

# What Would A 'Relevant' Christian Faith Look Like For The Young People In St Aidan's Church?

*by Charlotte Mould*

Academic year 2016-17, BA (Hons)

# Acknowledgments

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To my Father in heaven, all glory and praise is yours. Thank you for calling me, for guiding me and for entrusting me with being the hands and feet to your work. It is by your grace that I am achieving and I would not be in this place now if it were not for you,  
Thank you.

To my family, particularly my Mum and Dad and brother Daniel, for the years of support as I figured out my path in life and for continuously showing me grace, sharing in joy and comforting in sorrow. Thank you for the endless meals, washing machine cycles, financial contributions and words of praise, I love you so very much. And to my Grandad, you were one of the bravest, most strongest men I know and I dedicate this work to you for dedicating your life to us, I made it, I love you.

To my line managers and friends, Rich and Ali. Thank you for your support and your prayers. Thank you for seeing my heart and for sharing yours, for continuously speaking life over my ministry and for using your voices to encourage and guide me. Your investment has been invaluable.

To my mentors, friends and sisters in Christ, Laura and Anna. Your friendship and love have been a source of strength through this whole process and I've loved journeying and growing with you both. Thank you for laughter, for prayers and for the many dinners you've cooked me. Thank you Anna for calming me down and for encouraging me to order my thoughts and work as deadlines got closer, you're both awesome.

To the young people at St Aidan's church, I have so much admiration and respect for you all, thank you for the laughter and joy we have shared, for your honesty and for allowing me to share this journey with you.

To my St Aidan's church family, thank you for embracing me, for sharing with me and supporting me in my training and in my ministry. You are all such wonderful people and have taught me what it is to be living for Christ.

To the tutors and staff at St John's College, thank you for your time, your prayers and your provision, you are all so special and I've cherished the times we have had together and the relationships we have formed. Particular thanks extends to Nigel, one of Gods great gifts to me, you are an incredible man and an even more incredible disciple, thank you for listening so selflessly to God, for enabling me to carry on and for inspiring and encouraging me on a daily basis, just Thank You so much.

To Ruth Clarke, mentor, friend and all round superwoman. Not only have you worked tirelessly to enable I have the resources I've needed and technical wisdom I've lacked, but you've also become a dear friend whose spent hours listening to and guiding me through the many ups and downs I've experienced. I am so deeply grateful for your time, your love and your prayers.

To my patient and inspiring professional practice tutor, Nik, thank you for your practical help, for making sense of my thoughts and ideas and for believing in my potential and encouraging me to reach it. I have the upmost respect for you and appreciate all of the time and wisdom you've invested into my development.

To my incredible dissertation tutor, Jon, thank you for your wisdom, your guidance and your ability to bring clarity and order to my thoughts. Thank you for enabling me to see beyond what's in front of me and for patiently listening through all of my thinking and ideas over numerous café nero trips, your wisdom and guidance has been invaluable.

To my amazing friend, Jemma. Thank you for investing your time and love into my life. Witnessing your passion for Jesus was what brought me humbly back to his feet. You've helped me visualise my potential, encouraged me when I've wanted to give up and shared joy and laughter with me in so many times and places. I look back on our memories with a smile, but feel excited and expectant for what we will share in the future, love you Jemma, thank you.

To my best friend and future husband, Emmanuel. Words cannot express my gratitude to you for the endless time, inspiration, support and love you have given me. Thank you for unfailingly encouraging me to not take life at its face value, for seeing beauty in everything and for experiencing joy in every moment. Thank you for putting my education at the forefront of your mind and for the endless words of reassurance when I've felt like giving up, even for texting me 'lol' when I told you for the 100<sup>th</sup> time I was quitting. Your ability to find humour and joy in everything continues to inspire me. Thank you for picking me up when I've been at my weakest and sharing with me in my strongest. I've learnt so much of who God is together with you and I am so excited to be spending the rest of my life with you. Thank you Aloe B.

# Abstract

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The purpose of this research project was to explore the image of a relevant Christian faith for the young people at St Aidans church.

Through doing this I was able to draw conclusions and make recommendations to St Aidan's to effectively respond to the young people in the congregation in addressing their thoughts and opinions regarding what a relevant faith would look like to them and its applications to their daily lives.

I was able to explore this topic by using questionnaires to initially gather data relating to what is relevant to young people at St Aidan's church and then to more deeply explore those in a focus group and consider how they perceive the Christian faith and how it transfers to their lives, the worries they have and issues they face.

It has been possible to acknowledge two key themes in relation to a relevant faith for the young people; content and presentation. Both aspects were deemed relevant in shaping a relevant faith for young people and are therefore analysed more deeply with reference to their links to wider literature and in correlation with the teachings of Jesus.

It was also possible to highlight the disconnection between a knowledge of faith and how that transfers to their lives outside of the church walls as well as their perceptions of faith through experience at St Aidan's church.

I have touched on the idea of church as a source for faith as that is what arose out of data gathered, an intrinsic link between faith and church was highlighted and therefore the response of the church has been considered within the image of a relevant faith.

Drawing upon their answers and experiences of church in connection with literature available for other young people, I have been able to identify any discrepancies with their answers and test the validity of what they are saying. This has also highlighted an issue with discipleship and how knowledge of faith is transferred to reality of life.

I have attempted to explore the question from a number of angles to create a more holistic image of what a relevant faith would look like for the young people at St Aidan's church and considered its implications for practice alongside any recommendations for practice, both specifically for young people and with the church congregation as a whole.

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# Introduction

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Faith, if connected authentically, can influence, inspire and guide all aspects of our lives from birth until death. Unfortunately, many young people are 'falling away from faith' before reaching adulthood (Powell, Griffin and Crawford, 2011) calling for youth ministry to open its eyes to what is going on and why this is taking place. The term 'falling away from faith' is not so much a binary question of church attendance, but an acknowledged and involved relationship with the faith to enable participation with it amongst daily lives (Church of England's Education Office, 2016).

Sat in an 'all-age service' last year I heard the words uttered from the preacher *'firstly I apologise to the children down there, I'm going to be about twenty minutes, so if you want to disappear feel free.'*

I recoiled at what I'd heard, immediately sensing a barrier forming between what was being offered at church and what the young people were receiving. If this attitude is being expressed to young people, is their faith also being questioned and thought upon as something different than the faith of adults, or is it just that as adults we don't know what to offer young people, so out of a sense of inability to cater for them we don't attempt to do so, instead telling them to disappear?

Sensing a need to address this, my initial approach was to explore 'all-age services' and how we cater to the needs of young people within this setting. This particular research highlighted a sense of irrelevance that young people felt in regards to their faith, suggesting that regardless of the format of an 'all-age service' they still considered the faith offered to be irrelevant to them. This led me to reshape the scope of research and look more directly at what a relevant faith would look like to the young people at St Aidan's. As the research question was developed directly from the young people there is weight to suggest it's explicit relation to St Aidan's youth, however the concept of a relevant faith amongst young people in general can be explored and is talked through later in the literature review.

This dissertation aims to discover what a relevant Christian faith would look like for the young people at St Aidan's church. When using the term 'relevant' I intend to refer to its dictionary definition, meaning to be 'appropriately connected with the time period, circumstance and interest' of the topic (Collins Online Dictionary, 2017). The specific research question is; 'What would a 'relevant' Christian faith look like for the young people in St Aidan's Church?' With the objective being to accumulate research that will shed light on what young people see as relevant to them and how a Christian faith can be relevant within that so that St Aidan's church and youth ministry can respond with integrity to their answers and potentially help young people shape their engagement with faith to respond to many different aspects to encourage a faith that sticks with them through life.

Something I've witnessed happen with some of the young people who have turned 19 and left the church for university or jobs is their faith has not been taken with them into that stage of life. One thing I've reflected on when seeing this is the relevance of faith in that part of their lives, and to what extent are they viewing that faith as important or even needed. It is my belief that faith is key in any part of life and a key part of my role in the church is to help encourage this faith to last



throughout their lives. God has purposed and planned for all life, regardless of age and is using these young people for his glory. Addressing the oppression of potential in youth scripture reads 'Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity' (1 Timothy 4:12). Young people are valued and purposed in Gods plans and whilst I can't directly bring them to Jesus, nor can I be responsible for their relationship with Jesus, I can play a part in equipping them and drawing out the relevance of Christian faith for them to transfer to their daily lives and develop into adulthood.

By first drawing on theoretical explorations of researchers and data gathered, I will then be able to draw conclusions, contributing towards the possibilities of a relevant faith and make suggestions for future development. As illustrated in this work, a question of faith was not intended to represent church attendance, however what emerged was the explicit links the young people made between their faith and church, so continuously throughout this work faith is related to what is offered and presented by the church, in response to the young people's answers. These answers are what will enable church leaders to understand the images young people are suggesting as a tool to help them disciple and shape their faith to represent Jesus and contribute to young peoples lives.

I desire to see these young people directly applying their faith to their daily lives, using it as a guide and an inspiration in issues and worries they face and connecting it with topics they are interested in. For this to take place, the consideration for faith to be relevant is key as suggesting they can 'disappear' whilst teaching takes place is not going to equip them to take their faith out of the church walls.

# Literature Review

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The scope of the review is shaped to address the underlying and driving concepts of my research, defining what is meant by a 'relevant faith' and exploring what is relevant to young people with inclusion of possibilities for developing a relevant faith. Sourcing literature highlighted a lack of the word 'relevant' appearing in other research which could suggest that it either isn't an issue in the wider church or that it isn't widely researched. To find appropriate literature fitting to the research question I began by exploring the definition of 'relevant' to initiate suitable investigation of wider research within this particular scope of study. Meaning to be 'appropriately connected with the time period, circumstance and interest' (Collins Online Dictionary, 2017) the word 'relevant,' in light of this research question, would represent a faith in correlation with what young people are interested in, experiencing in their circumstance and being connected with the time in which they live. As mentioned in the introduction, this research was developed directly out of what the young people had expressed in previous research, suggesting the faith they are involved with and experience is not one in line with the definition of a relevant faith. This could be because this generation is not affiliated with previous ones, leaving faith a dull concept applicable to those living in a different age, culture and with different interests. Buford (cited in Kinnaman, 2011) said of this 'I think this next generation is not just slightly different from the past. I believe they are discontinuously different than anything we have seen before.' Such a statement recognises this necessity for assessing what is happening now, in this generation and culture, within their circumstances and with regards to what is relevant to them as a way of reflecting faith in a way viewed as being relevant to these particular young people. But how do we know what is relevant to young people today?

Miles (2000:60) tells us that young people are active in a 'youth lifestyle' within their cultural and social surroundings as a way of developing their own self-identity, which means they are essentially involving themselves in their generational culture as a way of working out who they are and recognising their identity in the world. If we therefore desire to shape a faith to 'fit in' with this and prove itself relevant, it is to be done in light of the interests, cultures and lifestyle of this generation.

A breakdown of this idea of 'relevance' can be approached in a number of ways, beginning with the content of what young people are being taught about faith and its links to whether this is 'relevant' or not. Youthscape (2016) contribute to this segment of relevance saying 'churches are failing to talk about the topics young people want to discuss' which is creating an irrelevant faith as it is failing to connect with what young people are interested in. Youthscape went further in analysing this question and found that the top 5 topics young people were eager to discuss and deemed 'relevant' to their culture and generation were; mental health and self esteem, how to share faith with friends, sex and relationships, poverty and social injustice and same sex attraction.

Contributing to this is research by The Barna Group (2011) which discovered criticisms of the 'youth generation' levelled at the church in order to express their discontentment with faith presented and taught at church and the lack of relevance of this to their lives. Some of the criticisms included; 'Christians demonize everything outside of the church, Christians are afraid of

pop culture especially its movies and music and Christians do not want to deal with the complexity or reality of the world.' If we're saying relevance is what is connected in time, circumstance and interest, then a relevant faith would be one reflective of the topics young people are suggesting are time (generational) appropriate, fit in with their circumstances and with their interests and responsive to the criticisms they offer to the church as a representative of the faith.

Further to this, the Evangelical Alliance (2013) explored with young people the reasons they may not engage with faith and why they perceived it as being irrelevant and found that they didn't feel their needs were being met, that what was being offered by the church as 'faith' was not in line with what they were experiencing in their day to day lives and therefore offered little or no contribution to them. Should we therefore be shaping faith around the key topics that young people want to specifically discuss? Boran (1999:37) seems to think so, but suggests this can have a negative impact on the Gospel, leaving it stripped of essential elements and teachings. He believes that by shaping our ministry to fit what young people are accustomed to, we run the risk of losing sight of the teachings of Jesus and the elements of scripture, which he argues are as relevant for young people today as they were when they were first recorded. When negotiating these components it almost becomes a balancing act of approaching young people with topics they are interested in, whilst being careful not to water down the Gospel and offer it in a way incomparable to its fundamental truths. Whilst Boran's writing is 18 years dated, the provocative nature of his work is seemingly appropriate across generations as the question of entertaining young people over offering them scriptural facts is present elsewhere. Often ministries, especially youth ministries, strive to offer fun and entertainment at the expense of faith (Dyck, 2011) which means the concept of faith can be somewhat lost amongst young people because they're being fired up with entertainment and 'short changed' on scripture. This observation suggests that a 'relevant faith' is made up of more than one element and links with presentation of content can be made; is faith being presented in a way sensitive to the interests, circumstance and time period young people are living in?

Whilst popular culture in a youth generation is more than media, it does tend to create an impact on youth values and interests, suggesting that faith should incorporate these if it is to hold relevance for young people (Schapiro, 2012). Dunn and Senter (1997:443) suggest this doesn't work however, saying there is 'a fine line between using popular culture and being used by it' and so in youth ministry we should be mindful of not presenting something which is not grounded in biblical truth. Dunn and Senter's work is 20 years old, so whilst being mindful of their warning, the culture in which they were referring is different to this current one and so there is opportunity to explore Schapiro's considerations when shaping a relevant faith. Further exploration of the entertainment aspect of presenting faith given by Dyck (2011) discovers a ministry offering great entertainment, amazing multimedia visuals and young people reporting to have amazing relationships with their youth minister and in their youth group, yet were leaving church and their faith behind. I consider then, why that is and explore young people growing in faith and shaping a relevant faith beyond what is currently observed.

Nick Shepherd explored young people growing in faith and was struck by the complexity of young people's daily lives, particularly when one individual expressed their desire to 'try to be a Christian' (2016:1) in the midst of everything they were engaged in. Interestingly, and touched upon in the introduction, the Church of England's Education Office (2016) researched

what it is that helps young people stay rooted in their faith and church lives and found that engagement with faith wasn't a binary question of attendance, but a question of involvement and connection to daily lives. Young people need to be a part of the bigger body of the church (Schapiro, 2012) and be involved in church life to learn skills to transfer faith to their lives. Stepping away from faith with the idiom 'you lost me' is suggesting that something hasn't translated from knowledge to daily life application (Kinamann, 2011). Young people find it hard to connect the relevance of what they know about faith to their daily lives (Lynn and Davis, 2009:6) and so making these links is key for us in ministry to illustrate a relevant faith to young people. I find it fascinating that an article written almost 30 years ago about a Christian programme reads '[the producer told Third Way] that what he was most keen to do in the five programmes was to present Christian faith as an entirely relevant option for young people today' (Cooling, 1988: 7). Thus suggesting, that the concept of a 'relevant Christian faith' is not a new one, nor is it an easily answerable one, but adaptable to be 'indwelt and constructed: habitus as handed down and re-interpreted anew for every generation' (Graham, 1996: 99-111). Faith, in any time, has to prove useful to a young person allowing young people to 'sustain their imagination as people of faith who can perceive and respond to God in everyday life' (Shepherd, 2016: 99). A relevant faith could therefore be considered as one that allows young people to see and respond to God in each aspect of their life, which would be presented to them and inclusive of aspects closely linked with their interests and circumstances, not only in content and presentation but in experience also.

A key point of consideration explored in a review of literature is that faith has to not only be taught, but also experienced as part of the whole church, thus suggesting that faith isn't only taught or presented, it is a liveable relationship, not only with God but with friends, family and other members of the church the young people attend. Young people are valued by God and viewed as a great gift to be cherished and upheld; 'Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate' (Psalm 127: 3-5). Supporting this, the CofE education report (2016) highlighted the importance young people placed on inclusion within the whole church family and that that inclusion was friendly and non-judgemental and that their voice was valid (Evangelical Alliance, 2013) So in connection with discovering what relevant faith is to young people, it allows us to include the sense of environment we are welcoming them into and how they are experiencing the faith we are teaching them. Within this, relationships can be formed and I believe the key way to explore what a relevant Christian faith would look like to a particular group of young people is to spend time in relationship with them as a way of simply being able to ask.

# Methodology

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The research process aimed to discover what is relevant to young people and explore its connections and possibilities for shaping a relevant faith. 20 participants will be used, a mix of male and female, all aged between 10 and 21 (those deemed 'young people' at the church). They are specifically chosen as the question is researching young people at St Aidan's church and all participants are current attendees. Due to the nature of the topic it was important that the method gave participants opportunity to share their experiences of faith; their perceptions and applications to daily life, in a non judgemental and safe environment. Deciding on the type of data to gather was also important and I explored both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Bryman et al's (2012) exploration of research methods is useful in determining how an approach would benefit the research process and enabled me to draw together the different aspects of the research question to determine the most appropriate method.

## **Influential Issues**

Possible influences on research (Bryman, 2012) include; theory, values, practical considerations, epistemology and ontology and so accounting for these prior to the research beginning could help research's reliability. Being mindful of epistemology, I will be careful to analyse data separately to my opinions so as not to influence the conclusions and make assumptions that may not be present.

I anticipated that data gathered in questionnaires, whilst offering opportunity for qualitative research, would predominantly be quantitative as previous research with the same participants has created this. To counter balance this anticipation the focus group was used, however as researcher, it is important to not be swayed by certain conversations had in the focus group, disregarding the quantitative data available. Data produced is therefore analysed together rather than as two separate sets of data, however where appropriate, the source of specific data will be referenced.

## **Rationale for Research Method**

The research method I chose had to produce valid, reliable data that wasn't influenced by issues previously discussed. The research design was cross-sectional, employing a mixed methods approach which 'involves the collection and mixing or integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study' (Creswell 2014:24) crossing the conventional paradigms in research using pragmatic approaches to create 'improved accuracy...a more complete picture...compensating strengths and weaknesses...and developing the analysis' (Denscombe 2007: 109-111) The chosen methods were questionnaires (see Appendix One) and a focus group. The exploration of the positives of questionnaires was helpful in enabling me to construct a set of questions aiming to retrieve a fruitful response to the research question. Regarding this construction, De Vaus says 'the function is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial questions as unambiguously as possible' (2001:9). To clarify this unambiguity the construction of questions was shaped to address what young people say is relevant

to them along with their perceptions of faith and its application to their lives, to help create a picture what a relevant faith would look like to the young people, drawing on their own suggestions.

These questionnaires are allowing 'full and honest answers' and achieving 'standardized data from identical questions' (Denscombe 2007: 154). The electronic copies will be created using survey monkey and emailed or sent via Facebook messenger as that is the most accessible form of communication for the older youth. The paper copies will be identical to the electronic but will be printed off and handed to the younger youth, and those older youth who would rather have a paper copy. When planning the questionnaire I chose to keep it brief, having 12 questions (appendix one) to help peak interest and gain willingness to complete with integrity as 'generally a short sized questionnaire has a better response than long ones' (Girija 2003:166)

### **The Nature of the Questions**

The questionnaire will be divided into two sections; In the first section there are 9 questions aimed at gathering an image of the life of the participant. They ask questions expected to generate answers reflecting or explicitly stating what is relevant to them as young people in general and as individuals. Questions explore the most common activities young people spend most of their time engaging in, discovering what is important and worrying for young people and how the Christian faith is viewed to address or not address these issues/topics. I chose to word the initial question seeking what young people spend most of their time doing with the inclusion of the word 'free time.' I chose to express it using the term 'free time' as I am aware that most of young people's time is spent in school. As school is a requirement for young people daily I accept that that takes up a significant proportion of their time, but what I'm interested in is what they consider their 'own, free time' to be and what is important and relevant to them in this area of their lives.

The second section of the questionnaire is made up of 3 questions from a different angle to the first section. It is designed to turn the question on its head, focusing on key Christian concepts and questioning what these mean to the young people. Questions include; 'what would being set free mean to you' and 'what does Jesus as your friend mean to you?' These questions will allow me to make connections between the relevance of faith and young peoples view of relevance to help me answer the question being researched. The different angles to the question will allow me to approach the question from two perspectives; what is relevant to young people and how faith can affect that, and what is relevant in faith and how that affects young people.

Quantitative data will be analysed via statistics and occurrence of answers and qualitative data will be analysed using thematic analysis (O'Reilly 2013) meaning I will code the answers given in 3 stages; categorising data, larger analysis through larger categories and then putting categories into themes. When the data is coded I can analyse it 'producing a clear and critical argument which addresses the research question' (O'Reilly).

## **The Possibilities of a Focus Group**

The questionnaires will be followed up with a focus group with the older youth participants. This is designed to explore the answers on a deeper level and gather some of the young people to enable them to communicate their answers face to face. This will allow me to establish a deeper scope of answer to the question as I will be able to register body language, spoken language and group/individual responses. A weakness of focus groups, pointed out by Cameron and Duce (2013:118) is the existing group dynamics and how these can impact the way the group engages with the research topic. Whilst I agree that this could transpire I believe that the benefits of the focus group will outweigh this. The group I will be doing the focus group with is the older youth, who have established good relationships over the last few years and confidently and eloquently hold conversations in which they sometimes have differing ideas and so I believe this will not affect the results too much. It will allow participants to expand and discuss their thoughts more broadly and with greater depth to reduce taking results at face value.

To be able to analyse the data from the focus group I'll be encouraging participants to write notes on large pieces of paper covering the table, whilst also taking notes on my ipad. This qualitative data will be analysed alongside the questionnaire data, adding to the codes and themes to get a richer scope of themes to answer the research question.

## **Analysis of Research Method**

The use of questionnaires generated an anticipated amount of quantitative data, which was useful in answering the research question to a certain extent, yet didn't explore the reasons for their answers and so made it difficult to answer with integrity and without applying my own assumptions onto the reasons for their answers. Because of this the way in which I approached the focus group was altered as I went in to it desiring to explore the quantitative data that had been gathered. This enabled me to develop their responses to discover a more holistic response to the research question; however it could have meant that the possibilities of certain data were not brought into fruition because I was focused on particular ways of exploring. Whilst I don't anticipate that this would have altered the data because the opportunity of the focus group was to expand on the quantitative data gathered, it is a point for consideration for future research as it could potentially construct a larger questionnaire or several focus groups to really explore the research area on a deeper more wider level.

Some of the data produced was not useful in contributing to the research question and so having a clear vision of the aims of the research was key in filtering what was useful and not so useful. Denscombe (1998:97) describes it as assessing 'what issues are at the heart of the research and what kind of information would enlighten those issues.' Challenges to this lie in the amount of data produced and in responding pragmatically to the question being researched. Some of the questions asked proved to be unnecessary in answering the research question as the way in which young people responded to them was not how I had expected them to. What may have helped would have been a deeper consideration of the questions constructed and possible anticipation of what was being asked of the young people, to clarify the research purposes through the questionnaires.

The depth of responses did agree with my thoughts to some extent and a key aspect of this I believe rests in the anonymity of answering questions privately. Crowe (2012:177) says 'consistency in identity has strong associations with authenticity' which was displayed in the release of pressure to answer in a way they felt they possibly should have done, allowing for deeper honesty and clarity of thought.

Upon reflection, the use of questionnaire and focus group was useful in answering the research question as it generated enough quantitative data to draw conclusions and was benefited by deeper consideration of those responses in focus group to contribute towards recognising implications to practice and future recommendations.



# Analysis of Research

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The research produced has allowed me to build upon and progress my understanding regarding the relevance of Christian faith for the young people at St Aidan's church, which has previously been based upon my own experiences and ideas. In this section I will analyse the data and begin to draw conclusions and ultimately consider its implications for practice, allowing for suggestions for development so this work can create an opportunity for practice to authentically be responding to the data gathered.

Whilst the research was specifically targeting young people from St Aidan's church, the question itself was not designed to exclusively link faith with church attendance. This, already mentioned in the literature review, was because a question of faith isn't necessarily a question of church attendance, therefore the research was designed to address a relevant faith for young people, in whatever capacity that displayed itself. Interestingly though, much of the data gathered shows a strong link between the two. Data suggests the young people connect their faith predominantly with the church, therefore when discussing relevant faith in this analysis, a lot of summaries revolve around activity at St Aidan's church.

The implementation of data management was imperative in more clearly defining the facts relevant to the research question, as information gathered, particularly from the questionnaires, was predominantly qualitative and idiosyncratic as it was asking of individuals' concepts of relevant faith. All data is available in Appendices Two and Three in full, however only relevant data to the question has been included in analysis. Some of the data gathered did not contribute to the research question and therefore without contribution was not drawn upon in analysis. Consequently, I applied Wiskers (2007) strategic questions to the data asking 'what kinds of responses keep repeating?' and 'where are there themes emerging?' Application of these questions to the data allows for a considered response, whilst not distinguishing individual answers, with a stricter filtration of data to be able to respond to the research question appropriately and more clearly.

This data analysis incorporates both questionnaires and focus group responses; however both sources are exclusively referenced where appropriate to analysis.

## Summary of Findings

Data gathered highlighted evidence to confirm the motives for the research; that a question of 'relevance' in regards to faith was in dispute and that deeper consideration was needed to hear and respond to the needs of the young people.

Initial observation of the data is presented with a summary of findings displayed below in Figure One.

**Figure One**

### **Summary of Findings**



The key themes presented in the summary of findings on page 19 will be analysed in light of their contribution to the research question, their links to the literature review and in reflection of their relationship to Jesus' ministry.

### **Understanding the Data: Key Themes**

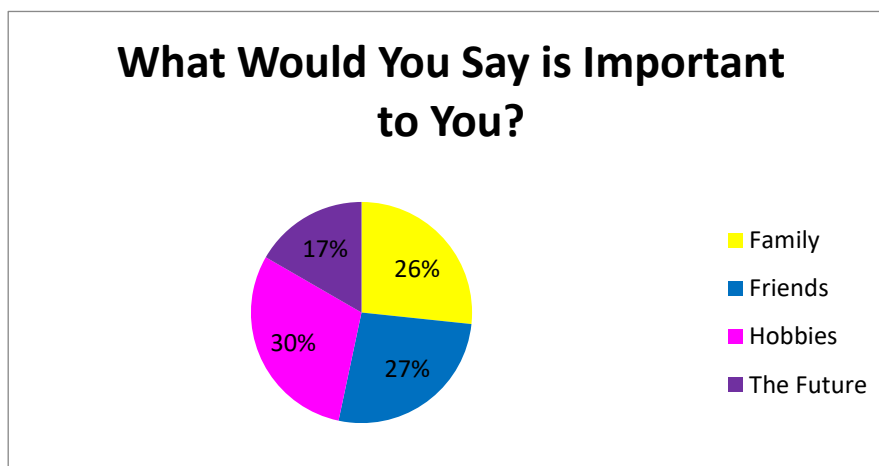
The data gathered from the questionnaires (Appendix Two) was analysed along with the data from the focus group (Appendix Three) to create a thought through and rounded approach to the research question. The data suggests that two key things were important to the young people at St Aidan's church when shaping a relevant faith, these were the content of what is taught to them about their faith and the way in which that is presented to them, both will be explored in this analysis in light of their contribution to the research question. The first theme analysed was recognised out of the connections the young people made between faith and church, which suggested that the content delivered at church is not currently delivering and needs to be developed to be deemed 'relevant' by the young people.

### **Content**

The first theme, content, is representative of the data gathered which suggested that an essential element of a relevant faith lies in topics discussed and taught, predominantly at church. The first portion of data contributing to this theme is found in the responses from the young people regarding what is important to them, what they worry about and what issues they face, both personally and as a generation. This data was quantitative and has been gathered together in Figure Two below.

**Figure Two**

**“What Would You Say is Important to You?”**

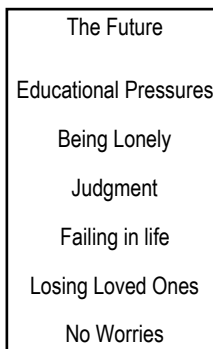


Data gathered displayed in Figure Two is representative of what young people say is important to them. Having this insight allows also for exploration into what they worry about or consider as an issue they face to create a picture of what is possibly relevant for them. I have therefore drawn upon this data which represents what the young people said they worried about

and the issues they faced. The data gathered from the questionnaires was quantifiable as young people expressed their responses via one word answers and these are displayed in Figure Three below.

**Figure Three**

**What Worries Do You Have and What Issues Do You Face?**



Together, the data from these two figures creates a picture of what content shapes these young people's lives and offers significant value towards the research question as it depicts an aspect of what is relevant to them, as a possible starting point for shaping a relevant faith that addresses such issues. What this data tells me in relation to the research question is that to envisage a relevant faith that is claiming to be 'relevant' in time, circumstance and interest; it has to address this data as a source for shaping their faith. It tells us that a particular area of interest for them is their family and friends, how they are viewed within those relationships and their future prospects which provoke a question of how they can experience and learn about faith that incorporates and addresses these interests and worries.

In relation to this, the data from the focus group suggested that for the young people, the aspect of faith and church were intrinsically linked, meaning they connected their issues and worries with how they were approached at church and suggested that *'church doesn't talk about the big issues that we want to talk about'* and that their worries are *'swept under the carpet [at church]'*. More than 50% of the participants expressed that St Aidan's specifically did not address their issues and worries, and over 75% answered either no or maybe (Appendix Four). Responses included *'it's a place to see my friends and socialise'* suggesting it is unnecessary for the church to cater to their needs, and *'No because what I mean by fail is to do with getting good grades and having a good life.'* This particular response was in relation to an answer given earlier in the questionnaire identifying failing in life as a worry this young person has. The response to the issue of the church addressing this worry suggests that there could be a discord between 'church' and 'life' and that the content explored in church regarding faith, may not be in agreement with the content experienced outside of church regarding 'failing in life.' This will be drawn upon further in 'conclusions' and 'future recommendations.' Before taking this data at its face value, a critical assessment of its contributions to research is necessary as not all participants reported that St Aidan's didn't address their issues and concerns. Of those who responded that St Aidan's church did address them, answers revolved around *'support through*

prayer' and 'feeling welcome and wanted' within the church, though this data was from less than 25% of the respondents and relates more to their experience of church as opposed to the content they are taught. It could therefore be considered a question of idiocentric relevance as opposed to a corporate response to the question. To address this and make possible connections with genuine data I've explored deeper what it is that young people report wanting to discuss through the focus group.

Going deeper on this, the focus group offered suggestions for what they considered the relevant content and topics were that they wanted to discuss at St Aidan's which highlights some connections between their interest, worries and issues and is presented in Figure Four.

**Figure Four**

**What are the relevant topics you want to discuss at St Aidan's?**

Arguments with Friends or Family
Animals
How we can get friends to think and talk about God
How I use my faith at school without looking weird
Talking about the future/jobs

This shapes our view of what young people deem as relevant and allows for consideration of what is being taught to young people in church regarding their faith and in relation to things that are relevant to them in circumstance, interest and of their culture and generation. Assessing the validity of the data at this point is useful in determining the correctness or credibility of the interpretation (Maxwell, 1992) as data presented is objectively exploring what a relevant faith content would look like based off of their interests and circumstance, with the direct answers from the young people regarding the same question. Bryman claims that validity is 'the most important criterion' as it is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions drawn from the data (2012, 41). The integrity of conclusions drawn here is clear, in that the responses given in Figure Four are in agreement with the interests and worries expressed in Figures Two and Three, suggesting that although as mentioned earlier there are elements of individualism, the relevant topics wanting to be discussed are in coherence with what young people suggest us important to them or they worry about.

In addition to this I present data exploring 'why and how the Christian faith is useful' to them as what materialized here was that the idea of the Christian faith and its possibilities had kept their interest, however the reality of it and its correlation with everyday life for them was not useful as it didn't address these topics they'd highlighted as being relevant for them. The focus group shared that '*the church doesn't apply to life outside [of church] because we don't talk about things in church that I do outside, so it's not useful to me in everyday life.*' It can be drawn upon here that the Christian faith is somewhat disconnected with many of the young people as they omit to recognise its place within their everyday.

In relation to this area of exploration contribution was also made to this theme of content by asking the participants a number of questions connecting their awareness of the Christian faith with their acknowledgment of it and how Christian faith is useful or applicable to their lives. Provoking participants with 'Christian concepts' allowed for deeper consideration and engagement with their awareness of faith which is necessary when implicating youth work practice to meet the needs and positions held by these young people. The key concepts the participants were asked to engage with were 'being set free' 'being a friend of Jesus' and 'Jesus having died for your sins.' The answers given, displayed in Figure Five, suggest that all of the young people had at least a basic understanding of the Christian faith and its values.

**Figure Five**

**Key themes emergent from participant's engagement with 'Christian concepts'**

<b>Christian Concept</b>	<b>Themes Emerged from Participant Responses</b>
Being set free	Having a choice for the future, being released, becoming a new person
Being a friend of Jesus	He's always there, never lonely, Jesus loves everyone
Jesus having died for your sins	Washing away sins, Jesus cares, He's a good man and takes away bad things

Whilst all of the young people expressed a level of knowledge of what it meant to know those 3 Christian truths, most didn't regard or weren't sure whether the faith addressed their worries, displayed in Figure Six below.

**Figure Six**

**Does Christian Faith Address These [Your] issues/worries?**

Yes: 3
No: 11
Don't Know: 6

If we analyse this more deeply it appears that on one level, there is connection between the Christian faith highlighted in Figure Five and the content they express a desire to be taught in Figure Four, however when expressing whether their desired content is represented in the Christian faith, the answers were predominantly no or not sure. Worries include being lonely and future pressures (Figure Three), which they majoritively claim aren't addressed by the Christian faith, however when analysing answers in Figure Five it appears they address these two things directly when reflecting on what key Christian concepts mean to them. I question then why this disconnection is present and consider a level of discipleship and ability to minister from a place of offering transferability of faith to everyday life. This observation will be drawn upon further in 'experience' and 'future recommendations.'

## Links to Literature review

Interestingly, this data is in correlation with wider literature explored in the literature review; particularly in the Youthscape research that picked out topics young people wanted to discuss. They highlighted that ‘churches are failing to talk about the topics young people want to discuss’ which correlated with current data at St Aidan’s showing the church doesn’t address the things they deem as relevant and doesn’t ‘*talk about things [in church] that I do outside.*’ Whilst not all of the topics highlighted in Figure Four were in the top five topics discovered by Youthscape as being relevant, they were all discussed within the Youthscape research and shared in their data analysis (Appendix Five). This could potentially offer contribution to a consideration of content discussed by young people generally and not just explicitly at St Aidan’s.

Coupled with this is literature explored with the Barna Group (2011) suggesting that ‘Christians do not want to deal with the complexity or reality of the world’ which when touched upon here, is represented in their views that the ‘*church doesn’t talk about the big issues that we want to talk about*’ and that their worries are ‘*swept under the carpet [at church]*’ suggesting that content is not being approached relevantly at the present time and that there is scope for improvement.

Also in the literature review, reports from Schapiro (2012) highlighted the disconnection of young people being a part of the bigger body of the church and their desire to have faith made relevant for them, without it being at the cost of the Gospel being watered down. One young person even stated that the Gospel is not being shown to be relevant for them if it has been watered down because it’s directly saying that it needs to be altered to be relevant, when actually the message of the gospel is just as relevant today as it was years ago. Whilst this message wasn’t explicitly drawn from the current research, the overarching theme can be linked with young people at St Aidan’s church in that the things they are experiencing in life are not being viewed in the light of the Christian faith as they don’t think it addresses their issues. By drawing upon biblical content that is relevant to their content, links could potentially be more easily transferable and a relevant faith more appropriately formed.

What is not explicitly mentioned in other literature are the worries and issues young people reported to face, particularly in connection with this data. This may offer no further contribution to the research question, however is useful in connecting what young people experience as relevant with their experience of faith.

## Theological Reflection

Through analysis of this data, it is evident that each of these topics (Figure Four) are mentioned in scripture and could therefore be considered as teaching points for the young people to enable them to experience a relevant faith. Mckiddie (2016) references it to taking these flavours out of the Christian word for teens to taste their intensity and recommends a key step is to ‘show where the Bible talks about the same thing teenagers experience, and point to the solution it gives.’ Interestingly, Jesus’ methods of teaching ran parallel with this; often given through parables which connected his word to everyday life for the people he was speaking to. You could say that he took the flavour of his father’s word and expressed it

in a way that the people could really taste for themselves the intensity of it. As in Luke 15 'The parable of the lost sheep.' By using the parable of one lost sheep over a field of sheep it brings the word of God directly into a scenario directly applicable to the listener's everyday lives.

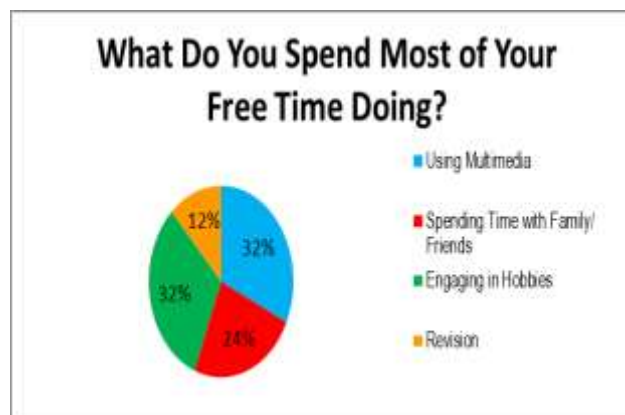
Jesus also taught particular messages to particular people and whilst the whole bible could be interpreted and deemed relevant for all, certain aspects and messages from it are more relevant to certain people than others, dependent on their place in life, their circumstance and their interests. Much like this discernment of message, Jesus spoke into the lives of those around him with content they needed to hear. When raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11), it would have been irrelevant for him to start talking about judgement of others (Luke 6:37-42). In this same way, we are called to discern and share God's message to his people, as and how desires. This can be rooted in content but expressed in presentation.

### **Presentation**

The second theme that emerged from the data related to the presentation of faith and its connections to the time and culture of this generation, their circumstance and interests, as a way of shaping a relevant faith.

In exploring what is relevant to young people, discovering what they spend their free time engaging with creates a picture of how they colour their lives; what they do daily and possibilities of how that could be influenced by the Christian faith. Figure Seven portrays the key themes that emerged when young people were asked in the questionnaire 'what do you spend most of your free time doing.' The type of data collected was quantitative as participants offered one word answers, some gave multiple one word answers, and the chart below presents that data.

**Figure Seven**



It is important to recognise that some individual answers are unique but by highlighting commonalities we can begin to offer organisation of thought that can influence our understanding and practice. What is visible in Figure Seven is the proportion of time young people spent engaging with hobbies and with various sources of media. When explored further in the focus



group, this was highlighted and seconded by all participants as a difference between faith shared in the church and their daily lives. One of the key things Figure Seven is highlighting, is the way in which young people engage with information and data and how that presentation is influencing their perceptions of relevance. Data shows that these young people normally engage with information via entertainment, through multimedia, which influences their perceptions of a relevant way in which they engage with information in different aspects of their lives. What this data tells me is that a particular aspect of relevance to young people, in definition of time, circumstance and interest, is information being processed through multimedia. Therefore, if faith is to be relevant in church, the format must be in coherence with this data. It also tells me that they engage in hobbies frequently and therefore faith could potentially be seen as irrelevant within this area if it is not representative of their interest within a particular hobby. Contributing to this is data taken from further discussions in the focus group regarding presentation of faith.

During the focus group further discussion surrounded the experience of faith at St Aidan's and what emerged highlighted differences between St Aidan's and other religious settings and events were the '*atmosphere*' and '*presentation of content*' were deemed more relevant. This was founded from the answers given by the young people (Appendix Three) which included '*At New Wine and One Event the music is more 'pop' it's like a party and it's enjoyable*' and '*St Aidan's just benefits adults, not us.*' In relation to presentation of content one young person said '*At New Wine they used puppets to tell a Bible story, it got the point across to young people, I preferred that to someone just talking at me*' and this statement was supported by other members of the focus group who agreed and added that '*At One Event there was a Goo tank, it made me watch more and I enjoyed it, it was fun.*'

The data suggesting the way in which faith is presented to them potentially provides opportunity to develop practice to make it both authentically and wholly scripturally sound, whilst incorporating a method of presentation the young people feel most engaged and excited about. Data gathered in the focus group (Appendix Three) details that church should be '*interactive*', '*lively*' and '*child friendly*.' To further analyse the research and make valuable contributions for practice this was explored deeper by asking for examples of ways in which presentation of faith could be more relevant for them. Within this there was a divide of answers for two reasons; needs and wants. Some young people expressed learning needs not catered for in presentation, in particular young people with dyslexia suggested that preaching through a PowerPoint with written words was more challenging and benefits would be felt with more videos and pictures that would enable imagination to be captured and an ability to understand and engage easier. Some of the wants they suggested were pinned upon their interest levels and attention spans; for example, a '*pop, party atmosphere*' and '*bible stories told through puppets, Lego movies, Minecraft videos and spoken word*'. One suggestion was for a Goo tank, whilst not necessarily easily accessible or possibly welcomed in the church, it is a potential entertainment possibility to engage the young people in ways that are fun and stimulating to them.

## Links to literature review

Interestingly, some of the data gathered here is supported by the literature and some is in stark contrast to what is being said elsewhere. As pointed out by Schapiro (2012) multimedia, as an element of popular culture, is in need of being improved and used to create a culture reflective of what is relevant to young people, which is in agreement with data gathered here suggesting the visuals are not seen as being relevant and that ones including videos and pictures would be.

There was a difference, however, in the concept of watering down faith. As cited in the literature review 'ministries, especially youth ministries, are heavy on fun and light on faith, it's fired up entertainment and watered down gospel' (Dyck, 2011). This differs with current data because what arose out of the focus group suggests that faith and church should be '*more fun*' '*party like*' and '*enjoyable*.' With this presented it is useful to contemplate the possibilities of creating an interesting and engaging faith that is seen as relevant to these young people, without reducing the Gospel to a set of games and jokes, God does his work to make us "born again . . . through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23) without an all singing, all dancing presentation.

Dyck went further on this by reporting that young people he had spoken with claimed to have an amazing relationship with their youth worker and had a great time at youth group, but actually they left their faith anyway because all that was on offer was 'entertainment' and not application of the bible and faith to their daily lives. Conversely, this current research appears to suggest that at some parts the young people actually want more entertainment at church and even suggest '*pop, party atmosphere*' and '*goo tanks*.' I question then, the balance between entertainment and content and question its sustainability and correlation to authentic biblical teachings. It appears through connections of previous and current research that this fine line of content and presentation is a source for consideration throughout youth ministry and interestingly the findings from this research support that dilemma. Possible solutions and ideas are explored later on during recommendations.

## Theological Reflection

If reflecting this finding in light of Jesus' ministry, on face value it could be difficult to make connections between adapting presentation to this generation as forms of multimedia were not available during Jesus' time and much of his presentation of teaching was done through his own words, he spoke to people a lot. Kinamann (2011) highlights this development saying 'even our faith journeys have benefited. People now have instant access to information that can help them grow spiritually: devotionals, sermon notes, Bible translations and expositions, podcasts, worship music, and so on' and this revolution has changed our world but we must work hard to remain faithful in this new world. 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect' (Romans 12:2). There then, develops a question mark over how Jesus would use this new technology and how it can be used as a useful servant rather than a cruel master (Kinamann).

If Jesus had access to multimedia, would he use it to enhance his teaching? Who knows, but there is weight to suggest he would pick up this relevant presentation of teaching in light of his use of parables. By teaching in parable Jesus was presenting his teachings in a way 'relevant' to the time, circumstance and interest of the people in which he was teaching it too and so if we are taking this element of presentation to heart, we could also present data in a way appropriate to time, circumstance and interest of these young people.

Jesus also lived out his teaching, he behaved and acted in a way that was so clearly translated from the content he was instructing and this observation draws my analysis together to one final point regarding the experience of faith.

### **Experience in Connection With Faith in Daily Life**

Whilst this wasn't an explicit theme out of the factual data, it has been drawn upon as a general and emerging theme for analysis out of the themes that did arise. This final contribution in light of both themes is the understanding of experienced faith alongside a topically and presently relevant one. If young people are being taught something, it doesn't automatically mean they are experiencing it, and this is where disconnections could arise. In particular light of the discord highlighted between their perceptions of the Christian faith and whether it addresses their issues and worries, I analyse data representative of an experienced relevant faith.

If 75% of young people are reporting that St Aidan's does not explicitly address their issues (Appendix Four) yet in a separate question they suggest that the Christian faith is responsive to some of their worries (Figure Three) then there is possibility to highlight a faith that is being taught to the young people as one different of how they experience it in church. For example, if they believe that 'being a friend of Jesus' means they'll never be lonely or judged, yet worry about that happening and suggest that St Aidan's doesn't address that worry, are they then experiencing feelings of being lonely at church and if so, is this then impacting their understandings of faith because of how they feel they are being treat. This was explored in the literature review suggesting that faith has to not only be taught, but also experienced as part of the whole church, thus suggesting that faith isn't only taught or presented, it is a liveable relationship, not only with God but with friends, family and other members of the church the young people attend. A key finding in the CofE education report (2016) was the importance young people placed on inclusion within the whole church family and that that inclusion was friendly and non-judgemental and that their voice was valid (Evangelical Alliance, 2013).

When analysing data gathered for 'how does/can Christian faith fit in with your life?' the data suggested that faith '*fit in on a Sunday at a church service*' or '*in a youth group at church*' and also '*in time at home*', particularly through personal prayer. To correlate these dimensions and enable young people to recognise their faith as being relevant, there is a requirement to not only teach well, not only present well, but combine the two and live them out in relationship and interaction with one another. Jesus' way of doing this was to not only teach what forgiveness was but give it. Not only teaching what loving your neighbour was, but do it. Not only say his death will provide forgiveness for our sins, but die and rise back to life to prove it.

This revelation supports analysis directed by Shepherd (2016:99) that faith has to prove useful and applicable, enabling young people to perceive and respond to God in everyday life, through a mixture of the key themes drawn from their data.

# Conclusions

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What can be learnt from this research is that a question of a relevant faith does not solely rest in one aspect, nor is it answerable by one quick fix. The data presented in analysis first illustrates that the content taught to young people needs to be in line with what they regard as important to them and what worries and issues they have, in order to be relevant. This offering of content was linked directly with church by the young people and so to consider future recommendations and their implication for practice it is vital that this connection is not lost in translation and is being recognised as important to the young people in defining a relevant faith.

Secondary to this is the way in which content is presented should reflect the popular culture in which this generation is accustomed to, whether that be in multimedia or through their hobbies. What was discovered in analysis though was the necessity to consider this presentation in reflection of its biblical content and checking our entertainment is not overruling our teaching. As the young people suggested they wanted more entertainment and better presentation, there is opportunity to develop this area dramatically without immediately replacing content, and addressing the balance is something intrinsic in shaping a relevant faith for the young people at St Aidan's church.

A further conclusion is that a question of a relevant faith, whilst expressed through content and presentation, is not a simple exclusion of the two. Having something be contently relevant doesn't mean it's presented poorly, or vice versa. There is opportunity to express relevant content through relevant presentation and explore the possibilities for intertwining the two themes.

In reference to the experience of faith in cohesion with its content and presentation, there appears to be an inability to transfer the Christian faith and the knowledge of it, to everyday life, issues and worries. The observation arose from the data gathered surrounding the content they know about the Christian faith and whether or not their worries and issues are addressed by the Christian faith. It seems to rear itself on a few occasions in answers suggesting that church or faith '*dosnt apply to life outside.*' My observation is that this is a discipleship issue, that although the young people have knowledge of the truths of the Christian faith, the inability to transfer this understanding to everyday life comes with discipleship. This could potentially be a wider church issue, created in the experience of faith in church touched upon in analysis or may relate solely to the youth, however what has transpired from this data is that there is discord between church and life with much of the data suggesting the content and presentation of faith is not applicable or appropriate for their daily lives. The discord highlighted between Figures Four, Five and Six are evidence to suggest that the ability to transfer faith to everyday life is not happening and this needs to be addressed in Future Recommendations if the relevance of the content and presentation is going to be of an use for the young people.

# Future Recommendations with Implications to Practice

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In light of the data analysis and conclusions drawn, future recommendations will be made to respond to what the young people are saying a relevant Christian faith would look like to them. To answer the research question to some extent; a relevant Christian faith would look to the young people, as one that addresses the areas of their lives they consider important and the various issues and circumstances they face on a daily basis outside of the church walls in a way appropriate to their interests and scope of intaking information. This is all in light of recognising their need for discipleship and experiences of faith to be addressed so as to enable faith to be more easily transferred to their daily lives and prove itself relevant.

First addressing the issue of content, the topics and issues that young people have expressed they want to talk about could be divided between the corporate church service and the youth group. Scripture offers so much towards the purposes of young people (Prov. 2:1-15, Eph. 6:1-3, 2 Tim. 3:16) and drawing on this content in connection with content they express desire to connect with offers potential to engage young people more deeply in the bible, recognising their uses for faith beyond what's in front of them. Peter's words are especially helpful: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Pet. 1:3). Notice that Peter writes, "all things that pertain to life and godliness." That means '*future jobs*', '*exam pressures*', '*family arguments*' and '*sharing faith with friends*.' It could also be appropriate and benefit the research more holistically to use the same set of questions to ask the adults in the congregation and analyse data gathered from that. This could highlight any similarities or differences regarding content discussed to enable the teaching in the main service to benefit all generations. It could also highlight differences which would encourage discussion in youth group to be centred on those topics specific to young people and enable deeper discussion and exploration of those topics with likeminded young people.

Furthermore, the presentation of any topics in church should vary, to incorporate the wants and needs of the congregation as a whole. Whilst I'm not suggesting the church immediately invests in a goo tank, there is an element of offering fun and interesting visuals for young people to feel excited about, which is not totally irrelevant within the church context. There was mention in the focus group of "*using puppets to tell bible stories*" which could encourage young people to invest more in what's being offered to them, as the presentation of it is relevant to them. This could be expanded upon to incorporate more of their ideas, hobbies and interests, as discovered in research, within the presentation of faith, for example, using multimedia more often to display videos, stories and images. A further recommendation in this area is to encourage the young people to get involved in presenting faith themselves by having them share the bible story or give prayers in a way they deem relevant, so as to share their vision and include them in the corporate church.

Something I've discovered in this research is that there's a fine line between relevance and watered down entertainment. Touching again upon the words of Dyck (2011) we are at risk of creating fun, fired up entertainment with a watered down gospel. Our strive for creating relevant faith cannot come at the cost of a watered down faith that tries too hard to prove its

relevance, rather than resting on its promise of being as relevant today as it was in the beginning, the Bible is a sword that pierces hearts (Heb. 4:12). I think the implication for practice lies in this balance, of portraying something interesting, useful and relevant coupled with the simple and truthful facts that the Bible has to offer. There is scope here to meet the needs of the young people and listen with integrity to their thoughts, without losing sight of the fundamental aspect of the Christian faith that is relevant all by itself.

What this research does teach me is that our job as youth workers and as a church is to be continually learning more of Scripture ourselves, so that we can see its relevance for our own lives and the lives of the young people God entrusts to us. In light of this I would recommend a re-evaluation of how, as a church, we are living out the values of the Christian faith, in a way that displays its transferability to our daily lives. There appears to be a need for a greater level of discipleship to help engage the young people in faith with everyday life as this data suggests they have the knowledge but not the ability to transfer that knowledge to their lives outside of the church walls. This data presents the question; how do we show connections between faith and church and everyday life? I believe the answer lies with us as a church at St Aidan's, as the Christians with whom these young people spend time with, learn with and are being disciplined. After all, as highlighted in analysis, this is how Jesus would engage with his disciples, by demonstrating a Christ centred life as an illustration to those he was discipling as to how it was possible for them to do this also in their own lives. The whole church could be more deeply involved in presenting faith as relevant for all aspects of life, not just on a Sunday morning. This could be through topics discussed, interactions and relationships formed amongst the church and conversations taking place between the whole church with the young people to address these issues they face and consider them in the light of Jesus Christ.

# Final Conclusions

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I hope that this research will be used as a tool to enable practitioners who work with young people in faith, to shape their ministry in a responsive way to what young people are asking for, particularly those in St Aidan's church with which this research was conducted. I hope that the future recommendations set out will provide a framework a relevant faith, through the content, presentation and experiences at St Aidans. and give confidence to those who simply don't know how to cater to the needs of young people. I endeavoured to highlight not only the key topics young people want to talk about, but the way in which it is done to emphasise the importance of a relevant faith being more than just one aspect.

It has been my intention to explore this topic objectively, so as not to influence data by my own opinions and ideas (McBurney and White, 2010:7). As the subject matter came directly from the young people, I felt very passionately, as their youth minister, about hearing their voice and recognising the ways in which church is exclusive of them. I hope and pray that this has been useful in drawing conclusions that will offer useful recommendations for future development that are considerate of the whole church and not just one part of it.

My final word is on Gods potential and purpose for young people and how we are responding to this as a church. God calls and uses young people for his glory, Noah was ten years old when he was ordained to the priesthood, Joseph was a teen when he had dreams from God after being sold into slavery, and Jesus himself stunned leaders in the temple with his understanding and response to questions, as ordained by God. Our youth are both loved and purposed for by God and it is our job to encourage and disciple young people to recognise and reach these purposes. Through our research and understanding of popular culture and what is relevant to young people today, we can thoughtfully discern what Gods will is within this, so as to respond to the will of young people, without neglecting the will of the Father.

***'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect'***

Romans 12:2

Amen.

Word Count: 10990



# Appendix One

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1. What do you spend most of your free time doing?

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2. What would you say is important to you?

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3. What worries do you have in your personal life?

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4. What issues do you face as a young person?

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.....

5. Does Christian faith address these issues/worries?

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6. Does St Aidan's church address these issues/worries?

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.....  
.....

7. How does/can Christian faith fit in with your life?

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8. Why is the Christian faith useful to you?

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.....  
.....

9. Why isn't the Christian faith useful to you?

.....  
.....  
.....

***The following questions relate to some key Christian concepts/ideas and the questions are asking what each concept/idea means to you.***

1. What would 'set free' mean to you?

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.....  
.....

2. What does Jesus being your friend mean to you?

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.....

3. What does it mean for Jesus to die for your sins?

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# Appendix Two

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## All Questionnaire Data

1. **“What do you spend most of your free time doing?”**

Revision, Watching YouTube, Videos, Watching Tv, Watching Films, With Friends, Chilling, Music, Tv, With my Dog, Reading, Reading, Singing, Phone, PlayStation, Gaming, Revision, At Cadets, With Friends, With my Dog, With my Family

2. **“What would you say is important to you?”**

My Family, Friends, My Dog, Cadets, Wi-Fi, A Job, Education, My Hamster, Family, Friends, My Mum, Friends, Family, Friends, Family, Friends, Friends, Internet, Sleep

3. **“What Worries do you have in your personal life?”**

None, Failure in Life, Family dyeing or getting Ill, Annoyance at School, None, Not Getting A Job, Pressure at School, Not Succeeding in Life, Not Impressing People, Losing Friends, Not Fitting In, The Future, Being Lonely, Being Lonely

4. **“What issues do you face as a young person?”**

Being Rejected Because of Tattoos/Piercings, Pressure to Revise, Getting Good Grades, Looking Good/Pretty, Some People Tell Tales at School, Annoying People at School, Not Having Friends, Being Lonely, People Judging You, Pressures of GCSE's

5. **“Does the Christian faith address these issues/worries?”**

No, Yes-God has a plan for us, Yes, No, Don't Know, Don't Know, No, No, No, Yes, No, Don't, No, No, Don't Know, No, No, No, Don't Know, Don't Know

6. **“Does St Aidan's Church address these issues/worries?”**

No, No-I Socialise here and see my friends, No, Maybe, Maybe, No, Yes I feel Welcome, Yes I Am Supported Through Prayer, No – My Life Is Different To Church, No, No, No, Maybe, No, No, Maybe, Maybe, Yes, No, No

7. **“How Does Christian Faith Fit In With Your Life?”**

At The Moment It Does Because I'm Free On A Sunday and Prayer Is Quick, Service At School, Listen to Worship Music, Don't Know, Teaches us About God, I'm A Christian, Yes, Church, Prayer, Rooted (Youth Group), It Doesn't, Sometimes

8. **“Why Is The Christian Faith Useful To You?”**

To Learn The Law Of God, It Isn't But It Is to Friends, It's Something I Stick To, If I'm Alone I Can Talk to God, It Isn't, I Can Talk About Anything, Teaches You To Be Less Horrible and Nicer and More Loving, Nice to Have Something to Believe In, Lets Me Know There's Always Someone There For Me, It Isn't, Don't Know, It's Not

9. **“Why Isn't the Christian faith useful to you?”**

Doesn't Make Sense, Hard To Believe All The Time, Don't Know, Don't Know, Don't Know, People At School Wouldn't Understand, Never Believed, I Like Games Instead, Don't Understand, It's not For Us, Church is For Adults, Church Benefits Adults Not Us

10. **“What would set free mean to you?”**

Having A Choice For The Future, Being Released, Becoming A New Person, Making My Own Choices, From the Bad Stuff I've Done, I'm New Again, I'm Not Trapped, I Can Do What I Want, I Am Free, I Am Myself

11. **“What would being a friend of Jesus mean to you?”**

Jesus Loves Everyone, I'll Never Be Lonely, I'm Not Alone, He's My Friend, He Likes Everyone, He's A Nice Man, He's Always There For Me, He Wont Make Me Lonely, I've Always Got Him, He Love Everybody, He Is Always There For me, He's Good

12. **“What Would Jesus Having died for your sins mean to you?”**

Jesus Care, He Is A Good Man, Jesus Washes Away Sins, Jesus Cares About Us, He's A Good Man And Takes Away Bad Things, Takes Away Our Sin, He Loves Us, He Takes Away The Bad Stuff, He Died for my Sins, I Am Set Free, I Can Do What I Want, I Am Free

# Appendix Three

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1. What you spend most of your time doing and how church is similar or different?

*+I have my iPad at home and I bring it to church, Talking about things*

*-No Tv at church, read an actual Bible at church but at home I'd use the internet/multimedia*

3./5. What worries do you have in your personal life, does the Christian faith address these?

*\* At church my worries are swept under the carpet rather than talked about*

*\* As a young person I don't always want to talk about my worries with the church*

*\*I think it would help to talk about them as it would get it out of us but I don't always know how to as we talk about adults stuff in church services*

6. Does St Aidan's feel relevant? What is it about other things/events that might be more relevant?

*\* At New Wine/One Event the service is more lively*

*\* At New Wine/One Event the music is more 'pop' its like a party, its enjoyable*

*\* Church is a bit calmer and more boring*

*\* At One event there was a Goo tank....it made me watch more and I enjoyed it, it was fun*

*\* At New Wine they used puppets to tell a Bible Story, it got the point across to young people, I preferred that to someone just talking at me*

*\* St Aidan's just benefits adults, not us. The talks are all about adults things, we can't stay for them, they aren't intended for us as younger people so they aren't relevant for us.*

*\* The talks are always about things that affect adults but not about things that affect us as young people*

8./9. Why is/isn't the Christian faith relevant to you?

*\*The church doesn't apply to 'life outside' because we don't talk about things in church that I do outside... so it's not useful to me in everyday life*

*\* The teaching should be more children friendly so we understand and are bothered*

*\* Church doesn't talk about the 'big issues' that we want to talk about*

*\* In church we talk about issues that affect adult's not young people*

*\* Adults are doing different things to us*

So what are the relevant topics?

- *Arguments with friends/family*
- *Animals*
- *How we can get friends to think and talk about God*
- *How I use my faith at school/with friends without looking weird*
- *Talk about the future/jobs*
- *Making talks interesting to me; using Lego videos, Minecraft, KoKo videos*

# Appendix Four

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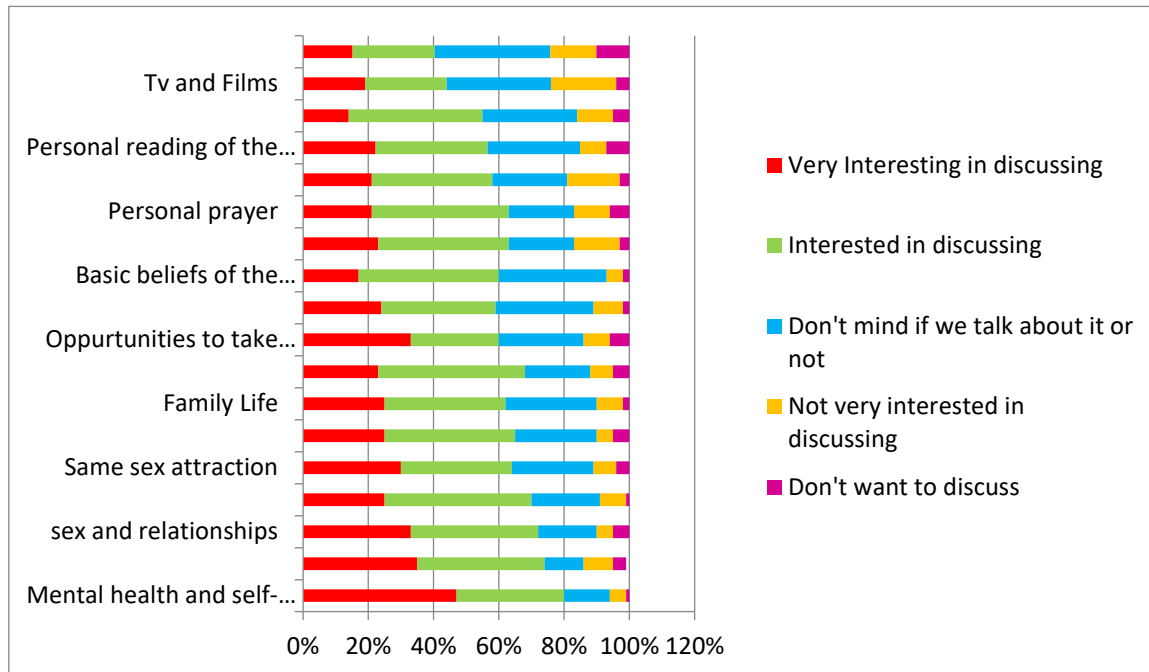
**Does St Aidan's church address these [your] issues/worries?**

Yes: 4
No: 11

# Appendix Five

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YouthScape (2016)



# Appendix Six

## RESEARCH ETHICS

### *Full Ethical Review Form*



- Full ethical review must be used for research involving above minimal risk and therefore necessitating a more thorough ethical review prior to approval.
- Further guidance on projects which involve above minimal risk is provided within the University's Ethical Review Policy.
- Relevant professional body ethical guidelines should be consulted when completing this form.
- Please seek guidance from the Chair of your Faculty Research Ethics Committee if you are uncertain about any ethical issues arising from this application.
- There is an obligation on the researcher and supervisor (if applicable) to bring to the attention of the Faculty Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not identified by this form.

#### **PART A: TO BE COMPLETED BY RESEARCHER**

Name of Researcher:	Charlotte Mould
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Student/Course Details (If Applicable)	
Student ID Number:	14027931
Name of Supervisor(s)/Module Tutor:	Jon Steel/ Sally Nash
PhD/MPhil project: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Taught Postgraduate Project/Assignment: <input type="checkbox"/>	Award Title:
Undergraduate Project/Assignment: <input type="checkbox"/>	Module Title:

Project Title:	What would a 'relevant' Christian faith look like for the young people in St Aidan's Church?		
Expected Start Date:	20.1.17	Expected End Date:	10.4.17

<b>Application Checklist</b>		
Have the following documents been supplied alongside this application?	Yes	N/A
Participant information sheet(s) in language appropriate to the recipient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant consent form(s) in language appropriate to the recipient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter/s of invitation to participants in language appropriate to the recipient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaires (only attach questionnaires that have NOT been validated previously)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health related projects only: Letters giving permission for access to participants or confirming that full LREC ethical approval is not required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other relevant information (e.g. tests or product information)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Submission Guidance (for completion by Faculty):</b>

<b>1. Project Outline</b>
<p>Please provide a brief paragraph indicating answers to the following questions where relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) The aims and objectives of the project.</li> <li>ii) Its rationale and justification.</li> <li>iii) The research question or specific hypotheses to be tested.</li> <li>iv) The background to the project.</li> <li>v) Where the research is to be carried out.</li> <li>vi) Names of other individuals or organisations involved in the project.</li> <li>vii) Whether other approvals have been gained or are to be sought.</li> </ul>



The aim of this project is to explore and research what a relevant Christian faith would look like for the young people in the church I am currently working in. By using the term 'relevant' I intend to look at what relates to the young people's lives, issues they face and how a Christian faith is part of and reflects in these areas. The specific research question is; 'What would a 'relevant' Christian faith look like for the young people in St Aidan's Church?' The objective is to accumulate research that will shed light on what young people see as relevant to them and how a Christian faith can be relevant within that.

Rationale for this project stems from a previous small scale project I have done in the same church looking at intergenerational worship. This project highlighted a sense of irrelevance that young people felt in regards to their faith, and the role of the church in their lives. This led me to reshape the question into looking at Christian faith and how it can be relevant to young people as a way of encouraging and best equipping young people to have a 'sticky faith' that lasts, rather than viewing faith as unnecessary to them because it doesn't address relevant topics in their lives.

I hope this research will allow the young people in St Aidan's church to voice what is relevant in their lives, and for us to look at how relevant they see church and faith to be able to reassess how we best meet the needs of the young people in the church.

Something I've witnessed happen with some of the young people who have turned 19 and left the church for university or jobs is their faith not being taken with them into that stage of their life. One thing I've reflected on when seeing this is the relevance of faith in that part of their lives, and to what extent are they viewing that faith as important or even needed. It is my belief that faith is key in any part of life and a major part of my role in the church is to help encourage this faith to last throughout their lives. I can't directly bring them to Jesus, nor can I be responsible for their relationship with Jesus, but I can play a part in equipping them and showing the relevance of Christian faith to them for them to carry and develop in life.

The research will be carried out using questionnaires and a focus group with the young people and so will largely take place at the church itself, before or after church and youth group.

Parental consent will be needed from the young people under 18 before participating.

## 2. Research Procedure

Please provide a summary of the procedures that will be followed when carrying out the research project under the following headings.

### a) The design of the project (including, where appropriate, issues of statistical power):

The project design will be using a mixed methods approach; this will include questionnaires and a focus group.

The questionnaires will address quantifiable data; asking all participants to complete either a paper questionnaire or one online, depending on accessibility and participant preference.

The focus group will be predominantly aimed at half of the participants to gather more in-depth qualitative data surrounding the answers given in the questionnaires. This will involve a group of young people and myself sitting together discussing some pre set questions from the questionnaire and allowing them to share and discuss other things that arise.

### b) The procedures to be followed:

To gain consent before I start I will write a cover letter to all participants and parents explaining the research and the questionnaire and focus group processes. Attached to this will be a consent form for both participant and parent/guardian to sign as the participants will be under 18.

Once completed and handed back to me the participant will be invited to fill in a questionnaire, I will ask them to tick a preference of

paper or online on their consent form so I know which to offer them. They will be asked to be completed and returned within a week.

A week later I will gather a mix of the participants to take part in a focus group. This will be in one of our youth groups, they will be told prior to the group that that will be happening that night. We will discuss some questions from the questionnaire and I will encourage them to discuss and share thoughts and ideas amongst the group.

All data will be kept securely by me. Paper questionnaires will be kept in a folder only I have access to, whilst online forms will be kept in a secure folder and then all will be destroyed after the research is completed.

All data will be anonymous, no one will be asked for any personal details.

c) The participation of subjects in the project:

Each participant will complete a questionnaire, some participants will join in a focus group.

Participants and their parent/ guardian will be told they can have access to the completed work once finished if they would like to read it.

d) How the design of the project and the procedures followed are likely to assess the research question or test the hypothesis in question or establish some significant result:

The questionnaire will allow me to ask participants what is relevant to them, what is important in their lives and what things they worry about. This data will shed light on what is 'relevant' to the young people. It will also give some classic Christian statements such as 'being set free' and 'being forgiven' to ask what these statements actually mean to the young people.

From this the focus group will then allow me to expand on what has been said and gather more qualitative data surrounding the relevance of the Christian faith in the young people's lives and what they feel is important to them.

When all data is gathered, I will analyse it to see whether I can marry up what young people say is relevant to them and what as a Church we offer to them and see how Christian faith can be shown to be relevant to them and their everyday lives.

e) Availability of facilities/resources/equipment to enable the project to be carried out:

Cover letters, consent forms and questionnaires will be printed out at the church or emailed where needed using an online link.

Focus group will take place at the church during one of our sessions. All other minor resources will be supplied by myself.

f) Procedures that will be followed if any adverse event occurs:

Whilst nothing adverse is expected to happen, my line manager (the church vicar) will be contacted immediately should anything adverse occur.

### 3. Participant Recruitment & Characteristics

Please provide clear information regarding the recruitment of participating subjects and their appropriateness to the project:

*(NB: Student researchers must also ascertain from their Supervisor whether or not they require a criminal record check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in order to enable this project to proceed. If this is the case the application must make clear whether or not it has been undertaken. Any data collection or other activities requiring this*

*clearance must not begin until it has been obtained.)*

a) The number of subjects involved in the study (including the adequacy of the sample size for both qualitative and quantitative research):

Young people associated with myself (as youth leader) and the church will be involved. They all attend youth groups that take place at the church itself. I will use between 20 and 30 young people for questionnaires and around half of the sample size for the focus group.

b) How participants will be identified, approached or recruited:

Participants will be identified based on their involvement/attendance at the youth groups at St Aidans church. They will be approached individually at first alongside parents to gain consent, then as a group when we do a focus group.

c) Whether there are any inclusion or exclusion criteria, together with their justification:

Participants will all be under 18 and part of St Aidan's Church, due to the nature of the question.

d) The age range of subjects; the gender balance of subjects; and the subjects' state of health:

Ages will range from 11-17, a mix of male and females and all of good health.

e) Whether there is any inducement to participate in the study:

N/A

f) How participants will be informed about the right to withdraw from participation the study (and whether time limits will be established during which a participant can request for their data to be withdrawn from the study):

The cover letter will tell participants and their parent/guardian that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up until the submission date, with no obligations and no questions asked.

Participants can write their own number on their questionnaire so they can identify their own data if they would like it to be withdrawn.

g) Whether the project involves any special groups requiring some additional justification or permission (e.g. children and young people under 18 years of age, those with a learning disability or cognitive impairment, patients, people in custody, people engaged in illegal activities (e.g. drug taking), or individuals in a dependent or unequal relationship):

Due to the nature of the question, under 18's will be used, therefore parent/guardian consent will be needed.

h) Will informed consent be obtained from research participants? Yes  No

Please give details of who will obtain content and how this will be undertaken.

Consent forms will be given to parent/guardian and participants before being involved in the study. These will be given out by myself, asking them to sign consent and give back to me before they are used in the study.

#### 4. Information and Data

Please provide answers to the following questions regarding the handling and storage of information and data:

a) How will research data be stored (manually or electronically)?

Paper copies will be stored in a folder only accessible by myself. They will be handed to me by the participants in sealed envelopes to protect identity. These will be kept in a locked office at church and will be shredded after I have used them.

Online data will be saved in a secure folder on my storage device and kept in the locked office at church. This data will be appropriately deleted once used.

Focus group discussions will be recorded on a voice recording device and kept in the locked office at church in a locked cabinet.

This data will also be deleted once used.

b) How is protection given to the subject (e.g. by being made anonymous through coding and with a subject identifier code being kept separately and securely)?

Participants will write a number and letter on their paper questionnaires so they have a personal record of their own data and can have it withdrawn at any time. Only participants will know which number and letter is their own.

Online questionnaires are made anonymous by following a link to complete it so I won't know whose is whose data.

c) What assurance will be given to the subject about the confidentiality of this data and the security of its storage?

Participants will be told about the number/letter recognition to be able to identify their own data. They will also be told about data being destroyed after the study and can be destroyed with my line manager as witness to assure participants it will happen.

They also know I have a locked office at church so will know it can be stored securely until destroyed.

d) Is assurance given to the subject that they cannot be identified from any publication or dissemination of the results of the project?

Yes – no names will be used.

e) Who will have access to this data, and for what purposes?

Only myself whilst I analyse the data. Afterwards the participants and their parent/guardian can have a copy of the work if they would like to review it themselves.

f) How will the data be stored, for how long, and how will it be discarded?

See sections a to c

It will be stored for a few months whilst the work is being written up.

## 5. Risk, Harm and Other Ethical Considerations

Please provide an estimate of the perceived benefits or outcomes of the project weighed against the possible harms caused to the participating subject.

Please identify any potential risks or hazards that might be caused to subjects or the researcher, in addition to any discomfort, distress or inconvenience to them, together with any ethical problems or considerations that the researcher considers to be important or difficult in the proposed project.

Time to fill in the questionnaire would be a potential inconvenience.

Nothing else would apply

Please explain how any potential risks or hazards will be dealt with, along with any justificatory statements. This information should highlight any remaining ethical considerations and to respond to them in a way which may assist the Research Ethics Committee in arriving at some judgement upon the proposal.

Nothing is expected to arise, however, pastoral support will be in place from the church vicar should anything occur.

## 6. Supporting Information

Please attach the consent form, information sheet, and questionnaire/interview questions to this application. Further guidance on the design and content of consent forms and information sheets can be found on the University's Research Ethics website.

### Researcher Declaration

I undertake to carry out the project described above in accordance with ethical principles. I have completed the application in good faith. I accept that providing false information constitutes scientific fraud and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Signature of Researcher:	c. mould	Date:	9.1.17
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**NB:** Any departure from the protocol for this research project may mean that the ethical approval decision made by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee is no longer valid and a new ethics proposal will have to be submitted. It is the responsibility of a student researcher to discuss proposed changes to the agreed protocol with their project supervisor as

soon as possible so that a revised /new ethics application can be submitted. Research based on any revised / new protocol **MUST** not proceed unless and until the protocol has ethical approval.

### STUDENT RESEACHER: NEXT STEP

- COMPLETE AND SAVE THIS FORM IN THE FOLLOWING FORMAT FOR THE FILE NAME
  - FAMILY NAME FIRST NAME, STUDENT, DISCLAIMER E.G. WHIZZ BILLY STUDENT DISCLAIMER
- E-MAIL IT AS A WORD ATTACHMENT, ALONG WITH ANY RELEVANT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS, USING THE FILE NAME AS THE SUBJECT [IN THE SUBJECT BAR OF THE E-MAIL] TO YOUR SUPERVISOR.

\*THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM\*

### STAFF RESEACHER: NEXT STEP

PLEASE FORWARD THIS FORM TO FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE [[ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk)] WHO WILL ARRANGE FOR IT TO BE CONSIDERED BY AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

\*THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM\*

### PART B: TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR/MODULE TUTOR (If Applicable)

I have examined this proposal and confirm that the rationale and methodology is appropriate and that it can proceed to the stage of ethical consideration.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have checked and approved the key documents required for this proposal (e.g. consent form, information sheet, questionnaire and interview schedule).	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of Supervisor:		Date:	
--------------------------	--	-------	--

### SUPERVISOR: NEXT STEP

- READ AND CHECK WHEN RECEIVED FROM THE STUDENT; IF SATISFIED ADD YOUR NAME AND DATE WHERE INDICATED
- SAVE AND SEND AS A WORD ATTACHMENT BY E-MAIL, USING THE FILE NAME AS THE SUBJECT [IN THE SUBJECT BAR OF THE E-MAIL] TO [ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:ethics-FACT@staffs.ac.uk)

\*THERE IS NO NEED TO PRINT THIS FORM\*





# Appendix Seven

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## Cover sheet

My name is Charlotte Mould and I am currently studying for a degree in Youth work, Communities and Practical Theology, validated by Staffordshire University. You are being invited to take part in my dissertation research study. The research question is; What would a 'relevant' Christian faith look like for the Young people in St Aidan's church?

The purpose of the study is to find out what is relevant, important and interesting to young people at St Aidan's church, and marry that up to the Christian faith and what it would look like to have a faith that addresses relevant things in young people's lives.

I hope to discover what is actually important to young people and see how as a church as a faith we can support and meet those relevant needs they are experiencing.

I would like to discover this to be able to better serve and encourage young people at St Aidan's church in their faith, to be able to show Christian faith as being relevant to their everyday lives and for their future lives beyond the present time.

Should the study provoke any issues/emotions you wish to discuss further you are encouraged to contact either myself at: charlotte.mould@hotmail.com/07855217989 or Rev Rich Phillips at: rich@staidans.org.uk

All Information gathered will be anonymous and kept confidential and will be secure until the end of the research when it will be appropriately destroyed.

The study will involve a questionnaire, followed by a focus group that will take place within one of our youth sessions.

Should you consent to taking part, you will give yourself a number and a letter on your questionnaire so that you can identify your data at a later date, should you wish to withdraw your data from the study.

By agreeing to partake in this study you are agreeing to your answers and opinions being used for analyses to answer the research question, however you have the right to withdraw from the study at any point with no obligation. If you wish to withdraw from the study please inform me at: charlotte.mould@hotmail.com or on: 07855217989 quoting your questionnaire number/letter. You can withdraw at any time up until 1st April 2017 when the work will be submitted to Staffordshire University for marking.

Please could participants give consent and a parent/guardian also as participants are under 18.

If you would like any further information please email me at: charlotte.mould@hotmail.com or contact my research study centre via: g.benson@stjohns-nottm.ac.uk

Thankyou

Charlotte Mould

**Consent form**

Please circle as appropriate

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions if I need to:

No Yes

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason:

No Yes

3. I agree to take part in this study:

No Yes

4. I agree to take part in a questionnaire:

No Yes

5. I agree to take part in a focus group if I'm needed:

No Yes

6. I agree to written records being made of the focus group:

No Yes

7. I would like to see a copy of the notes recorded:

No Yes

8. I agree for the information obtained to be used in publications for grading:

No

Yes

Name of participant:

Date:

Signature:

Name of person giving consent:

Date:

Signature:

### Sample Questionnaire

Please circle as appropriate

Sex: Male      Female

Age: 10-12      13-15      16-17

1, What is the most important thing to you in your life?

2, What are the things you spend most of your time doing?

3, What is your favourite hobby?

4, What are the 'big issues' in your life?

5, What do you think young people care about most ?

6, What sort of things do you worry about?

7, Of what you know, what parts of the Christian faith are most interesting to you?

Below are some Christian themes/phrases. What does each mean to you?

1, Being set free

2, Being saved

3, Being forgiven by God

4, Prayer

5, Being a friend of Jesus

Charlotte Mould

Youth Worker

St Aidan's Church

Hull

HU9 3HF

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