

FAITH IN OUR FAMILIES

Spotlight on churches

Introduction

The *Faith in our Families* booklet reports on research commissioned by Care for the Family and HOPE, and conducted by 9dot-research, to find out what parents in the UK are currently doing to nurture their children's faith, and how churches are supporting them in that. This supplement to that report provides further information about what is happening across a spectrum of UK churches and denominations. We have also produced separate supplements related to Anglican and Baptist respondents, which were the two groups where there was a reasonable sample size for analysis.

Who responded

Our Faith in our Families survey was taken by 983 parents, 175 church leaders, and 479 children's workers, giving an interesting insight into how a wide range of churches are seeking to support parents in nurturing their children's faith. Some types of churches had only a small number of respondents and it's important to be aware that some of the differences noted in this report may therefore not be statistically significant.

We asked parents which denomination they regarded themselves as belonging to, and the largest responses were from the denominations listed below. Other denominations selected (which came to 19% in total) included Methodist, Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland, Vineyard, Salvation Army and others. 25% selected "Christian – no denomination". We also asked how they would describe their church (where they could select more than one option), and those answers are in the table on the right.

Which denomination do you belong to?	
Anglican	25%
Baptist	12%
Pentecostal	6%
Independent (FIEC)	5%
New Frontiers	4%
Presbyterian	4%

Which of these apply to your church?	
Evangelical	62%
Charismatic	26%
Broad, Low or Liberal	18%
Fresh expression	16%
Anglo-Catholic or Traditional	15%
Rural	6%

Importance and responsibility

When we asked parents about responsibility for nurturing children's faith, most parents agreed that they should be doing more and that it was largely their responsibility, but there was some variation in thought about whether the church should be doing more.

Percentage of parents who agreed that:	Evangelical	Charismatic	Anglo-Catholic or Traditional	Broad, Low or Liberal	Fresh expression	Rural
I should be doing more	93%	94%	92%	89%	91%	92%
The church should be doing more	52%	49%	70%	58%	57%	68%
It's largely the parents responsibility	95%	96%	92%	94%	95%	95%

Children’s workers from traditional or rural churches were the least likely to feel that it is largely the parent’s responsibility. Those from traditional churches were also the least likely to feel that parents understand their responsibility in this area.

Motivation

The primary motivation across all denominations that parents had for nurturing faith was for their child to be in a relationship with God, and to know that they are loved by God. A number of parents from Anglo-Catholic and traditional church backgrounds were also concerned that their children should display Christian values to others.

What are parents already doing?

When asked how parents were already nurturing their children’s faith, there were some variations between denominations.

Activity	Anglican	Baptist	Presbyterian	Pentecostal	New Frontiers	Independent (FIEC)
Celebrate Christian events at home	94%	97%	92%	79%	95%	92%
Talk about God	85%	83%	87%	79%	83%	90%
Pray together	73%	84%	82%	88%	83%	82%
Listen/sing to Christian music	73%	82%	82%	80%	83%	84%
Talk about faith with child	72%	77%	58%	68%	81%	88%
Share Bible stories	71%	72%	66%	75%	67%	82%

- Parents who attended New Frontiers churches were more likely than other parents to do good deeds, explore nature, look for God in everyday life, and use Bible-based apps together with their children.
- Over 60% of parents from Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and FIEC churches reported that they pray often or always with their child.
- Compared to other denominations, a higher proportion of Pentecostal parents reported that they often or always look for opportunities to nurture their child’s faith.
- Parents from Presbyterian and FIEC churches appeared more likely than others to talk to other parents about nurturing their children’s faith.
- It was particularly important for parents from FIEC churches that their child make a public declaration of faith at some point.
- Over three quarters of all parents reported going to church weekly with their child, apart from Anglican parents where the figure was 64%.
- Parents from charismatic churches were more likely to feel they were regularly setting a good example of faith to their children.
- Anglo-Catholic parents or those from more traditional churches were less likely to talk with their child about faith.

Barriers

The most significant barriers to nurturing faith at home highlighted by parents across the board were family time being devoted to other things and not having enough time to spend with their child. However for Anglican parents and those from New Frontiers churches the most significant barrier was needing help with knowing what to do, and for parents from FIEC and Presbyterian churches the second most significant factor was feeling they were not a good enough example.

Children's workers highlighted that family time being devoted to other activities was the biggest barrier for nurturing children's faith, and most church leaders agreed.

Children's workers from churches that they described as low were most likely to feel that there weren't enough people to support this ministry. Workers from reformed churches were most likely to feel that other church activities took priority.

Across all denominations church leaders reported that the most significant barrier for the church was not having enough people to support the ministry.

What do church leaders already do

Children's workers from charismatic or evangelical churches were most likely to report doing some or a lot to support parents in nurturing their child's faith. When we asked church leaders, interestingly it was those from fresh expression or reformed churches who reported doing the most in this area.

We asked children's workers what their churches are already doing to help parents nurture their children's faith:

- Broad or low churches were most likely to involve parents in christening/baptism/confirmation preparation.
- Charismatic churches were more likely than others to run parenting courses.
- Rural churches were more likely than others to point parents towards online resources.
- Traditional and rural churches were most likely to encourage parents to celebrate Christian events at home.
- Charismatic churches were more likely than others to encourage singing or listening to music.
- Fresh expression churches were more likely to encourage parents to talk about faith with their child and be creative together.

Across the range of churches, children's workers reported that parents found it most helpful when their church gave them confidence in their own faith, except for the workers from broad or traditional churches who felt that involving parents in christening/baptism/confirmation preparation was more significant.

The most popular response from church leaders was also that parents found it most helpful to be given confidence in their own faith, although there were some exceptions.

- Leaders from broad or traditional churches felt that involving parents in christening/baptism/confirmation preparation was the most helpful.
- Leaders from fresh expression churches felt that helping parents understand the importance of nurturing faith was key.
- Leaders from rural churches felt that running parenting courses and helping parents develop a network with other parents were most significant.

From a list of 17 suggested activities, we asked children’s workers what they thought parents found most helpful to do at home to nurture their child’s faith. There were differing views on this, as illustrated below in relation to four of these suggested activities. The most popular response for each group is highlighted in bold. Overall, the ‘top four’ responses were to pray together; share Bible stories; read Christian books with their child; and talk about God.

Activity	Broad	Charismatic	Evangelical	Fresh expression	Low	Reformed	Rural	Traditional
Pray together	30%	33%	32%	41%	47%	27%	18%	38%
Share Bible stories	33%	28%	34%	21%	35%	36%	29%	30%
Celebrate Christian events at home	39%	8%	16%	12%	24%	9%	32%	32%
Talk about faith with their child	22%	19%	27%	24%	15%	36%	15%	18%

The majority of children’s workers who responded were particularly keen for ideas to help parents pray and talk about God with their children.

Opportunities

It was encouraging that many parents from a broad spectrum of churches do activities with their child regularly which can help nurture their faith, and that so many were motivated by the desire that their child would have their own relationship with God. The majority of parents we spoke to felt that nurturing their child’s faith is primarily their responsibility, and that they should be doing more. The majority also felt that churches could be doing more to support them.

The parents who took this survey were self-selecting and therefore more likely to already be engaged with this topic, but quite a number of those that we heard from were not currently praying or talking about faith with their child, which could be encouraged and developed. Many were looking for new ideas and resources to explore.

There is a vital role for the church to play in supporting parents in this key ministry, through developing what parents already find most useful, and discussing with them how some of the barriers could be overcome. Across the spectrum of churches in our survey there was significant variety in the ways in which parents are currently being supported. Going forward, if some of the experience, ideas and resources could be shared between churches it could have a lasting impact on families.

What next?

For more information, visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk/children-and-faith. Here you can view the full research booklet, find out about forthcoming activities, and sign up to receive future updates.



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Care for the Family is a Christian initiative to strengthen family life. A registered charity (England & Wales: 1066905; Scotland SC038497).