



The Church of Scotland

ASPIRATIONS FOR MINISTRY

WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND





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How can we get more children and young people into our church?

Introduction

One of the comments heard most often from local churches is “How can we get more children and young people in our church?” The answer is simple (and yet terrifying) - the whole church needs to change. The truth is that few churches are prepared to put this into practice. We do not want to change. Despite expressing a concern for children and young people our actions are communicating that we see the needs of those who currently attend as more important than the needs of those who are not engaged (particularly children and young people). Too often we would rather start a new program, or an event, or find a resource we might ‘buy in’. Some of us seek to appoint an expert (whether a volunteer or paid worker) and then expect them to fill the pews with youth. However the responsibility for passing on the faith to our children and young people is not an option. It is not simply a nice aspiration; it is biblical, and critical. A church that does not pass on the faith has no future.

The church’s engagement with children and young people isn’t driven simply by social concern, but by a desire to engage with God’s mission here on earth. This requires us to articulate a clear theological understanding to underpin our actions and on which to establish guiding principles for our work.

Background

The 'Towards a Theology of Children and Young People' report was accepted by the 2017 General Assembly. With that acceptance came the instruction for the theology of children and young people working group to continue its work developing and articulating a theological framework for the Church of Scotland in its ministry with children and young people. Offered to the 2018 General Assembly and duly accepted were a set of theologically rooted aspirations.

This document and associated resources have been produced by the Mission and Discipleship Council to equip local congregations to engage with the aspirations and thereby root their ministries with children and young people theologically. The Council believes that whilst these have been developed for the purposes of developing congregations' ministries with children and young people, they are in fact relevant to the whole Church community.

Presented here are the aspirations, each the practical outworking of a principle and offered with questions for congregations to consider. Underpinning all the aspirations is the desire for excellence and the importance of being a church that ensures appropriate training and support for all ministering with children and young people.

Aspirations

We seek to be a church that is relational, desiring deep relationships with God and one another regardless of age.

We seek to be a church that involves children and young people in worship enabling them to use their gifts and talents.

We seek to be a church that functions as a community of faith continually passing on the faith to the next generations.

We seek to be a church that is hospitable, offering a safe and welcoming community of faith to all children and young people.

We seek to be a church that encourages children and young people to live life in all its fullness, encountering God through being actively involved in all aspects of discipleship.

We seek to be a church that enables full participation of all children and young people in the life of faith.

We seek to be a church that empowers children and young people to live a life of service and seek justice.

We seek to be a church that ensures appropriate training and support for all ministering with children and young people.

A large, leafy tree stands in a field, with the sun shining through its branches, casting a long shadow. The scene is bathed in a soft, golden light, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The text "MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE" is overlaid in white, bold, uppercase letters.

**MADE IN
GOD'S IMAGE**

We seek to be a church that is relational, desiring deep relationships with God and one another regardless of age

Principle:

Made in God's image

Motivation:

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1.26

For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him. Acts 2.39

So often we consider children and young people as human becomings; having been born as infants they need to grow and develop into adulthood. However the Bible teaches us that all humans are made in the image of God. This means all people whether they are 4 months, 4 years, 14 years, 40 years or 84 years old, are complete human beings; God doesn't judge us on how old, or wise or developed or 'finished' we are.

God is relational. The triune nature of God shows us this. Having been created in God's image all humans have therefore been created as relational beings, designed to be in relationship with God and one another. God desires a relationship with everyone no matter what age they are, although the nature of the relationship might be different for those of different ages.

Through the incarnation God became human and dwelt amongst us, opening the way for everyone, should they wish, to be in relationship with God. All people need to encounter God for themselves; to have a relationship with and not just learn about God. In the activities we do with children and young people it is especially important that we introduce them to God, allow space for encounters with God to happen and encourage their relationship to grow. It can be very tempting, because it seems easier, to always do things for children (we pray for them, we read the bible for them,

we decide which bible stories they need to know, we tell them what bible stories mean) but this can stilt the development of a child's relationship with God. Rather than praying for them we need to enable them to pray themselves, rather than telling them what the bible means we need to enable them to interpret it for themselves.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5.21

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. Acts 2.46-47

We are also all made to be in relationship with each other. As the community of God's people the church is, in part, about being in relationship with one another. Therefore throughout the activities of the church community, space needs to be created in which relationships can form and develop - relationships with people of the same generation and intergenerational relationships. These encounters with one another should be open and honest, offering quality and depth and reflecting our own relationship with God and each other. Establishing such relationships will require determination, commitment and time but all generations will benefit from sharing together and with each other.

Our children will have faith if we have faith and are faithful. Both we and our children will have Christian faith if we join with others in a worshipping, learning, witnessing Christian community of faith... Without interaction between and among the generations, each making its own unique contribution, Christian community is difficult to maintain. Westerhoff

As the church, we are also connected to God's people throughout the ages. Our relationships and connections deepen as we share stories of the church and how God works through the generations with one another. Our children and young people need to be in a community where they see the biblical story lived - a community where the actions of those around them give meaning to the words and stories of Scripture.

Aspiration:

We affirm that being made in the image of God each child and young person is precious and valued in God's sight and that we were made to live in community together. We therefore seek to be a church that is relational, desiring deep relationships with God and one another regardless of age.

Questions to consider:

- How can we treat children and young people more as human beings than human becomings?
- How do we show our children and young people that they are precious and valued?
- What opportunities do we create for children and young people to encounter God?
- What sort of relationship with God are we modeling to our children and young people?
- How can we better share our stories and the stories of the church with one another?
- How do the children and young people in our community see the biblical story through how we live our lives?



A close-up photograph of a wooden cross against a dark, starry background. The cross is made of light-colored wood. The horizontal beam of the cross has the words "BODY OF CHRIST" written on it in a white, hand-drawn, sans-serif font. The background is dark with some out-of-focus light spots, suggesting a night sky or a similar setting.

BODY OF CHRIST

We seek to be a church that involves children and young people in worship enabling them to use their gifts and talents.

Principle:

Body of Christ

Motivation:

In Mark 9, we read of a dispute amongst the disciples about who was the greatest. Jesus responds by placing a child 'in the midst of them' and says, "Whoever receives one of these little children in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." What are the implications for the worship of the Church of having children and young people 'in the midst'? (Not up front to entertain or at the side hidden from view.)

The Assembly (Ekklesia)

The image of the worshipping church as the assembly of God's people in one place is found throughout Scripture, from the gathering of Israel on the plains of Moab, to worship in the temple to the meetings of the early Christian movement. One key feature of each of these gatherings is that they are expressions of God's covenant. As Israel gathered in assembly to celebrate and renew the covenant of God's law, churches gather in assembly to celebrate and renew the covenant of God's grace in Jesus. This is perhaps most clearly stated in the Sacrament of Holy Communion in the words "This cup is God's new covenant, sealed by my blood."

The Biblical tradition of covenant explicitly includes children and young people, as God's covenants are made with whole households and their descendants. Children and young people therefore need opportunities to learn of, express and celebrate their covenant with God as part of the worship of the whole assembly of God's people, and in particular by sharing in Communion.

The Community (Koinonia)

The life of the early Church is often described as koinonia, normally translated as community, fellowship, intimacy or communion and also used to describe the activity of the Holy Spirit within the Church. Describing the Church as a community in the sense of koinonia means that it is more than an assembly of people. It is a community of faith filled with the Holy Spirit, in fellowship with God and with one another. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit filled both young and old alike, bringing all ages into this Spirit-filled community.

A community in the sense of koinonia is characterised by being sharing in nature. The community is sustained by sharing the story from one generation to the next, often through worship, symbolism and song. When all ages are present for this sharing, each generation is renewed by others and learn afresh from one another the core values of the community.

One of the most symbolic acts of sharing is the sharing of bread and wine in Communion, affirming the place and equality of each member of the community. In many churches, 'sharing the peace' is another symbolic act

of community. As children are often 'visual' more than 'verbal', taking a full part in these rituals is an important part of discovering their identity within the community.

The Body of Christ

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 1 Corinthians 12.12&27

In the Body of Christ, if one part cannot say to another "I don't need you" and "we cannot do without the parts of the body that seem to be weaker" then children and young people within the Church are part of the Body of Christ.

Paul writes that the Holy Spirit gives different gifts and ministries to each individual so that the whole Church works together as one body. Taking a child's place in the Body seriously means that children and young people also share in these gifts. They may have an apostolic ministry, being sent out to make Christ present in the playground or the home. They may have a prophetic ministry in the (sometimes difficult) questions they ask of the way things are. They may have a teaching ministry, voicing doubts and questions that adults would be too self-conscious to ask and enabling everyone to learn together. They may have a ministry in planning and leading worship (as opposed to being used as entertainment) which calls the whole Body to share in what is rich in meaning for everyone.

Giving substance to the gifts children and young people bring to the Body of Christ means discovering a way in which the generations together can encourage and support one another in the worship life of the Church.

The Child

This model of Church is taken from the words of Jesus, "I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." What would it mean for the Church to think of itself as a child? What unique gifts of children should the church display?

“Viewed as a young child it tries to be like its parent and to do what the parent does; viewed as an older child it feels safe to explore rebellion and questions. Like the child at play it is imaginative, inquisitive and spontaneous. It experiments, reshaping and reconfiguring the world, delighting in what it finds... It would be light of heart and tenacious of purpose, a community of rejoicing and a community of resistance. It would be generous to people beyond its own immediate circle. The worship of such a church would be very imaginative and allow room for spontaneity.”
CGMC

The presence and participation of children and young people gives meaning to this model. Allowing them the opportunity to shape and participate in the worship of the Church means that the Church will become more child-like.

Aspiration

We affirm the place of children and young people as important parts of the Body of Christ and the gifts that they bring to the whole worshipping community. We therefore seek to be a church that involves children and young people in worship enabling them to use their gifts and talents.

Questions to consider:

- What opportunities do we create for children to learn of, express and celebrate God’s covenant as part of the worship life of the Church?
- Do we enable children and young people to fully participate in the Sacrament of Holy Communion? Why/why not?
- What gifts might children and young people bring to worship and how do we take them seriously using them in a non-tokenistic way?
- What opportunities and challenges would including children and young people in planning and leading worship present?
- What aspects of our current practice are not enabling our children and young people to worship?
- How different would our worship look if we thought of the church as a child?



We seek to be a church that functions as a community of faith continually passing on the faith to the next generations

Principle:

Community of Faith

Motivation:

After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. Judges 2.10

In 1976 Professor John Westerhoff argued that over time the Christian church had mistakenly decided that dealing with our children and young people, and in particular passing on the faith, could be achieved by 'education'. The church has too often tried to copy the latest school systems of education, and tried to match or better it. This has led to us operating as an institution teaching religion and morals in various

'educational' forms such as classes or 'Sunday Schools', and delegating responsibility for children and young people to a small set of volunteers and 'teachers'. This has failed.

The annual returns show that between 2012 and 2016 there was a 22.95% decline in the number of under 18s in the Church of Scotland.

Passing on the faith to the next generation is the single most effective thing we can do to grow the Church. It will make more difference than evangelism, running courses, seeker friendly services, investing in Alpha, Christianity Explored, Back to Church Sunday, Christian Conferences and the latest fad or trend. Ali Campbell

Increasingly we are realising that the main decline in institutional church is not due to adults leaving the church. We are failing to pass on faith to the next generation. Westerhoff called the church back to being community of faith, and a community that passes on the faith. Scripture suggests that it takes a whole faith community to pass on the faith, and so responsibility cannot be left with a small group of volunteers or experts, but rather lies with every member of the faith community.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament seem far more concerned with a community that is passing on the faith, than with formal education, or giving instruction in morals or principles.

When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' Then the people bowed down and worshiped. Exodus 12.25

God gave the Jewish people a set of festivals and rituals, alongside a command to 'remember' and to tell their stories. Religious life was organised and designed to encourage young people to participate, to ask questions, to foster spiritual hunger. Questions were expected and encouraged.

Jewish religious life, including the festivals and acts of worship were designed not to pass on facts, but as interactive experiences enabling the whole community to re-enact and remember a common story and identity. Stories are more powerful than we appreciate helping us discover our God given identity.

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Deuteronomy. 6.6-8

In ancient Jewish culture passing on the faith was not done at one set time, or in a class, or by an institution or a small set of volunteers and experts, but was interwoven into everyday life. There was no secular / sacred divide.

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.
1 Thessalonians 2.8

Jesus method and example of discipleship was the ultimate 'lived life'. The disciples spent three years 'with him' in a rabbinical model, sharing whole lives, and these disciples then went on to live that out and follow his example by sharing the good news in and through their whole lives. Paul passed on the faith not just in words and letters, but 'life to life'.

A community that passes on the faith does life together, shares experiences, tells stories, celebrates together, acts in the world, reflects and questions together. Supporting parents and carers in their role too is vital as they have particular responsibility for the faith formation of the children and young people in their care.

Every single piece of research that has been done in the last five years exploring how children and young people come to faith has highlighted as crucial the role that parents play. Out of every class of 50 nought to nine-year olds in Sunday school in 1985, only 15 will still be going to church in their 20s: we lose 70% of our children. The problem and the solution is parents. Ali Campbell

Aspiration:

We affirm the responsibility of the whole church to be involved in passing on faith to children and young people and in particular the role of parents and carers. We therefore seek to be a church that functions as a community of faith continually passing on the faith to the next generations.

Questions to consider:

- How intergenerational is your church community? Are your children's and youth groups separate from the rest of the church all the time? How well does your church include children and young people in its day-to-day life?
- What spaces are we creating for relationships to develop across the generations?
- How can we support and resource willing adults to take an active interest in the lives of children and young people?
- How do we resource and support the development of faith in the home (our own and that of our children and young people)?
- How can we provide safe spaces and time for open conversations that involve listening and exploring rather than lecturing? How do we not avoid the more challenging/touchy subjects?
- How can we enable the whole church to fulfil its responsibility to be involved in the faith development of children and young people?



A wooden sign with a semi-circular cutout at the top, mounted on a post. The word "OPEN" is written in a large, dark, decorative serif font across the middle. Overlaid on the "OPEN" text is the word "HOSPITALITY" in a white, bold, sans-serif font. The background is a warm, blurred indoor setting with soft lights.

HOSPITALITY

OPEN

We seek to be a church that is hospitable, offering a safe and welcoming community of faith to all children and young people

Principle:

Hospitality

Motivation:

We live in an age where finding somewhere to belong and feel ourselves is difficult. Due to the increasing number of single parent families, the breakdown of social institutions and the effects of social media, this is particularly true of children and young people. Our culture wonders - with some confusion - "Why don't I belong?" And if there is one place that should welcome them with open arms, it is the church.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13.2

Hospitality is written large across the pages of Scripture, from Abraham's welcome to the three strangers (Genesis 18) to the author of Hebrews reminder to offer hospitality to strangers. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (perhaps more accurately entitled the Parable of the Loving Father) in Luke 15.11-32, demonstrates clearly that God has little problem with welcoming the prodigals back home - even running to meet them before they reach the gateway. God offers an unconditional and limitless welcome to all.

After exhorting the Christians in Rome to faithful prayer and love, Paul instructs them to practice hospitality (Romans 12.13). Peter tells us to offer hospitality without grumbling (1 Peter 4.9). The house churches in Acts show us that Christians gladly welcomed each other into their homes. It is said that the earliest Christian evangelists were known to say, 'we have no house, but we have homes everywhere we go,' highlighting the hospitality offered by Christian families and communities to the pioneers of the early church.

Ultimately, in our celebration of the Lord's Supper, Christ offers us hospitality: a place at his table where we find welcome and grace.

God is perfectly hospitable. As the people of God, the church must be equally hospitable to all, particularly to the young who often feel acutely alone, marginalised and excluded.

A.P. Shaw United Methodist Church in Washington D.C. is widely respected for launching young people into ministry. But Shaw Church's commitment to teenagers was hard-won. Etched in the congregation's memory is a brutal murder on the church's front steps. One Sunday evening during worship, a young man fleeing gang assassins ran to the church's locked doors, trying literally to gain sanctuary. He collapsed on the front steps from gunshot wounds. Following his death, the congregation voted that "the church doors will always remain open so that young people can come into the church. If they are being chased by dealers and gangsters, there is no better place for them to run than to God's house." Today, despite the neighbourhood's high crime rate, Shaw Church keeps its front doors open.



Aspiration:

We affirm that offering hospitality is central to the identity of the Church of Jesus Christ; our doors and hearts must always be open, enabling people to discover community and find belonging in God's family. We therefore seek to be a church that is hospitable, offering a safe and welcoming community of faith to all children and young people.

Questions to consider:

- Do your children and young people consider your church to be a safe, welcoming and hospitable environment? If not what can you change?
- 'To welcome the stranger, one must be near to and available to the stranger'. What physical space does your ministry with children and young people use? Do you need to contemplate a radical relocation?
- How welcoming are your buildings to children and young people? Think about signs, directions, images on the walls, access, furnishings, storage, door handles, and toilet facilities. What would you change? What can you change?
- How hospitable are your church activities to children and young people? Is the language used understandable? Is everyone friendly? Are they enabled to actively participate? Are they welcomed? What would you change? What can you change?
- How can you receive hospitality from your children and young people as well as offer it to them?
- What do you do when children, young people and their families stop attending? How can you show your continued commitment to them?

A person is standing on a sandy beach. They are wearing a dark leather jacket over a blue and white plaid shirt, and blue denim jeans. Their hands are in their pockets. The background is a blurred beach scene. The text "FAITH FORMATION" is overlaid in a white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

FAITH FORMATION

We seek to be a church that encourages children and young people to live life in all its fullness, encountering God through being actively involved in all aspects of discipleship

Principle:

Faith Formation

Motivation:

The goal of nurturing Christian faith in all ages and equipping people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world has guided the Church for 2000 years. Faith formation is perhaps best understood as the participation in and the practice of the Christian life of faith. It is a lifelong journey with Christ, in Christ and to Christ, which involves informing (a way of the head), forming (a way of the heart) and transforming (a way of the hands).

There are broadly 3 different ways of approaching faith formation that have developed over time. From the perspective of chronological age we approach faith formation as a production line with raw material and skilled technicians and so we do things to people. From the perspective of developmental stages we approach faith formation as a greenhouse with seeds and gardeners and so do things for people. From the perspective of characteristics of life we view faith formation as a pilgrimage with pilgrims on a shared journey and so do things with people. It is this approach that is worthy of further consideration.

Throughout Scripture there is a pervasive sense that all generations were typically present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger, and for support and service. Allen and Ross

Intergenerational ministry is not an end of itself. We seek to build relationships among people of all ages because we believe that those relationships develop lifelong disciples of Christ and bring energy and vitality to the wider church community. Perraud

Understanding children and young people as spiritual beings, as disciples, as fellow pilgrims, as priests, should lead us to consider that they need to actively take part in all aspects of discipleship and church life with us. This in turn leads us to consider that our current models of age segregation mean we are all missing out; children are missing out on part of the richness and diversity of the church and an encounter with God through participation in worship, and the church is missing out on the joy, exuberance and questioning spirit of children.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Peter 2.9

Before Jesus it was the Levitical priests who could draw near to God, but through Christ's sacrifice all believers are now considered priests and permitted access to the presence of God, and that includes children and young people. As a church we need to cultivate a culture in which every believer, no matter what age, understands they are a priest of God and part of a holy priesthood, and create opportunities for all to participate in the mystery of God's presence in our midst.

Our ministry with children and young people therefore becomes less about teaching them what they need to know to secure the future of the institution and more about their participation in the community of faith and creating spaces for them to encounter God, to be challenged to see themselves as part of God's story and to experience ministering to others.

Aspiration:

We affirm that children and young people are fellow pilgrims on the journey of faith. We therefore seek to be a church that encourages children and young people to live life in all its fullness, encountering God through being actively involved in all aspects of discipleship.

Questions to consider:

- How comfortable are you with the idea of being fellow pilgrims with children and young people rather than their teachers/experts?
- How have you been encouraged in your journey of faith recently by a child or young person?
- How can we create opportunities for learning together where adults are just as much disciples learning from those they seek to serve?
- How do we show through our actions that children and young people are not a demographic that we as adults minister to, but priests of God we minister with?
- Does discipleship need to happen within the church or are there other places/contexts in which this can happen?
- How are we engaging children and young people in the practices of faith (the sacraments, prayer, exploring the bible, worship, service and leadership) for themselves rather than doing everything for them?





**INCLUSIVE
PARTICIPATION**

We seek to be a church that enables full participation of all children and young people in the life of faith

Principle:

Inclusive participation

Motivation:

The Christian narrative is one of radical inclusion and participation. The Hebrew Scriptures witness to a God who insistently seeks out the marginalized, the hopeless, and the oppressed. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness and individual personal failings, Scripture speaks of a God who refuses to abandon people, and instead welcomes individuals and communities into relationship with God and each other.

In the New Testament, this message of inclusion and participation is expanded to include the entire world, without losing sight of the specific needs of individual people. Jesus went out of his way to minister to tax collectors, lepers, and women – in short, those who were resented and rejected by the wider community (including the religious community!). The New Testament speaks to Jesus' and the disciples' ministries as being intentionally focused on the specific, concrete needs of individual human beings and communities – whether these needs be physical or spiritual in nature.

Jesus was deliberately inclusive than when he spoke of children. "Let the little children come to me," Jesus said, even when the disciples attempted to shield Jesus from them (Matt 19.14). While it would have been easy for Jesus to focus on the more 'adult' needs of the religious establishment, or even the more practical needs of the new Christian community, children were wholeheartedly welcomed and included by Jesus.

We see in Jesus a model for how we might continue to understand and treat children in the wider life of the Church. Importantly, this inclusivity is not generic; Christianity affirms radical inclusivity for all people, but this general inclusivity requires detailed attention to the specific needs of individual people – in this case, the unique developmental, spiritual, and physical needs of children and young people.

Aspiration:

We affirm the radical inclusivity of the Gospel and that all children and young people, no matter their abilities or stage of spiritual development, are part of that. We therefore seek to be a church that enables full participation of all children and young people in the life of faith.

Questions to consider:

- Are you radical in how you include children and young people in the life of your congregation?
- How can we encourage children and young people to serve & participate in the church?
- How can you identify the unique developmental needs of the children and young people in your congregation – these needs might be physical, educational, emotional, or spiritual – and work to make sure they are met?
- What spaces are we creating for relationships to develop across the margins/ with people who are different?
- How are you enabling those children and young people with additional needs to participate in the life of faith?
- How are children and young people enabled to be part of the decision making processes of the congregation?



A close-up photograph of two hands, one from the left and one from the right, with their index and thumb fingers touching to form a heart shape. The background is a soft, out-of-focus bokeh of warm colors, including shades of orange, yellow, and pink. The text "SERVICE + JUSTICE" is centered in the middle of the heart shape.

SERVICE + JUSTICE

We seek to be a church that empowers children and young people to live a life of service and seek justice

Principle:

Service & justice

Motivation:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6.8

God has a deep concern for the poor and longs to bring healing to a hurting world. His people are encouraged to show His love to those around us and seek to bring peace and justice, that God's Kingdom may be seen on earth as it is in heaven. This is evident throughout Scripture and biblical narrative where God seeks to heal and restore creation.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Matthew 25.35-36

If a brother or a sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what good is it? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. James 2.15-17

In the parable of the Good Samaritan and elsewhere, Jesus challenged thinking about who our neighbour is and how we should respond to need. God uses His people as His hands and feet on earth today so we are called to put our faith into action. This call is the same for children and young people as it is for adults.

As we engage in service and justice, our faith develops. We need to show children and young people that when they give to the poor and care for the sick, God's Kingdom is being seen and they have a vital part to play. Children and

young people can and should be involved with social justice, tackling poverty and challenging the structures that keep people marginalized and in poverty.

In our globalised world, we are increasingly exposed to the needs of others and the concept of our neighbour has been stretched and widened. Children and young people today are demanding authenticity, so if the church says it has a priority for the poor they want to see that priority in action and if the church says it cares about justice they want to see that care in action. Moreover they have a desire to be directly involved in action and we have a responsibility to empower them in that.

Aspiration:

We affirm that we live in a broken and hurting world and that God calls us all to be the means of healing and reconciliation. We therefore seek to be a church that empowers children and young people to live a life of service and seek justice.

Questions to consider:

- How do you encourage children and young people to explore what the Bible says about the challenging issues we face in our world today?
- How do you enable children and young people to relate their faith with what they are learning in the classroom, on the news and in the world around them?
- How are you empowering your children and young people to become involved in matters of justice?
- What issues and concerns are at the forefront for children and young people and how can you help them explore those from a faith based perspective?
- How are you enabling children and young people to be engaged in acts of service, rather than just teaching them about the importance of doing so?
- How are you equipping families to be living a life of service and seeking justice together, in the home?



A close-up photograph of a silver medal. The medal is circular and features embossed designs, including four stars and the word "WINNER" in a stylized font. A red, white, and blue ribbon is attached to the top of the medal. The word "EXCELLENCE" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the medal.

EXCELLENCE

We seek to be a church that ensures appropriate training and support for all ministering with children and young people

Aspiration:

We seek to be a church that ensures appropriate training and support for all ministering with children and young people.

Questions to consider:

- How do you support those volunteering in the churches work with children and young people?
- If you have a paid children/youth/family worker, how do you treat them? What support do you offer them? Do you give provide them with times for retreat? Do they have a team to work with? What sort of hospitality do you offer them? Do you pay them well?
- What training opportunities do you offer your volunteers? Do you pay for them and give them adequate time to undertake it?
- What training opportunities do you offer your paid children/youth/family workers and ministers in this area? Do you pay for them and give them adequate time to undertake it?
- How do you equip parents and other family members for their part in the faith formation of their children?
- How do you equip the Kirk Session and other members of the congregation in undertaking the vows taken at baptisms?

Motivations and aspirations for ministry with children and young people in the Church of Scotland

Made in God's image

We affirm that being made in the image of God each child and young person is precious and valued in God's sight and that we were made to live in community together. We therefore seek to be a church that is relational, desiring deep relationships with God and one another regardless of age.

Body of Christ

We affirm the place of children and young people as important parts of the Body of Christ and the gifts that they bring to the whole worshipping community. We therefore seek to be a church that involves children and young people in worship enabling them to use their gifts and talents.



Community of Faith

We affirm the responsibility of the whole church to be involved in passing on faith to children and young people and in particular the role of parents and carers. We therefore seek to be a church that functions as a community of faith continually passing on the faith to the next generations.

Hospitality

We affirm that offering hospitality is central to the identity of the Church of Jesus Christ; our doors and hearts must always be open, enabling people to discover community and find belonging in God's family. We therefore seek to be a church that is hospitable, offering a safe and welcoming community of faith to all children and young people.

Faith Formation

We affirm that children and young people are fellow pilgrims on the journey of faith. We therefore seek to be a church that encourages children and young people to live life in all its fullness, encountering God through being actively involved in all aspects of discipleship.

Inclusive participation

We affirm the radical inclusivity of the Gospel and that all children and young people, no matter their abilities or stage of spiritual development, are part of that. We therefore seek to be a church that enables full participation of all children and young people in the life of faith.

Service & Justice

We affirm that we live in a broken and hurting world and that God calls us all to be the means of healing and reconciliation. We therefore seek to be a church that empowers children and young people to live a life of service and seek justice.

Excellence

We seek to be a church that ensures appropriate training and support for all ministering with children and young people.

Additional useful resources

Learn: Children and Young People

Learn: How Will Our Children Have Faith?

Guidelines for employing a children's, families or youth worker – 2017 edition

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/childrenandyouth

Children and Youth Newsletter

Now You're Talking Facebook Group

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