

GROWING FAITH

The Growing Faith Adventure is a call for the renewal of hearts and minds so that it becomes second nature to include children, young people and households in every aspect of church life for the lifelong formation of faith in the whole of life.
February 2020

Growing Faith promotes a partnership between the three communities of Church, School and Household to enable the discovery, exploration and growth of faith for all in those communities. The partnership is imagined as intersections of a set of overlapping spheres to find and promote ways to help faith to grow with children, young people and households.

Each 'sphere' might already be interacting with one of the others, but very few contexts demonstrate clear and fruitful interaction between all three – the central intersection. The intersections encourage a joint venture or activity seeking to normalise talking about Christian faith, leading to opportunities for developing prayer and gathering for worship.

Growing Faith Principles

The three principles that are defining and describing our approach to Growing Faith:

Connected Communities - *looking for the meaningful connected community of faith in the intersection between church, school and households.*

Spiritual Encounters - *engaging in conversations about and expressing faith as people encounter God as individuals and together.*

Imaginative Practices - *searching for 'a new way of being church' and creating new thinking and new doing in relation to children, young people and households.*

Assessing any activity, vision or attitude through the three Growing Faith principles helps to draw the thinking toward that central intersection where all three communities are operating in partnership. The Growing Faith Adventure has a growing number of aspects and workstreams.

Central to the adventure is the Growing Faith Project, which is using six Trailblazer Dioceses to experiment with what the intersection of the church, school and household might look like in practical terms. The Growing Faith Enabler is facilitating that discovery and analysis of those ventures in order to find simple, general values and principles that will help any context to grow faith.

Growing Faith Trailblazer Dioceses

Each of the six Trailblazer Dioceses are in the process of designing a bespoke, contextual response to the Growing Faith challenge. These might include:

- Schools in Durham Diocese are partnering with their churches to plan ventures inspired by a toolkit of ideas curated by the Diocesan Growing Faith team.
- Community Hubs in market towns aimed at reaching all ages in Salisbury Diocese exploring how households and schools can 'normalise talking about God'
- Coventry Diocese have made funding available to employ two Growing Faith Family Workers within a single deanery who will provide capacity for different ventures within the deanery.
- Two cohorts of Accompanied Ministry Development in Truro Diocese will be focussing on Growing Faith and developing projects that prioritise children and young people.

Diocesan GF Champions

In addition to the above work, each diocese has named a Growing Faith Champion who is tasked with asking, "what is the impact of these discussions and decisions on children, young people and households?" at every level of the diocese.

Growing Faith and Renewal & Reform

Growing Faith is being encouraged in dioceses alongside other national church programmes, including Setting God's People Free, Motivating the Million, Estates Evangelism and being a Church for all people. There is a commitment to working together at the national level to ensure we don't over-complicate the different workstreams but find effective ways for Growing Faith to be seen as a part of each one. There is a particular resonance with the Everyday Faith Campaign with both projects seeking to develop discipleship in the whole of life for all God's people.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

GROWING FAITH

GROWING FAITH TRAILBLAZERS

The experimental phase

Growing Faith is a vision for what a partnership between church, school and households might mean for children and young people exploring faith.

“Growing Faith seeks to bring the three spheres of church, households and schools together—in **how we think** and in **what we do**—for ministry with children and young people to enable them to live out a **lifelong faith** in the **whole of life**.”

The vision is a call to **aim for the centre**—the central intersection of the three spheres—so that our communities of faith might **include** and **value** children and young people as **fellow pilgrims**—equal members.

The research evidence¹ available offers a set of predictions expected to emerge and be evident in any community that has raised its expectations of children and young people. Trailblazer Dioceses are undertaking an experimental process that tests those prediction (outcomes) by designing bespoke Growing Faith Ventures. The process will also test how the culture of the diocesan leadership can be to improve faith formation in children and young people.

The process can be summarised as:

The Question: How do church communities increase and improve the exploration of faith with their children and young people?

The Hypothesis: Bringing the three communities where children and young people live, into some kind of partnership will grow faith (GS2121).

The Predictions: The predictions from the available research are grouped into DOINGS (practical examples or activities) and BEINGS (ways of thinking or attitudes about children and young people). These are the possible outcomes we’d expect from the central intersection of church, household and school, which are only possible if each of the three spheres facilitates each outcome.

The Learning: The Growing Faith Adventure will use an accompanied learning action set process to assess these outcomes and discern replicable principles.

GROWING FAITH PREDICTIONS (outcomes)

DOINGS

activities that ‘happen’ in the central intersection

BEINGS

fostering attitudes that demonstrate children and young people are...

Encountering God

Opportunities for prayer, spiritual encounters, expressing faith etc.

Valued

Recognised as created in God’s image, not learning to be

Conversations about Faith

Opportunities to hear and share stories of discipleship, normalising the spiritual

Included

They feel a sense of belonging

Relationships

Connections within community, safe space, interacting across generations

seen as Equals

The inherent culture of the community perceives them as Fellow Pilgrims

Affecting real change:

How can this GF Attitude be hardwired into the wider Diocese, especially the diocesan leadership?
 How will Trailblazer Dioceses find out what children and young people feel *they* need for *their* faith to grow—‘faith formation pathways’?
 How can we ensure that all missing voices are included in the adventure?

Faith Formation Pathways

There is a resonance between the ‘DOINGS’ and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso’s model of faith formation, which starts with an encounter of God. It is only when we have the opportunity and space to tell the story of that experience, that our theology develops. There is also a feedback loop in which the BEINGS make the DOINGS more obvious, and the BEINGS in turn become easier—i.e. it is easier to pray with children and young people if you believe them to be equal and have value, which in turns deepens your shared encountering God.

¹Research including: Rooted in the Church, Barna Group, ComRes, BSA, Faith in the Nexus (NICER), Youthscape: Losing Heart, Faith Generation (N Shepherd 2016), Church Army, Messy Church, Growing Young, YFC - Gen Z: rethinking culture, Sticky Faith - Fuller Youth Institute, The Children’s Society - Good Childhood, The Children’s Society - Loneliness (with ONS), Francis et al 2018, Church Growth Research Unit, Smith & Denton 2005 - MTD, Day, 2009 p275 - fuzzy faith, Collins Mayo 2010 - happy midi-narrative, Ruth Perrin, Vibrant Faith, John Roberto, David Csinos, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso