church, can lead to a positive outcome. This in turn helps when faced with 'real world' scenarios outside of the church when cultural diversity is encountered, and expected behaviour is unknown. This is in line with Stonehouse (1998) who regards richness of social interaction as the means of developmental potential. The greater the input, interaction and knowledge of other cultures can only enhance the development of an individual, socially or educationally.

Question 7 showed just how strongly the children feel about embracing cultural diversity. With no positive results, 77% were adamant that a ministry divided by ethnicity is bad. The children innately seem to echo the opinion of Anderson, (2004) that diversity is the expression of God's family and without it we are missing something vital about who God is.

4.2.2 Curriculum Development

The data collected from volunteers briefly outlined some positives and negatives of the children's ministry before the trial took place (Appendix B). These were used in conjunction with the children's responses to create a curriculum that combined the benefits of learning styles and content within the framework of multiculturalism. The Outline Curriculum (Appendix C) clarifies the main aims and content for the sessions throughout the trial studying the Easter Story. The overall structure was to be 3 sessions of primarily traditional teaching methods with the last week a more responsive session. This links into the research of Shultz and Shultz, (1993) who explain that experience is of more benefit when learning than passive education and personal understanding of God needs space and time to ponder information rather than be learnt by rote.

4.3 Findings and Analysis: Cycle 2

Cycle 2 starts with the developed curriculum (Appendix D) as a base and builds upon it after the first session is completed. With the data received through the survey done with the children over initial thoughts on the subject matter (Appendix G), the personal observations of the researcher (Appendix E) and the feedback from the other group leaders (Appendix F), further analysis can be undertaken.

The survey of the children's answers in response to "What do you know about Easter?" showed a significant difference between the two groups who partook of this exercise. Image G1 and G2, which are images of group 1's contribution, show a complete focus on the Bible story of Easter and the previous knowledge of the story. However, image G3 illustrates the contribution from the group 2 and this group was not directed to confine their answers within the biblical story – any information they knew about Easter was relevant. Thus, group 1 shows a more correlated result as the story is well known and the children know what to draw/write within the limitations. The answers provided by group 2 however, provide an insight into the vast breadth of information the children are in possession of regarding this topic and shows what topics come more readily to mind.

This data highlights that while there is an effect of culture that is somewhat positive, the opposite is also true. The social context of individuals will always have an impact on the thought process. Therefore, while the results may be surprising, the high percentage of 'bunny' and 'chocolate' answers through this creative brainstorming should be somewhat expected.

This survey also highlighted that the main biblical pre-known themes regarding Easter are that of the cross, Jesus dying and the resurrection. This illustrates the perceived important themes that the children have learnt and retained from other sources – i.e. from parents, previous study, school etc. prior to input from the session. The results show that details important to a specific culture – in this case the importance of the Easter story to Christians - are transferred through other outside sources. While one culture may have a focus on a subject, it doesn't mean that others will not emphasize and encourage the same learning goals. The shared cultural beliefs or even the

observation of beliefs foreign to a single culture both conclude with development and deeper learning as argued by Cole (2003).

The personal reflection on this session (Appendix E) analyses the content in terms of effectiveness, appropriateness and interaction in relation to the teacher's opinions on the session. It was easy to observe the structure/content that perhaps the leader's thought were the highlights and most important parts, compared to observing the moments the children interacted most authentically. Many positive outcomes observed by the teachers in the other groups were also highlight in the group being observed. This correlates to the theory set by Dewey (1916) that the group culture is affected by the style and input from the teacher.

By using the knowledge of cultural communities and how they relate to each other as previously researched, this set out a framework to discuss the traditions and focus of Easter within the diverse families present. By doing so, it allowed the children to realise the breadth of cultural influences present even with 10 children and paved the way to have discussion about multiculturalism within the context of Easter. This supports Howes' (2016) opinion, that culture provides opportunity to change and develop 'classroom' activities.

4.4 Findings and Analysis: Cycle 3 and 4

A vast majority of what was garnered from these two cycles was the same and the ability to see how the curriculum was undertaken on two different occasions with similar results gives a certain validity to the results. The main learning points were that of the benefit of different learning styles and the freedom of expression.

Children enjoyed experiencing the learning rather than just hearing and accepting it. The different activities lend themselves to having full participation from the audience. It was active rather than passive. This agrees with Shultz and Shultz, (1993) who state that there needs to be experience in order to have understanding. By building on what the children knew about the story in different ways – acting, craft, music, games, food, videos, storytelling etc. it allowed the children to firstly find a style that they more readily accepted but also gave them a chance to find a new way of looking at things. Rather that only catering to the styles that most would enjoy, the range of activities in

fact allowed them to grow a more well-rounded experience. This agrees with Weinstein, Sumeracki and Caviglioli, (2019) and their theory that there shouldn't be a preference of learning style in a teaching environment.

The other interesting theme noted when data was collected was that of the benefit in being free to choose. In both sessions when given the choice between two or more activities, rather than dictating what the activity would be, there was a greater uptake and general happiness throughout the group. The children were able to express themselves with what activity they felt most comfortable doing and were engaged for a longer time. There was still the difficulty of engaging everyone with the activities, but it was a noticeable difference. These results encourage a more free and informal expression of teaching, with the children being able to dictate to some extent what they want to learn and how. The freedom allows them to invest in the learning which is in line with what Ford and Forman, (in Green and Luke, 2006) say regarding learning - participation should become the focus rather than results and assessments.

This ties in with the overall theme of the curriculum which is that of being able to respond once 'formal' learning has been accomplished. This supports the theory that children need a chance to experience faith not just learn it. The ruler by which faith is measured could therefore be interest and participation in the session, rather than head knowledge and ability to recite bible verses. The last session's focus of primarily giving time and space for the children as well as a variety of activities that hopefully engage the children, is founded on proof from previous sessions that it works.

4.5 Findings and Analysis: Cycle 5

The final week of the trial curriculum was different in some significant ways. The design of the curriculum was that of three weeks of 'traditional' teaching with the last giving a more relaxed and responsive time for the children to reflect personally on what was taught. This changed the overall structure of the session with a significantly less proportion of time given to teaching or input from teachers and more freedom for the children. Also, the age range was larger, as was the number of children. While there was a proportionate number of adults present, the larger group size and age range changed the environment from the usual.

The welcome game opened a chance for the children to note similarities and differences between themselves and others in an unobtrusive way. They could all pick out who applied to different facts and enjoyed finding the things that made them similar that they may not have thought of before. In some cases, the facts had to be very specific to single a person out which highlighted the similarities the children had rather than the differences.

Although there was an element of traditional teaching to put the session into focus the highlight was the time of response. The children enjoyed not being spoken to and expected to listen and learn the whole session. The knowledge they had – from the youngest in the room to the oldest, could be put into practice in a way that helped them to identify with the session and engage with it.

It is important to point out that while the majority of children were present in one large group, the pre-schoolers stayed in their own room. This was simply because of the vast different between their sessions and that of the older children and because they are very easily lost in the big groups without very specific helpers. This session was still aimed at them having a chance to respond but it was not as successful as the older class. This comes back to developmental stages – the children aged 2-4 are not as capable as abstract thought and personal reflection. Erikson (1963) states that each stage there is development of new capabilities and children at this age are unable to understand this process. The activities needed to be more grounded in the teaching and the time was used differently so that the children could respond through more structured crafts.

The children enjoyed being able to express their opinions during the activities but with creativity. This was evidenced in the fact or fiction quiz with the positive and negative sided plates but also with the response activities. When the children knew that what they said, or thought was regarded and important they became more interested in giving an answer.

There was a certain element of peer pressure with some changing their opinion or activity to do but this was tied more with social groups then strength of character. Some wanted simply to spend their time with those that they knew well and had stronger bonds with. Bigler, Jones & Lobliner, (1997) explain this as a normal behaviour with

children yet in this case, there was no specific ethnic, age or gender divide. The children had formed close attachments with others regardless of their outward appearance but rather with those that attended more regularly and were more known to them.

The response time gave the children an outlet to express themselves in ways other sessions did not allow. The children could choose to stay at one activity or complete them all, but the emphasis was made on taking the time to really think about Jesus and what He had done by using the story of Easter. By using the response time as a chance to catch up with the children over what they had learnt, there was a clear way to measure their knowledge base and this was compared to the first week.

Appendix H shows a repeat of the activity of 'What do you know about Easter?' that was given to the oldest in the group – similar age to those in the first week (8-11 years). As this was within the limits of the reflection time then children were more focused with their answers and the majority answered with the Easter story in mind. The answers were also more focused on personal reflections of Easter and what it meant to them. Many mentioned the themes of sin, forgiveness and new life which was very different from the first week's results. It was also noted that the story was clearer in their minds as many included parts of the Easter story that were learnt over the 4 weeks.

The second set of data that could be analysed was that of the paintings/drawings (Appendix I). This activity was open ended and very free in expression. The children were asked to draw/paint anything that came to mind when they thought about Jesus and what He did during Easter. There were no right, or wrong answers and the children reflected that with how they responded. There were both literal answers- the face of Jesus or descriptions of his personality but also more abstract thoughts like how He made them feel and pictures conveying love or happiness.

4.6 Overall findings

By using the method of action research, when each week lead to its own findings then this information could be used immediately, and effect change for the subsequent weeks. However, only when reflecting on the whole curriculum trial could some results be drawn. There was also the important task of asking the parents what they thought

and for their opinions so that it could be viewed three dimensionally and not just from my own point of view.

The difference in post-it notes surveys (Appendix G and H) showed the depth of knowledge that the children had either learnt through the curriculum or through other means over the Easter holiday. The style and timing of the collection may too have some bearing on the results as the first was done as an introductory activity while the second was done as a reflection yet it still shows a more intimate look at the children's opinions and feelings from the first until the last weeks. This is reflected in the parent questionnaire (Appendix J Question 7)) as the majority of parents answered that their children remembered the main points of the sessions above other things – the resurrection, Jesus dying, Questions about Jesus and Palm Sunday in order from most popular.

The parent questionnaire also supported the enjoyment the children have of a variety of activities and chances to put what they know into doing something. (Appendix J Question 2) 89% of parents said that this was the best time for their children. 50% also said that their children enjoyed the chance to build relationships with others within the classes. This links with Howes (in Sanders and Wishard Guerra , 2016) in that the children have found the their own particular culture within the group that they feel a part of and welcomed into. When this happens the chance to build relationships becomes a driving force.

It must be noted for reliability's sake the repeat attendance of the children during these trial four weeks. If this curriculum was to have the same children every week and the same children could be surveyed, then the results would have a higher validity and reliability. In fact, only 7% if the children present over the four weeks were present every week (Appendix K). The vast majority were only present one out of the four weeks (45.9%) It is somewhat implausible to say therefore, that the results from the data during the final session was in fact in response to the teachings of the previous weeks. Many of these answers would have been garnered from other places.

Parents commented that the place their children learn most about Christianity was from the home (85.7%) (Appendix J Question 6). This was followed closely by children's

church (75%) but if the former is true then the results must also consider the teaching happening at home. Much of what the children who attended only once a month must've come from another place – most probably the home environment. This agrees with A Scheme of Training for Church Children, (n.d.) in that the parent has the primary role in developing faith in children and when it is embraced children can learn more about faith at home than in other places. Question 3 links to this in that the parents recognise that the children's ministry can become an agent of support and information for them to disciple their children at home - 71% say that it helps.

Question 8 broaches the opinion of the place of multiculturalism in Children's church within this context. While only 74% of parents said it was something that needed to be focused on, in fact the other 25% also agreed that while it may not need a direct focus, it should be mentioned and endorsed. Therefore, there is almost a unanimous response that multicultural teaching for children is important.

4.7 Summary

In summary, the main points gathered from the design and implementation of this trial curriculum and analysis of it in the action research cycle model were as follows:

- Cycle 1: The design was strongly based on the premise that children have an innate sense of multiculturalism and the benefits of it. The overall structure was planned to be three sessions of traditional teaching with the fourth being a reflective/responsive session in line with the volunteer and child feedback. This led to a simple curriculum outline and development of the overall themes.

- Cycle 2: The retention of knowledge about a subject does not come from one place but an amalgamation of many social and relational sources. Easter is a topic that spans many cultures – both faith-based and secular within the minds of children.

- Cycle 3 and 4: The importance of freedom of expression when developing faith is an important part of how children learn and deepen understanding. Different learning styles have their benefits when used in conjunction with one another.

- Cycle 5: Time away from formal teaching within the boundaries of a topic provides a unique opportunity for children to respond in a way that is personal and important for faith to develop. Relationships in children are not primarily

based on what is similar to them but what is more familiar to them. Pre-schoolers require a more descriptive session as they are still building their information base.

- Overall Findings: Results based on knowledge retention and overall experience were positive, but all knowledge could not be accredited to the trial due to attendance. Information must be passed to children from other places, most likely the home environment.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this research was to further the understanding of Multicultural Children's Ministry and the effects it has on child development within the three main headings of spiritual, social and educational development. The specific research objectives were listed as below:

1. Clarify what multicultural children's ministry is.

2. Identify the ways children's spiritual, social and educational development is affected by the immediate cultural climate.

3. Design and implement a Children's Church curriculum to engage with multiculturalism in an appropriate and positive way.

4. Critically assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.

5. Formulate recommendations for future development of an appropriate multicultural children's curriculum.

This concluding chapter will briefly look at the previous chapters in relation to these research objectives and discuss the specific findings and conclusions that can be drawn for each one. As recommendations are part of the objectives these will be mentioned in the scope for alternative, expanded and future research. Lastly, a section on personal reflection of the research process is included.

5.2 Research Objectives: Summary of Findings and Conclusions

5.2.1 Research objective 1: Clarify what multicultural children's ministry is

The literature exposed the fact that while multiculturalism is a subject that is of interest in many sectors, it is a term that is not well defined. This is primarily because the term "culture" is so fluid and interchangeable between many areas of research. Multicultural ministry was therefore defined in terms of a variety of cultures interacting against and

with each other, impacting how we relate to one another and with time, affecting our own cultural identity.

The empirical research however showed that multiculturalism was something the children were aware of in their everyday lives, although they too had trouble expressing what it was. They saw the benefit of it and embraced the differences of those around them with no trouble. While multiculturalism may be a contested term, children seem to innately know that cultural diversity is the ideal way of life. They don't focus on difference but embrace it to learn more about others and themselves.

5.2.2 Research objective 2: Identify the ways children's spiritual, social and educational development is affected by the immediate cultural climate.

The Literature Review highlighted that these 3 areas of development are all linked within the context of culture and are interwoven within it. Learning within a multicultural environment provides its challenges and its benefits that a monoculture does not present. A wider range of knowledge from different cultures provides a more diverse, interesting and broader pool of information but these opinions can cause cultural conflict. When this happens there is possibility of educational, social or spiritual growth to be hindered.

The quality of learning, in an educational way is in direct correlation with the atmosphere of the classroom. When students are accepted and valued then they will interact and embrace the learning more readily. When cultural diversity causes problems such as miscommunication to occur and is not addressed or dealt with then the atmosphere changes and learning is less effective. All members of the learning environment have an impact on the quality of learning – including the 'teacher' who provides the cultural norm within the group.

The empirical research shows that this is true. The difference of teachers brings out the personality of certain children more simply due to the similarities in 'home' culture. They would be closer to the norm and therefore more comfortable with it. Different styles of teaching can help bridge the gap between the cultural diversity, but it is something that needs to be aware of – especially by the teachers who would naturally

revert to a teaching style and cultural environment that they have had previous experience with and are more comfortable in.

The literature also shows that relationships have the same cultural influences as learning. People will naturally gravitate to that which is familiar, and that they are comfortable with. However, when many cultures are interacting with one another in a confined space for a significant amount of time, then its own culture will emerge. This new social culture is something that everyone belongs to and is appreciated in, but it is fluid and changes with the addition or loss of cultural input. While this can be a benefit to building relationships across boundaries that may well otherwise be too difficult to breech, it also has its challenges as there must be an awareness of the group as a whole.

The empirical research echoes this in that the children would not group together by what others may see as cultural groups but by which they were familiar with. The peer groupings were based more on those who attended church more often and had a shared history with.

Spirituality is first developed by the immediate cultural climate – that of the family. When this is expanded to include other input then this is when faith can be tested and challenged. Church would be the next primary influencer of faith and with it comes the opinions and dilemmas of other cultural ways of life. However, a diverse demographic would also be the ideal situation to teach children about multiculturalism. If done within the scope of bible truths and stories, it can be embraced like God intended the church to do in the first place leading the children to treat this as the new normal and encourage others to do the same.

Parents need to be aware of the impact they have of their children's faith. While outside influences can direct a child's faith to a certain extent, the primary input comes from seeing, learning and experiencing it at home. The data shows that most of the target audience parents were mindful of this fact but that they also regarded the children's church as another major influencer. When working together these two forces would enable the child to learn and experience faith in its fullest.

5.2.3 Research objective 3: Design and implement a Children's Church curriculum to engage with multiculturalism in an appropriate and positive way.

Much of the curriculum's designed for Primary school aged children are well planned – almost to the minute. And while there can be a great benefit in being able to account for all the time spent with children, this can lead to a very structured and unmoving session. The method of determining whether learning is effective is usually achieved by bible memorization or retention of the story.

The curriculum was designed in mind that there would still be a way to determine if it was effective but with a primary focus on moving from head knowledge to heart understanding. This is in line with the literature as children need to be active participants and experience things for true development to occur. Within the traditional learning sessions, a range of activities given allowed the children to access the story and main point in a way that was relevant to them. It moved the point of the session away from what was taught, to what it meant individually for each child.

The data collected also agreed that this was the best curriculum style for this group. They enjoyed the variety but more importantly it allowed information exchange across cultural boundaries that was natural and helpful. Within the scope of learning about a specific topic, the group also learnt about others and perhaps more importantly, about themselves in relation to others.

5.2.4 Research objective 4: Critically assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Overall, it could be said that this curriculum achieved what it set out to do. The children learnt more about the cultures within the group, about themselves in relation to the group and how cultural matters and faith can interact. The empirical data showed that the children learnt about the subject in an educational capacity but also engaged with it personally and were able to make some individual conclusions about what it meant to them. They were able to build relationships, not based on what was physically similar about each other but what they learnt about each other. Friendships were made between children who may have seemed from the outside as an unlikely grouping. Allowing the children to express themselves gave others the chance to get to know them properly and look past the superficial.

When it comes to teaching children, being able to give a certain level of freedom leads to an expression of children's culture in a way that a rigid structure can only hope to achieve. The response time and the reactions to it were proof that this was the highlight of the sessions and all the children felt able to take part in a way that suited them. Although the measure on whether their faith was developed in some way is difficult to say, the positive experience would be an indication of the growth and invested interest in the learning.

The personal observations gave my own individual opinion on whether the session touched on the subjects of culture and learning, culture and relationships and culture and faith. While this only gave a single view point to how the curriculum was affecting a certain group at any one time, it did allow for an interaction between the target audience and the researcher that could develop the study further. By allowing the observations to enhance future sessions it opened up more chances for what was deemed important to be highlighted and move away from problems and unnecessary input.

Ideally this sort of input would be a benefit for development if it was from all the group leaders. It would lead to an overall viewpoint of the curriculum's effectiveness throughout the age groupings rather than an in depth view of one and simplistic from the others. It would also include the cultural influences of the leaders which would effect the curriculum development in a positive way.

There were a number of pros and cons to having the children together in a larger group during the last response session. While there is an obvious correlation between age and faith maturity, there is also benefit in younger children providing a different outlook on a theme that older children and adults can learn from. As the space was freer, the difficulty of tailoring the session to reach all developmental needs was some what removed and self expression encouraged. The larger number and age range gave anonymity to expresses their views and opinions without judgement.

With the larger number also comes the need for crowd management. Although the data suggests that the majority of children interacted and engaged with the session there would always be those who loose interest and cause disruption in the group. With a larger group comes the higher probability that this would happen and more must be done to accommodate this. Distraction also came in the form of the maturity level of the

children present. When one child acted in a certain way receiving attention from others, both negative and positive, then this behaviour spread throughout the group. A group that previously were able to engage with an in-depth discussion about a topic were not able to when the behaviour was different from expected.

5.2.5 Research objective 5: Formulate recommendations for future development of an appropriate multicultural children's curriculum.

While this research only touched on the structure of this trial curriculum more research would be required to see if grouping children by the age banded classes is the most effective and appropriate. Perhaps more can be learned from a young child who has been attending church their whole lives or an older child who is new to faith and wants to relate God to the previous secular world culture that they know? Other formats such as an activity rotation or large group/small groups have been widely researched and have been shown to be effective when engaging children with church. It would be interesting to see if this would be true with a multicultural church which perhaps has more barriers when engaging children then those that have been researched.

To prove that this curriculum is truly effective it would need to be implemented for a longer time. The structure of a certain number of weeks of teaching followed by a responsive session, in theory, would lend itself to any topic or bible book series. Within the scope of this research, to give children the freedom to live out what they have learnt is much more effective that continuing to input knowledge hoping that it will apply in real life. Unless the church, children's ministry or parents provide a way for children to model the multiculturalism we talk about in the sessions, then that it where it will stay – in the classroom. Multiculturalism doesn't need to be the focus of a curriculum, but a curriculum needs to be developed with multiculturalism in mind.

There would be scope to extend this research into areas outside of the cultures that are present within the group and into the local community or wider area. If we are expecting children to be able to utilize their knowledge of God in relation to local culture then we must provide as much information as possible to help. While there is a correlation between the church congregation and the local community there too are some differences that could be expounded on and explored. This could lead into social

action projects that could take the place of the response session which would bring the knowledge and real life together.

This could lead to trialling it in other contexts and cultures such as different locations, church denominations, in urban and rural contexts or as far reaching as other countries. By starting local this would provide a wealth of data on how children in the immediate area respond but in theory this curriculum style should be accessible by all. By investing in a focus of multiculturalism within a children's ministry the individual context should not matter as it is adaptable.

There is also scope to expand the age range that this curriculum caters for. The subject of multiculturalism is universal and should be of interest to all ministries. While this curriculum focuses on the learning styles and structure of a children's ministry, there is further research that can be done to develop this into a series for youth groups and adult ministries. Further research into the opinions of the wider church and community via methods of sample surveys would lead into this.

While this was only briefly mentioned, parental involvement should be a further area of development within this topic. As children receive their primary influence of cultural and spiritual input from their parents there must be a level of interaction between the children's ministry and the parents. This means that there is scope to develop a training course for parents and other adults involved with the ministry in multicultural matters. When the knowledge is shared between the influencers of children's development then the results would be more far reaching and universal.

With all these recommendations in mind, it is clear that future development is not linear. While some research must take priority over others, the research of the impact of this curriculum style could happen in different contexts simultaneously. For example, one focuses on the effect on structure and another on location. Parental involvement can be included from the outset but would also need to be developed in response to the curriculum.

5.3 Self-Reflection

This research started from an interest in the relationships that formed between children with such a vast cultural variety and how they came about. It was difficult at first to put into words what this research should focus on as there were many factors surrounding

something as simple as friendships between children in a church. The focus on multiculturalism was born out of previous research and the unique context my placement provides. How then did these two ideas link and interact with each other and was it important?

The literature review gave much insight into how a child develops educationally, spiritually and socially but it was difficult to find sources that looked into the effects of culture upon these things. Much of the research had to be adapted from an adult church context and placed into a different design and implementation strategy.

Action research provided a level of personal reflection through the whole project. This allowed some results and conclusions to be drawn throughout the research that could be included and more research could be based from it. While this was useful in some ways during the trial it also meant that it was more difficult to develop an overarching opinion of the curriculum based on the initial set of data.

The pressures of timescale and deadlines for this research led to a trial that may not have been optimal. The Easter season would not have been my first choice when trialling the curriculum as it is an already busy time of year within the life of the church. However, due to the time constraints of the research, this was the only realistic time to do it and have enough time to analyse the data. In future, I would ensure that the initial trial took place away from major holidays.

Following on from this, it was difficult to plan this research around a usual full time work week. While there was some obvious crossover with research and data collection, the analysis took up more time than initially thought. It created problems with work, life, and study balance. The initial interest was what kept the progression moving – the value of the research is important to my work. When faced with a mammoth piece of work such as this, there needs to be a real desire for the outcomes if it is to be achieved.

Through this research I was very aware of my personal cultural influences and biases. While I have worked in this multicultural setting for over 5 years and have spent extended time in other countries and cultural influences, how I look at the world and the conclusions I draw from those experiences would determine what results I would regard as important and significant. These conclusions could be very different from another person completing the same research as my culture has affected the way I look at the world just as it would any other.

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Chapter 7 – Appendices

Appendix A

Survey 1 - Results from a survey conducted with 35 children over the course of 2 weeks about their opinions of the multicultural children's ministry

	Question	Yes	Maybe	No	Don't Know
1	Our church welcomes people regardless of background	31	1	1	2
2	Our church is a community of people from diverse culture	31	3	0	1
3	Our church reflects the local community's culture	17	7	2	9
4	Our church celebrates the different cultures within it	24	6	0	5
5	Learning about Christians from other cultures is helpful	24	7	1	3
6	I am aware of the cultural differences within my children's church group	26	1	3	5
7	It would be better if the children's church groups were split by ethnicity	0	2	27	6
8	What we learn in the children's church is relatable to our daily lives/culture	21	9	1	4
9	Learning about other cultures helps to build relationships	23	9	0	3

Table A.1
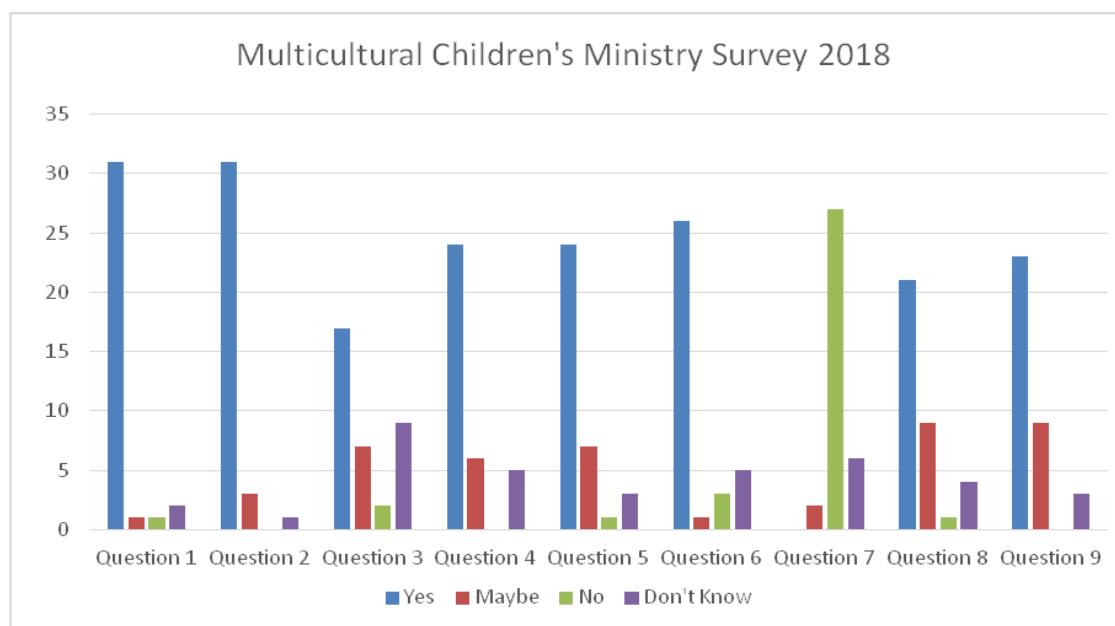
Figure A.2

Survey 1 results by percentage

	Yes	Maybe	No	Don't know
1	88.5%	2.8%	2.8%	5.7%
2	88.5%	8.6%	0%	2.8%
3	48.6%	20%	5.7%	25.7%
4	68.6%	17.1%	0%	14.3%
5	68.6%	20%	2.8%	8.6%
6	74.3%	2.8%	8.6%	14.3%
7	0%	5.7%	77.1%	17.1%
8	60%	25.7%	2.8%	11.4%
9	65.7%	25.7%	0%	8.6%

Table A.3

Appendix B

Survey 2 - Opinions from Adult Volunteers on the Children's work

Positive	Negative
Well resourced and valued	Too many children to adults
A single clear theme per session	Lack of volunteers
Pre-planned activities	Some activities in curriculum are too hard
Variety of activities	Managing challenging behaviour
Craft	Length of service (too long!)
Range of activities – active, reflective etc.	Children are seen but not heard in the wider church
Games – interacting with the children in a more fun/relaxing way	Parents are not involved enough
Opportunity to do the story in drama form	Explaining difficult Old Testament concepts to young children
Able to build relationships with the kids	Time for pre-planning in the week
The children are engaged in the sessions – they know what they have learnt	Dealing with children who need addition help in a large group

Table B.1

Appendix C – Outline curriculum

Week 1 – Easter Overview 7th April

Main theme: A story for everyone (God's rescue plan for humanity)

Main Activities:

>Video – Overview of Easter

>Older: Post-it notes data collection – what do you know about Easter

>>Look at Easter traditions from their homes – what do you focus on?

>Younger: Draw what you know about Easter on a poster

>Craft: Story Stones – retelling the story individually and to take home and share

Week 2 - Palm Sunday 14th April

Main theme: People welcomed (and can welcome) Jesus

Main Activities:

>Act out the story (dress up, props etc.)

>Older: Weave with palm leaves

>>Write prayers of praise on palm leaves

>>Create comic strip of Palm Sunday sequence in own words

>Younger: Video of Palm Sunday

>>Palm leaf colouring/prayers

Week 3 – Easter Sunday 21st April

Main theme: It's for you (the gospel)

Main Activities:

>Video – Easter Sunday (Resurrection story)

>Older: Cross activities

>Questions about Easter

Gospel outline

Easter Egg Hunt with a difference/bible verses

Gospel Eggs (using colours to remember what Jesus has done)

Easter Gifts (Jelly Beans)

Week 4 – Bring it together 28th April

Main theme: So, what does it mean for us? (Response)

Main activities

Story: Road to Emmaus

Video: A Really Surprising Story (Bible Society)

Fact or Fiction? Quiz

Response to Jesus' sacrifice

Craft: The whole bible points to Jesus

Bead threading on 'sandals' – follow Jesus

Older: Draw/write what Jesus means to you

What do you know about Easter?

Younger: Ask questions about Jesus

Appendix D

Detailed Weekly Curriculum Outline

Week 1 – Easter Overview 7ᵗʰ April

Main theme: A story for everyone (God's rescue plan for humanity)

Main Activities overview

       Older: Post-it notes data collection – what do you know about Easter

       Younger: Draw what you know about Easter on a poster

       Video – Overview of Easter

       Discussion: What does Easter mean to you? What do you focus on? Look at Easter traditions

       Craft Activity: Story Stones – retelling the story individually and to take home and share

The story of Easter from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday

Welcome activity	- 2 truths and a lie
	- Name game
	- Table activities
	- Free Play
Outline the topic	- what do you know about Easter?
	- post it notes – creative brainstorming
	- Easter posters – draw what you know
Watch video	- Brief story of Easter from Palm Sunday through to Easter Sunday/resurrection
Bible passages	- Matthew (21:1-13, 26:1-75, 27:1-66, 28:1-15)

- Mark (11:1-19, 14:10-72, 15:1-47, 16:1-8)

- Luke (19:28-48, 22:1-71, 23:156, 24:1-12)

- John (12:12-19, 18:1-40, 19:1-42, 20:1-18)

Story	- Main points: Palm Sunday, Last Supper, Praying in Gethsemane, Arrested, Mocked/tortured, Crucified, Buried, Alive
Activity/Games	- Place Easter story pictures in order in quickest time/group relay races
Discussion	- What does Easter mean to you?
	- What part of the story do you focus on most/what's the most important part to you?
Activity	- Story Stones - images on stones to take home to order and remember

Week 2 - Palm Sunday 14th April

Main theme: People welcomed (and can welcome) Jesus

Main Activities overview

Act out the story (dress up, props etc.)

Older: Weave with palm leaves

Write prayers of praise on palm leaves

Create comic strip of Palm Sunday sequence in own words

Younger: palm leaf colouring/prayers

The story of Palm Sunday

Welcome activity	- Talk to your neighbour – when were you praised for something?
	- Table activities
	- Free Play
Outline the topic	- Review previous week
	- Clarify the topic
Watch video	- Palm Sunday animation
Bible passages	- Matthew 21:1-11
Story	- Main points: Palm Sunday
	- We can welcome Jesus just like the people did – people from many nations
Activity/Games	- Act out the Palm Sunday story with props (including different points of view?)
Discussion	- Why is Palm Sunday important?
	- Who were all the people doing the cheering?
	- Why do you think people praising one Sunday and accusing the next?
	- What can we learn about Jesus from this story?
Activity	- Palm leaf weaving
	- Palm Sunday comic strips
	- Palm Colouring/prayers

Week 3 – Easter Sunday 21ˢᵗ April

Main theme: It's for you (the gospel)

Main Activities:

> Video – Easter Sunday (Resurrection story)
>
> Older: Cross activities
>
> Questions about Easter
>
> Gospel outline
>
> Easter Egg Hunt with a difference/bible verses
>
> Gospel Eggs (using colours to remember what Jesus has done)
>
> Easter Gifts (Jelly Beans)

Welcome activity you get it?	- Talk to your neighbour – what's your favourite Easter Egg? Did
	- Easter Quiz
	- Table activities
	- Free Play
Outline the topic	- Review previous week – plus what happened in Holy week (link to first session) and up to Easter Sunday
Watch video	- Easter Video
Activity/Games	- Hunt the bible verses in plastic eggs
Bible passages	- Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8
Story	- Main points: Resurrection, Jesus won and it is because of His love for each of us

- God sacrificed because He loves us

Discussion   - Scenarios that lead to punishments

                      - What would you do if someone said they would take your punishment?

                      - What's sin? Why is it a big deal?

                      - Gospel in 2 minutes (illustration)

Activity   - Easter Questions

                      - Gospel coloured eggs

                      - Give out Easter gifts

Week 4 – Bring it together 28th April

Main theme: So, what does it mean for us? (Response)

Main activities

        Story: Road to Emmaus

        Video: A Really Surprising Story (Bible Society)

        Fact or Fiction? Quiz

        Response to Jesus' sacrifice

        Craft: The whole bible points to Jesus

        Bead threading on 'sandals' – follow Jesus

        Older: Draw/write what Jesus means to you

                What do you know about Easter?

        Younger: Ask questions about Jesus

Welcome activity   - Talk to your neighbour – if you could ask God one question that would be answered, what would it be?

- Run around game

- Free Play

Outline the topic	- Review previous weeks – Whole Easter Story
	- The whole bible points to the story of Jesus
	- It's ok to ask questions like the men on the road to Emmaus
Video/Quiz	- A Really Surprising Story
Activity/Games	- Fact or fiction - Old Testament verses about Jesus verses made up ones
Bible passages	- Mark 16:13-33
Story	- Road to Emmaus – disciples questioning what happened over Easter
Activity	- Bookmarks: The whole bible points to Jesus
	- Bead threading on 'sandals' – follow Jesus
	- Draw/write/paint what Jesus means to you
	- What do you know about Easter?

<u>Appendix E</u>

Detailed Weekly Curriculum Outline with personal observation notes and recommendations

Session 1: Personal observation group – age 9-11

Main theme: A story for everyone (God's rescue plan for humanity)

The story of Easter from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday

10 children in the group, roughly equal split between boys and girls, most kids are regular attendees (no new faces)

Welcome activity   - 2 truths and a lie

Most kids willingly get involved. Some creative answers help get the group into the swing of things and help to get to know each other. Quick catch up of highlights of individual weeks for those that want to share something

Outline the topic   - what do you know about Easter?

                           - post it notes – creative brainstorming

Kids really get into the activity, some 'obvious' answers as well as those that are surprising. Quieter kids get a chance to interact without being overshadowed. Some willing to fill in multiple post-its and others only one or two.

When done, we worked together to place the post-it's in groups of themes to have a look what people know and associate with Easter.

Watch video   - Brief story of Easter from Palm Sunday through to Easter Sunday/resurrection

Clear animated video with humour gets the story across. All kids engaged

After given an opportunity to ask any questions but none asked at this point.

Bible passages - Matthew (21:1-13, 26:1-75, 27:1-66, 28:1-15)

- Mark (11:1-19, 14:10-72, 15:1-47, 16:1-8)

- Luke (19:28-48, 22:1-71, 23:156, 24:1-12)

- John (12:12-19, 18:1-40, 19:1-42, 20:1-18)

Story   - Main points: Palm Sunday, Last Supper, Praying in Gethsemane, Arrested, Mocked/tortured, Crucified, Buried, Alive

Rather than going through all the bible passages or retelling the story, the book of Mark is used to find the main points of the Easter story (link it to the bible – so they know it's not just made up!) as we flick through the appropriate chapters

Activity/Games   - Place Easter story pictures in order in quickest time

Volunteer requested for challenge of placing the story in order as quickly as possible. Repeated 2 more times but becoming easier for everyone every time. Others can't help but get involved and give their opinion and help.

Brief discussion on the role of Judas led slightly off topic but kids interested to hear more about his role and punishment and asked questions about difficult topics such as if he was forgiven! I didn't know the right answer so gave them the opportunity to give their opinions and challenged them to ask parents.

Discussion   - What does Easter mean to you?

                      - What part of the story do you focus on most/what's the most important part to you?

Started off with an animated discussion about chocolate and the amount each child expects to receive! Differences noted in that so do not have a family focus on chocolate – some do not receive sweets/chocolate of any kind but something else is a replacement – new clothes, Easter keepsakes etc.

Once brought back on topic most responded that Easter was the story of Jesus. One child explained that to them knowing the story of Easter was helpful when talking about it with non-church friends. Others said Easter was an easy topic to talk about with friends but maybe only mentioned the crucifixion which is the well-known part. There was only one mention that the resurrection was the important part to them. When asked, Jesus dying for sins was a theme that they all indicated that they knew about and accepted.

Activity   - Story Stones - images on stones to take home to order and remember

Using the same symbols, kids enjoyed using sharpies on rocks to create and decorate their own set to take home. Some engaged more than others, but the symbols were well known by the end of the session. Observed kids putting the stones in order without prompting

Final thoughts:

Overall successful session. The kids bonded well and didn't have any interpersonal issues. The 'louder' kids were given the chance to speak up, but the activities led the quieter ones to still engage and not be overpowered. Discussion about Easter gave some insight to the differences of celebration even with a well-known holiday such as Easter and with a group of regular attending church children.

Session 2: Personal observation group – age 6-9

The story of Palm Sunday

Main theme: People welcomed (and can welcome) Jesus

14 children Roughly equal split boys to girls, regular attendees, no visitors

Welcome activity   - Talk to your neighbour – when were you praised for something?

Great chance to get the children talking with those near them. Most automatically sit next to those that they know but some grouped together who may not be familiar with each other. Most answers about sporting achievements or school achievements. 2 mention being praised at home for doing the right thing.

Outline the topic   - Review previous week

                         - Clarify the topic

Only half or so have attended the week before so a quick overview is necessary. Many who were there remember the different parts to the Easter story – others add in bits they have previous knowledge of.

Explain what this Sunday is – some children holding the palm crosses that are given out during the worship time with adults. Many are aware of the day and of the story. After explanation of what we're going to do in the session many are excited for the chance to do some acting.

Watch video   - Palm Sunday animation

Bible passages - Matthew 21:1-11

Story   - Main points: Palm Sunday

                         - We can welcome Jesus just like the people did – people from many nations

Between the video, bible verses and recap of the story we collectively identify 3 groups of people involved in the story (not Jesus) – disciples, crowd and Pharisees. We briefly look at some of the emotions and opinions of these groups in relation to the story.

Interestingly, vast majority are interested in the feelings of the Pharisees and their desire to kill Jesus.

| Activity/Games | - Act out the Palm Sunday story with props (including different points of view?) |

3 groups to be 3 different groups of people in the story. Willing volunteer to be Jesus. All given props and asked to create a mini play about what they would do when Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

During the time of practice, one child asks to be the donkey which made me laugh. After a short time, the children return and take it in turns to act out their play. 'Pharisee' group get really into character and love to plot Jesus' death and blame him for lots of things. Really grasp the emotions the Pharisees may be feeling

'Crowd' group say the right things but don't really get into the acting side of things. Place coats and branches down as Jesus rides through but no other acting. Some kids not interested in acting and are doing it "because they have to".

'Disciples' group are a little confused all round and don't really understand the task. The natural leader of the group shuffles the others around and follow 'Jesus' down the street. Perhaps concept of disciples trying to understand what's happening is a little too confusing for this age group?

Discussion	- Why is Palm Sunday important?
	- Who were all the people doing the cheering?
	- Why do you think people praising one Sunday and accusing the next?
	- What can we learn about Jesus from this story?

The discussion was more difficult with this age group. While they do like giving their opinion it is difficult in a younger, larger and more boisterous group who had been excited by the previous activity. The point that people had come to Jerusalem from many nations for Passover was of interest to many and questioned – with some asking the furthest distance possibly travelled by those who were there. It was observable that the majority, if not all had not realised that the crowd would've been diverse and yet they all cheered for Jesus. The discussion did not last long as interest was being lost but the link between palm leaves being used as something to worship Jesus in the bible and a reminder for us today was made.

Activity   - Palm leaf weaving

                            - Palm Sunday comic strips

                            - Palm Colouring/prayers

The option of different activities suited the group well. The ability to do all three for those that were naturally faster with their creativity meant the children were occupied for the remainder for the time rather than becoming distracted and bothering others. The weaving proved challenging for some of the younger children but most persevered and enjoyed using real palm leaves in the craft. The comic strips provided an insight into how well the children had embraced the story with many able to sketch out the entirety. Because of our group conversation about the crowd, some of the children were more ethnically diverse in their depictions of their drawn crowds.

Final thoughts:

The kinaesthetic approach to this session kept the children interested and helped them learn about the story from different points of view. I believe an understanding of the way the crowd worshipped Jesus – and him being worthy of that praise everyday was conveyed. The options of crafts/creativity gave the children freedom to do what suited them best and therefore meant they were more interested in doing it.

Session 3: Personal observation group – age 9-11

Main theme: It's for you (the gospel) Easter Sunday

12 children, roughly equal split boys /girls regular attendees, no visitors

Welcome activity you get it?	- Talk to your neighbour – what's your favourite Easter Egg? Did
	- Easter Quiz
Outline the topic	- Review previous week – plus what happened in Holy week (link to first session) and up to Easter Sunday

Lots of talk about Chocolate and whether the kids had eaten it or not already. We did a quick Easter quiz with some prizes looking at some of the things from the previous weeks, holy week and Easter Sunday timeline which the kids all loved and were able to answer quickly. Made a point to include the quieter children by asking them specific questions once the louder ones had had a chance.

Watch video	- Easter Video

Great visual way of telling the Easter story (from Good Friday to Easter Sunday). Many of the kids knew the story well so this was a different way of going over it.

Activity/Games	- Hunt the bible verses in plastic eggs

The children loved the chance to get up and about. The room does not lean itself to more active games for this group so by utilizing the hall and another small room a mini egg hunt worked well. After finding one plastic egg they were encouraged to help others find more and showed some great teamwork. Together they placed the bible verses pieces together to spell out John 3:16. Surprisingly, some of the kids did not know this verse so we went over it.

Bible passages	- Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8

Story	- Main points: Resurrection, Jesus won and it is because of His love for each of us
	- God sacrificed because He loves us

Discussion   - Scenarios that lead to punishments

                          - What would you do if someone said they would take your punishment?

                          - What's sin? Why is it a big deal?

                          - Gospel in 2 minutes (illustration)

The kids were encouraged to say actions that lead to punishments with a wide range of answers, some very interesting – annoying siblings that should be punished, killing someone, a friend who tells one of your secrets, not doing homework, stealing etc. We discussed briefly what would be an appropriate punishment for these things and apart from some extreme answers many of the kids came up with good answers. We used one of these situations (stealing something, being caught by a parent and being forced to take it back and apologize and receive any other punishment) the kids were asked to think about how that would feel. And then think about how it would feel if one of your friends took the blame instead. The kids gave answers like "guilty", "happy to have such a good friend" and "surprised". They led well into speaking about what Jesus did for us using a Gospel picture (sin separating us from God.)

Activity   - Easter Questions

                          - Gospel coloured eggs

                          - Give out Easter gifts

We didn't have much time to do the activities, but many kids wrote down questions that they had about the Easter story. At times this age group dislikes doing crafts/colouring but this week they all enjoyed colouring the gospel eggs and using colours to represent the different parts of the story. Some kids asked questions about the story, but many were quiet. All the kids received a gift at the end of the session reminding them about the gift of life from Jesus.

Final Thoughts:

This was a slightly more difficult session because many of the children have heard the story of Easter many times and think they know it. At times it was a challenge to get them all engaged with the discussion but overall the gospel picture/scenario helped get the point across.

Session 4: Personal observation group – age 5-11

Main theme: So, what does it mean for us? (Response) Road to Emmaus

39 Kids, 21 boys/18 girls, 5 visitors

Welcome activity   - Talk to your neighbour – if you could ask God one question that would be answered, what would it be?

-          Describe a person – obscure facts until a person in the room can be guessed (some facts do not give people away, but some facts are unique – Jesus was a unique person and there is evidence from the OT that links only to him)

The kids enjoyed coming up with some questions – some surprising ones (Why can't we all be rich? What is heaven like? Why did Jesus die like he did?) and they all had a chance to get involved.

When picking out the people using facts, the kids enjoyed the process of picking out an individual person with various descriptions. They noticed when facts applied to themselves but also those around them – learning about one another. They wanted to keep playing until everyone was identified but the time was too short. It was a good way to get everyone interacting and realising just who was in the room. It was easy to relate this to the points about Jesus and many of the children realised the connection quickly.

Outline the topic   - Review previous weeks – Whole Easter Story

- The whole bible points to the story of Jesus

- It's ok to ask questions like the men on the road to Emmaus

Video/Quiz   - A Really Surprising Story

With the incentive of a prize for the quiz questions, the children watched the video well!

Activity/Games   - Fact or fiction - Old Testament verses about Jesus verses made up ones

All the kids were asked to create positive/negative images on either side of a paper plate ready to vote on their opinions of facts. It was observed tat the children came up with different ways of expressing positive and negative – emojis, words, detailed drawings etc. They liked the option of doing what felt most comfortable to them.

Bible passages   - Mark 16:13-33

Story   - Road to Emmaus – disciples questioning what happened over
                         Easter

We read through the story quickly as a quick reminder from the video as much of the
time left I wanted to give as a response time.

Activity   - Bookmarks: The whole bible points to Jesus

                         - Bead threading on 'sandals' – follow Jesus

                         - Draw/write/paint what Jesus means to you

                         - What do you know about Easter?

The kids understood the main points and were interested in being free to express their
ideas. The older kids were asked to write down what they knew about Easter again
(repeating the activity on the first day) and many of them came up with something
easily. The children loved the variety of activities and all were engaged with at least one.
Some came up to the adult volunteers and asked some questions they had about Jesus
and Easter and these were discussed in a very relaxed way. Some questions were too
large to really get into, but the children were encouraged to ask parents/friends after
the service.

Final Thoughts:

The time and space given for a response was invaluable – rather that just hope that the
children had learnt something over the sessions about Easter there was proof in one
way or another. The freedom given helped the children spend time responding in a way
that felt comfortable to them and it didn't feel forced.

<u>Appendix F</u>

Volunteer feedback on weekly sessions

Session 1

Age 2-4

- The activity was difficult for the preschoolers but the pictures helped with the storytelling
- The Easter story is easy to tell to young children

Reception-Year 1(age 4-6)

- Video was helpful to do an overview of the story
- Story stones were a bit tricky with the younger ones but a good tool to share the story at home
- Easter poster pictures were a good arrival activity but the children didn't understand the reason behind it and just coloured whatever they wanted!
- Some kids knew the story but others didn't so keeping them all engaged was difficult at times
- Putting the story in order was helpful

Year 2-4 (age 6-9)

- The feedback activity about Easter helped to understand what the children knew
- The children enjoyed using post-it notes to make a picture together
- The video was very effective
- The children were interested in learning about the story of Easter

Session 2

Age 2-4

- The palm leaves were a hit with the toddlers as they could feel what they are like in real life
- We used the leaves and some mini ribbon streamers we made and acted out cheering for Jesus which the children enjoyed.

Reception-Year 1(age 4-6)

- The kids wrote and drew prayers of praise on their (paper) leaves that we read out at the end all together. They seemed to understand the story of the crowd praising Jesus

- The acting was a bit chaotic as everyone wanted to be Jesus but they enjoyed it!
- We had a few unsettled children that made the group dynamic shift slightly and my time was taken up more with managing it

Year 5-6 (age 9-11)

- There were two children who were being particularly disruptive which caused some problems.
- Spending time with worship music on during the craft time was a nice way to link between story and activity

Session 3

Age 2-4

- VERY quiet group which was strange but gave space to move around the room more
- The kids enjoyed the mini hunt to find egg shaped pictures of Jesus
- The children and the parents appreciated the Easter gift

Reception-Year 1(age 4-6)

- There were 5 visitors to the group, so a longer time was spent settling them down.
- The Easter story was something they could all understand – they all knew it but were interested to hear it again
- We wrote/drew prayers thanking God for His sacrifice that the children could take home.
- They children loved the sweets to go home with

Year 2-4 (age 6-9)

- The Easter egg hunt with a difference worked really well. The children worked well together in teams to race to answer the questions about Easter and then hunt for eggs.
- They enjoyed watching the video
- The colour coded gospel seemed to be understood by everyone and they knew at the end that Jesus dying was for each of us.

Session 4

Age 2-4

- The story was difficult to explain to the pre-schoolers, so the session didn't really work– apart from the crafts
- Having 2 different craft activities helped to fill the time gap

Appendix G

Post-it data collection from children aged between 6-11. 28 Children present (Week 1)

Image G1

Image G2

Appendix G – Continued

Image G3

Main Themes	Frequency Group 1 (out of 30 responses)	Frequency Group 2 (out of 45 responses)
Cross	17	5
Tomb	9	1
Jesus dying	7	5
Resurrection	6	4
Bunnies	4	7
Lord's Supper	4	1
Chocolate/eggs	3	9
Arrested/betrayed	3	2
Angel	3	0
Holiday/no school	0	6
Family/Food	0	3
New Life	0	3

Table G4

<u>Appendix H</u>

Results of Post-it data collection from children in response to the question "what do you know about Easter?" 15 Children aged between 8-11. (Week 4)
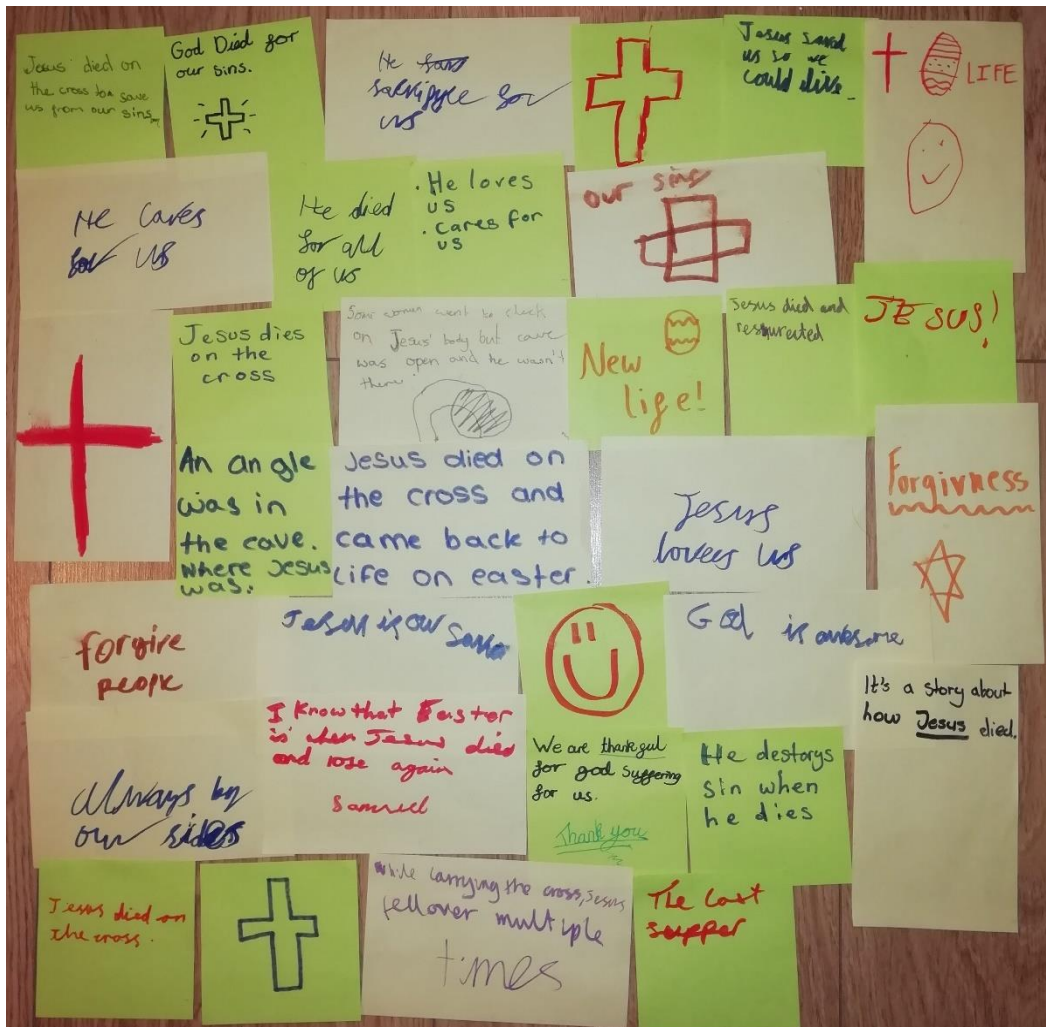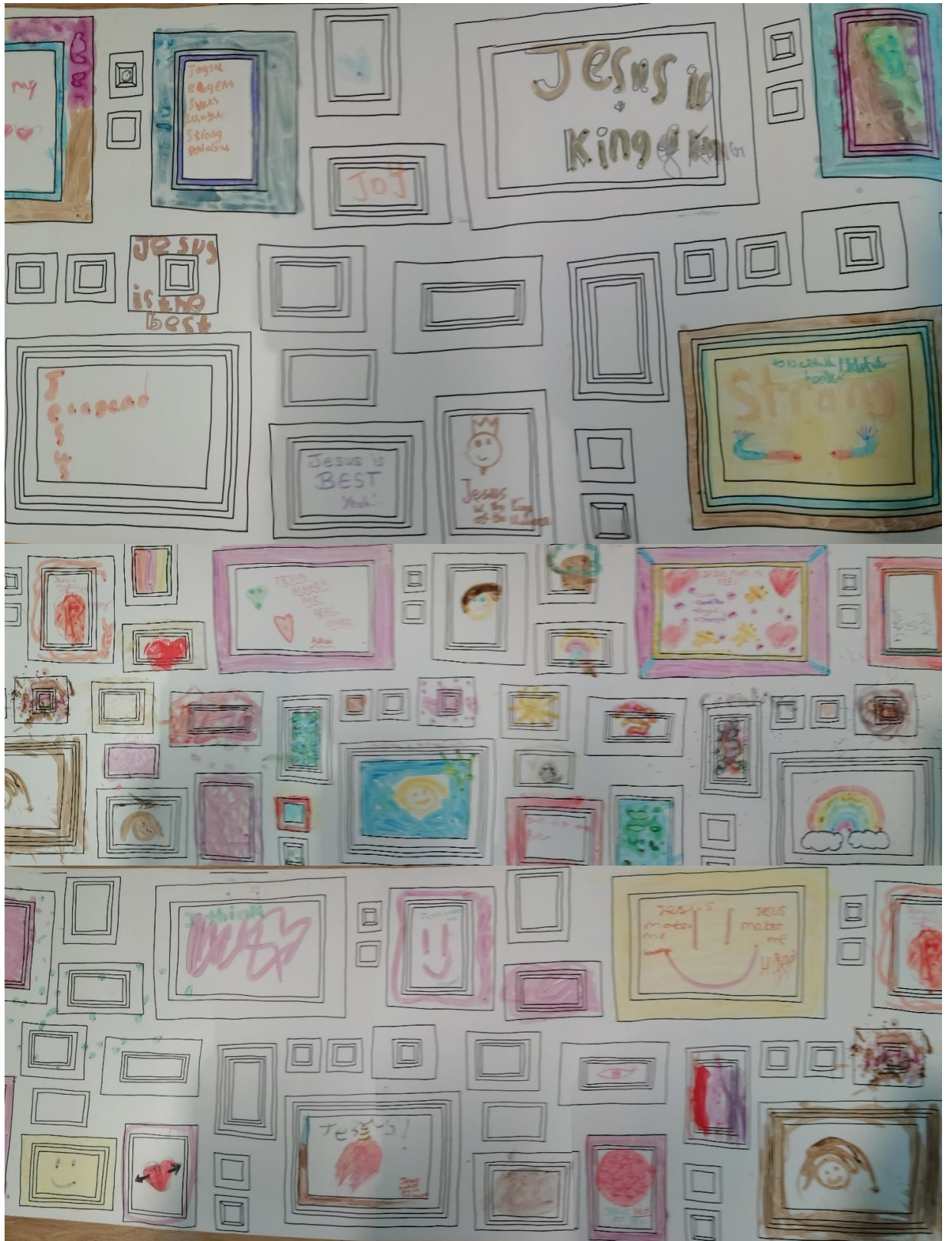

Image H1

Main Themes	Frequency
Cross	10
Jesus dying	10
Resurrection	3
Love/caring	4
Forgiveness	3
New Life	2
Sins	5

Table H2

Appendix I

Images of children's artwork in response to the question "what does Jesus mean to you?" 15 Children aged 6-8 (Week 4)

Appendix I: Continued

Appendix J

Results of Parent online questionnaire

Q1 What do you like most about the children's ministry at SBC?

Chart J1

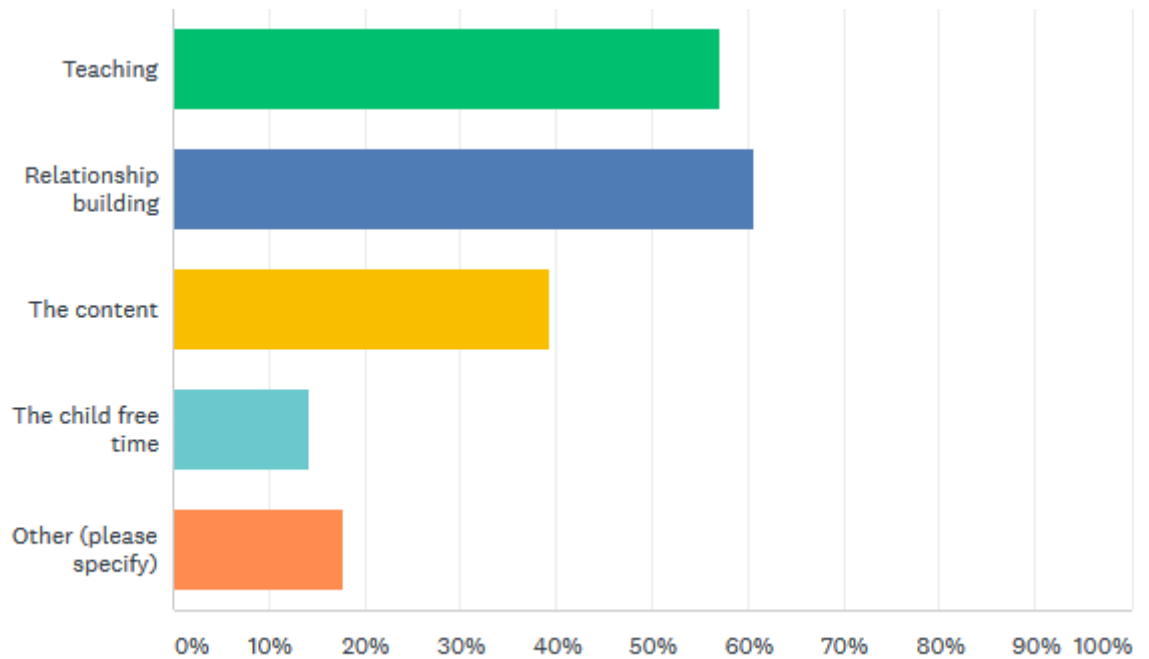| Response	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching	16	57.14%
Relationship building	17	60.71%
The content	11	39.29%
The child free time	4	14.29%
Other (please specify)	5	17.86%

Table J1

Comments:

- The commitment and dedication of the team. Also the clear sense of purpose and direction.

- The children mix well & engage well with one another & very much feel at home. New children are welcomed & put at ease. The content is workable & easy to digest

& seeks to address everyday life issues through the lense of Gods Word & how children can best apply that in their everyday life's.

- At the moment I am disappointed with children SBC. My kid found it noisy and chaotic and often doesn't want to go there.

- Children learning about God

- How SBC tries to make children feel valued and part of the church rather than a duty to be dealt with

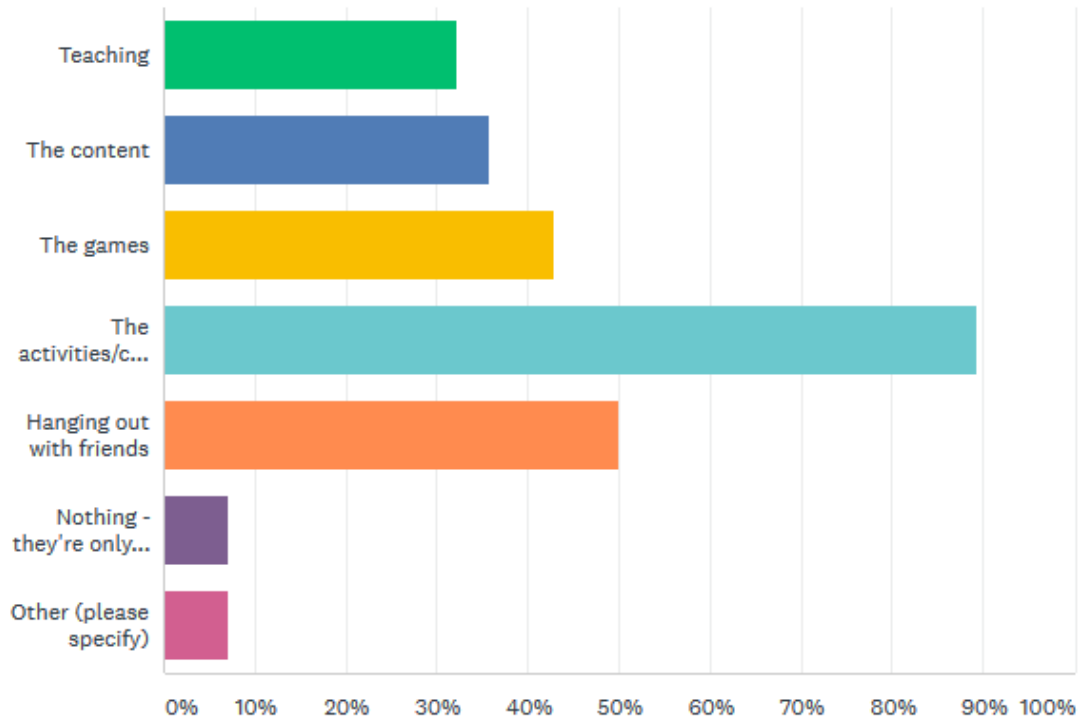Q2 What does your child/children like most about the Children's Ministry?

Chart J2

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching	9	32.14%
The content	10	35.71%
The games	12	42.86%
The activities/crafts	25	89.29%
Hanging out with friends	14	50.00%
Nothing - they're only there because they have to be	2	7.14%
Other	2	7.14%

Table J2

Comments:

- Aged 11 our daughter requires age appropriate environment & peers. She has struggled when classes have had to be mixed. She does however enjoy craft work activities.
- Thanks

Q3 Does the Children's Ministry help you to disciple your child/children at home?
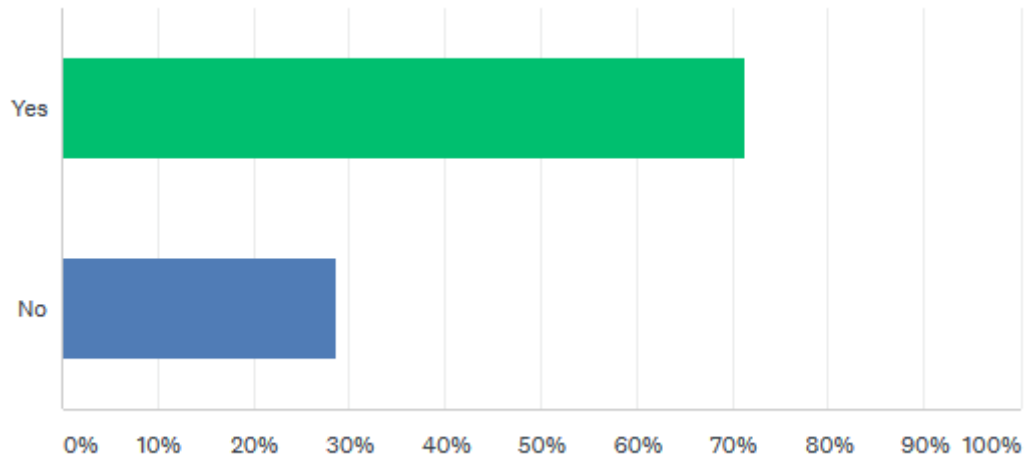
Chart J3

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	71.43%
No	8	28.57%

Table J3

Comments:

- Brings up bible characters and what they did and how we can do similar things in our lives to help people
- Irrelevant
- It helps to recognise and support in the style which the church already adopted. I suppose there is always room to integrate the family style as well.
- Where able to apply practically the teaching to her everyday life, from home to school showing the relevance of Gods Word & its power to transform hearts & minds.
- Take home materials promote discussion
- I think for me it teaches my child Godly principles and the ways of the Lord and that could have an impact positively on their choices but not necessarily helping me discipline my child at home.
- We can put what they learned into every day life and scenarios
- It's great to see that when we have discussions (as a family) on various subjects such as honesty, hard work, trust etc. they always know references from scripture and can understand how it relates to our everyday lives. We know that their knowledge of scripture comes from what they learn at the Children's ministry
- If she does something which I don't like, I would ask her if that is Christ like behaviour. Equally it works both wise as she will often tell me that God can tell me what to do!

- We briefly talk about what they have learnt at home
- We talk about what they've learnt at Kingdom Kids and try to keep thinking about it. They like it when they sing songs as they are always singing at home. It's helped them know their way around the Bible more confidently.
- We discuss what they learned that day and make sure they have understood the message.
- It gives us a topic for discussion and helps in knowing how to explain the Bible to them in an age appropriate way.
- Whenever my child does something wrong, I remind him about what was said during children's ministry and His response is positive
- As it gives them more understanding
- I recap whatever they learn in children's service and it's really amazing what my son learns and is able to summarise to details what he has learnt
- If we know what the topics are we can continue looking at it at home together as a family.
- She explained about what she learnt and put it to practice
- Not always sure that volunteers are taught 'class management' techniques
- I don't use what they learn for discipline but it does help them to establish their own values
- With a weekly focus it is easy to make reference to the specific teaching
- If I know what the church is teaching I can reflect this at home

Q4 What ways could this be improved?

Response	Frequency	Percentage

Regular email updates	6	25.00%
News Sheets	5	20.83%
Parent Involvement in the classes	12	50.00%
No improvement needed	4	16.67%
Parenting Courses	4	16.67%

Table J4

Comments:

- Periodic report, perhaps at the end of each academic year. I feel this will give parents a picture of the progress achieved by their children. (I'm aware this would mean additional commitment of time and energy.)
- A short task for the child to complete at home based on what was discussed in children's ministry time- will help parents to be involved and also reinforce what has been taught at church. atleast for older children who are 6 yrs or older. May be a scripture to memorise and share the next week? will encourage them to learn and remember scriptures.
- More use/knowledge of the bible
- Better material, consistent teaching and most of all better bible knowledge.
- I think Parent should be encouraged to volunteer regularly. You get out what you put in so if you want your children to grow spiritually then you need to help out.
- It would be really great if they could pray more in kingdom kids to encourage prayer as a really natural thing that's part of their lives as friends of Jesus. I enjoy taking part in their classes as it gives me an insight into what they're learning and it could benefit all parents to be on the rota occasionally. Another idea is to have a weekly memory verse as a colouring sheet which they bring home. Their childminder is a Christian and she has started doing this with them recently, and they have been keen to learn Bible verses by heart. The colouring sheets just help us to have something to talk about. Having the verse also gives us the chance to talk about what it means.
- Different teaching content and activities. One of the teachers do repeat her own activity without introducing new thing.
- Training for volunteers

Q5 In your opinion, would you say your child/children are a Christian?

Yes	85.71%	24 responses
No	3.57%	1 response
Unknown	10.71%	3 responses

Table J5

Comments:

- It's difficult to commend. When asked if they are Christians, they claim they are. When probed on their Christian beliefs, they made a constructive and convincing representation. One is only left to encourage them and trust they would be able to reconcile their convictions to their conducts at some point in their life journey.
- Whilst there are signs of understanding & also I believe a healthy respect for Yahweh, I couldn't say she is born again, I believe that is still to come. Having said all that there is a foundation being laid & seeds being sown.
- Yes, but until they come to a full knowledge of christ and confess it themselves, we don't know for sure.
- Work in progress.
- They've both had moments when they have consciously decided they want to be friends for life with Jesus. They are still quite young so over time we need to talk about what this means in a more mature way.
- They believe in Jesus Christ and know that he died on the cross to save us and he rose again and lives in us all.
- I hope he is Christian but I think he is young to understand the concept
- They love God yes but they have not professed him as Lord and Saviour of their life.
- Pray and read bible verses for study

Q6: In your opinion, what is the best way children learn about Christianity?
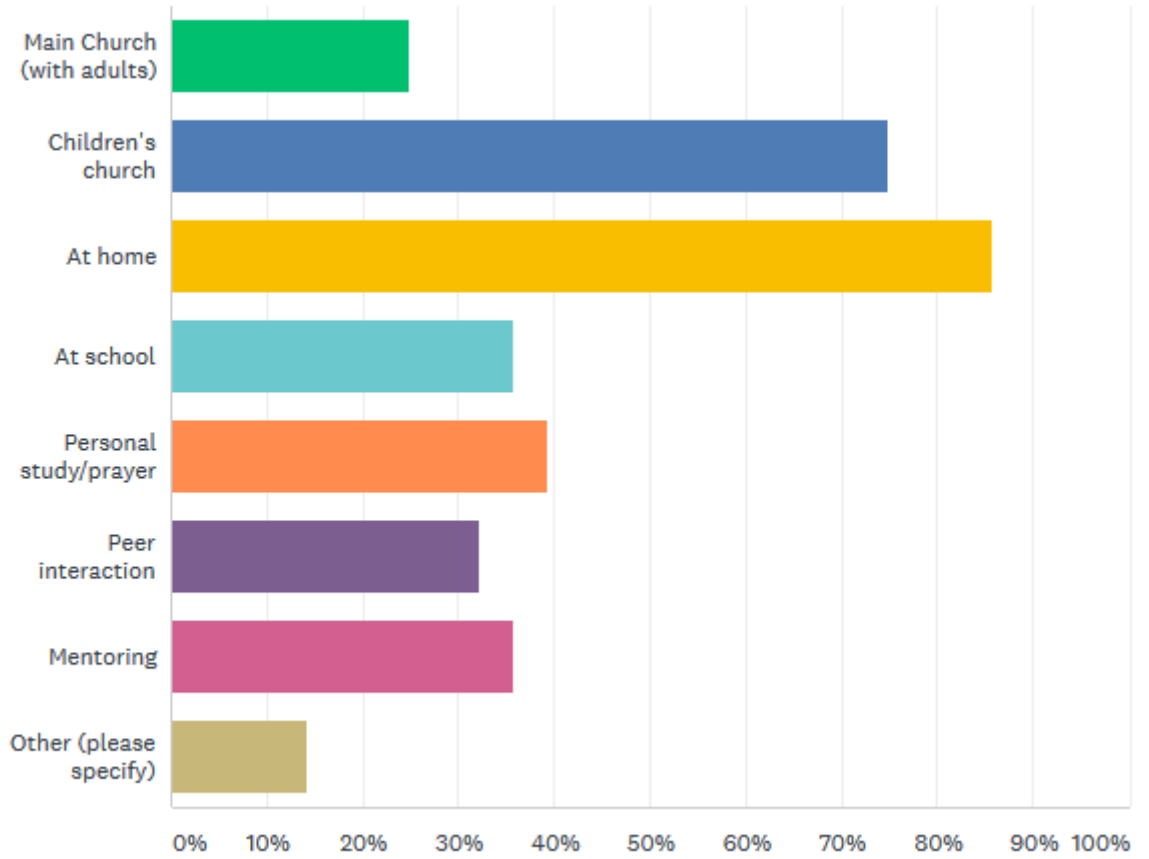
Chart J6

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Main Church (with adults)	7	25.00%
Children's church	21	75.00%
At home	24	85.71%
At school	10	35.71%
Personal study/prayer	11	39.29%
Peer interaction	9	32.14%
Mentoring	10	35.71%
Other (please specify)	4	14.29%

Table J6

Other (please specify)

- All the above & school depending if they are true to core teaching & believing on the Lord for salvation.
- I think it's a combination of all three. Christianity has to be thought in context
- parents being the best example of showing a Christ-like heart
- Talking in small groups. As Emeralds is quite full of noisy boisterous children could it help to occasionally split into smaller groups of boys and girls?

Q7 What stories do you remember your children talking about during the Easter period (April) from Kingdom Kids?
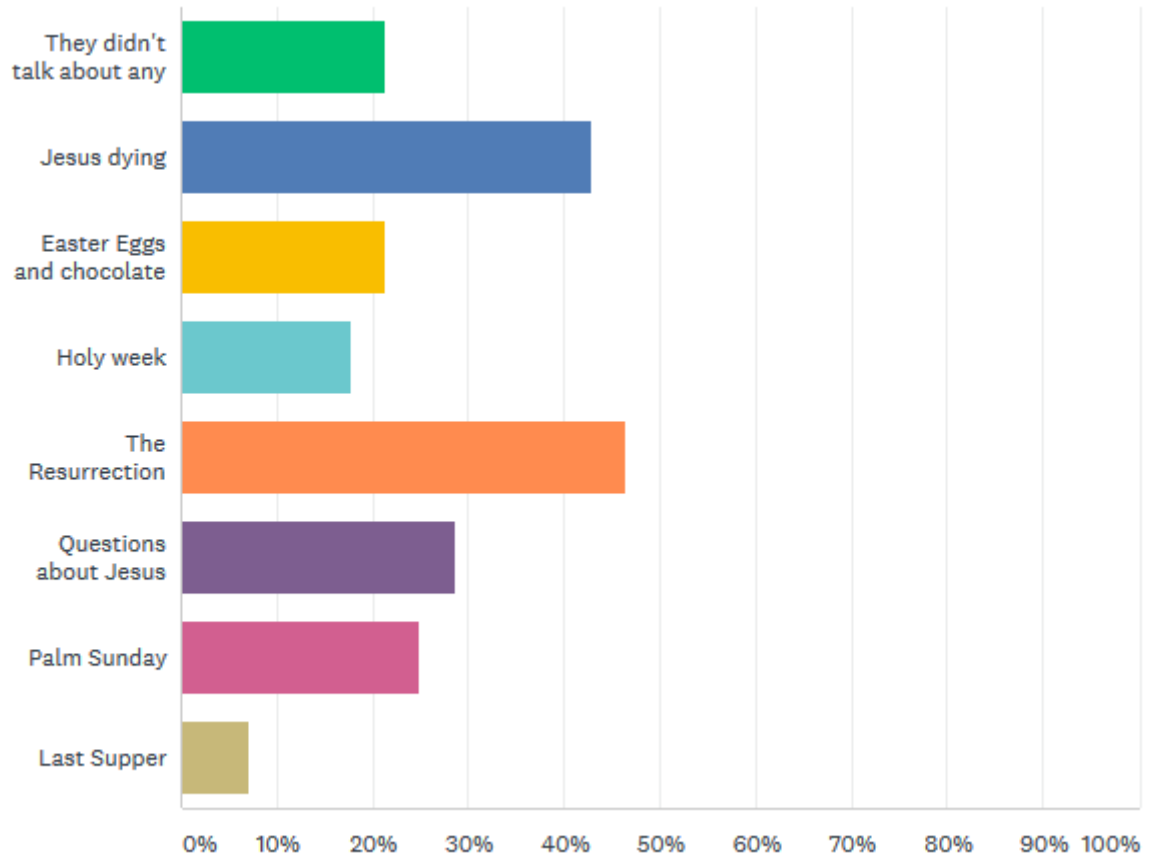
Chart J7

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
They didn't talk about any	6	21.43%
Jesus dying	12	42.86%
Easter Eggs and chocolate	6	21.43%
Holy week	5	17.86%
The Resurrection	13	46.43%
Questions about Jesus	8	28.57%
Palm Sunday	7	25.00%
Last Supper	2	7.14%

Table J7

Q8 Do you think that Multiculturalism is an important topic to focus on in a children's ministry?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 1

Responses

Yes	74.07%	(20 responses)
No	25.93%	(7 responses)

Table J8

Comments:

- Important for children to understand that people in the bible also looked like them rather than the assumption everyone was white, but celebrating that there are other cultures and ethnicities in the bible too
- To the difference in why what we believe is different from others.
- I think we are Christians first and and teaching children that in Christ we are one, no matter our culture, colour or race
- It is important that children learn very early in life that all human beings are created equally, regardless of their background - race, culture and so on. I belief the church is the best agent for advancing this reality of creation by planting the understanding in our children from a tender age
- Yes...but within the dialogue of His Word that being "made in His image & likeness.." and out of that we see ourselves as being connected to each other and not separate.
- We are a multi-cultural church and it is very evident from our church life, that we accept and appreciate people from all backgrounds. While it is important to touch on this sometimes as part of the teaching in church, I feel it gets too congregation focussed and people focussed when we keep talking about who we are(which is quite obvious anyway)- rather than the Lord who we serve. I feel it is more important for our children's attention to be drawn to Jesus, the love of God and the greatness of our Lord. So my opinion is that when the focus is the Lord, and His Love, then even children will learn to accept all cultures and people from all backgrounds :)
- Not to focus on. But to make sure it's embraced and endorsed
- Because the world is multicultural and therefore children should learn about it and be comfortable in building relationships with other children from diverse cultures.
- No, I believe we are one in Jesus.
- Everybody is too worried about LGBTQ. If we introduce our kids to multiculturalism it will enable our kids to know God's love and how God's kingdom is suppose to be. If the kids are equipped with that information then they will be able to stand up for the truth in situations where they may feel tested and faith questioned.

- As we live in a multicultural society, it's important that our children learn about and respect people of other cultures. Especially as Christians, we should be the salt and light of the world, we would want our children to be so too, since they will make and be part of the future society.
- We are a multicultural society so children should have an appreciation of other people's cultural, including their faith. It builds tolerance and respect of others.
- We are to continue holding others in high esteem , regardless of their beliefs or background there to respect other cultures is essential
- I don't feel strongly either way. They don't know what the word means (I just asked them). They live in a multicultural community so for them it's a natural thing. its too big a topic for answering in this format.
- So children are aware of the different multiculturalism and are more knowledgeable and aware of it. Knowledge and understanding is very important for our children to be wise to make there own decisions as adults . They will be equipped for the future.
- It's important that our children are aware of the wide range of different nationalities and cultures that we have in our church in order to be tolerant understanding. I also think it's great that my kids get to mix with so many different people.
- As a diverse church, it is important to make children aware of the fact that there are differences in people in terms of race and culture but ultimately our God focuses on inward characteristics. Some children may not be aware of this as it might not be a topic they discuss at home as family
- It's good to have an understanding of all people
- They already know there are differences in this world. They get that from the media, school. I think coming to church and seeing different faces worshiping is enough.
- It helps them to have knowledge about different regions and their differences.
- Education and talking about things deals with unconscious bias. God asks us to meet people where they are at, not only if they become like us and agree with us first.
- As it is such a fundamental part of our local life
- Unless it specifically is related to the individual bible teaching topic
- If the children can see how they are similar and different from those around them, this will help them learn to show love like Jesus did to everyone

Appendix K

Attendance of repeating children aged 2-11 during the trial

Total number of children over the 4 weeks: 98

Attendance frequency	Number of Children	Percentage
4 weeks	7	7.14%
3 weeks	12	12.2%
2 weeks	34	34.7%
1 week	45	45.9%

Table K1