

# Engaging with children and their families

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THIS  
ZOO  
IS NOT  
FOR  
YOU



ROSS COLLINS

nosy  
crow

We're very good at throwing poo.  
Young Jeffrey here can play kazoo.

Is there a **trick** that you can do?  
If not, this zoo  
is **not** for you.











What if.....

We were as passionate  
about sharing our faith  
with our children?



## Two Key Tasks

Connecting with and giving confidence to those who already attend/are part of our church community

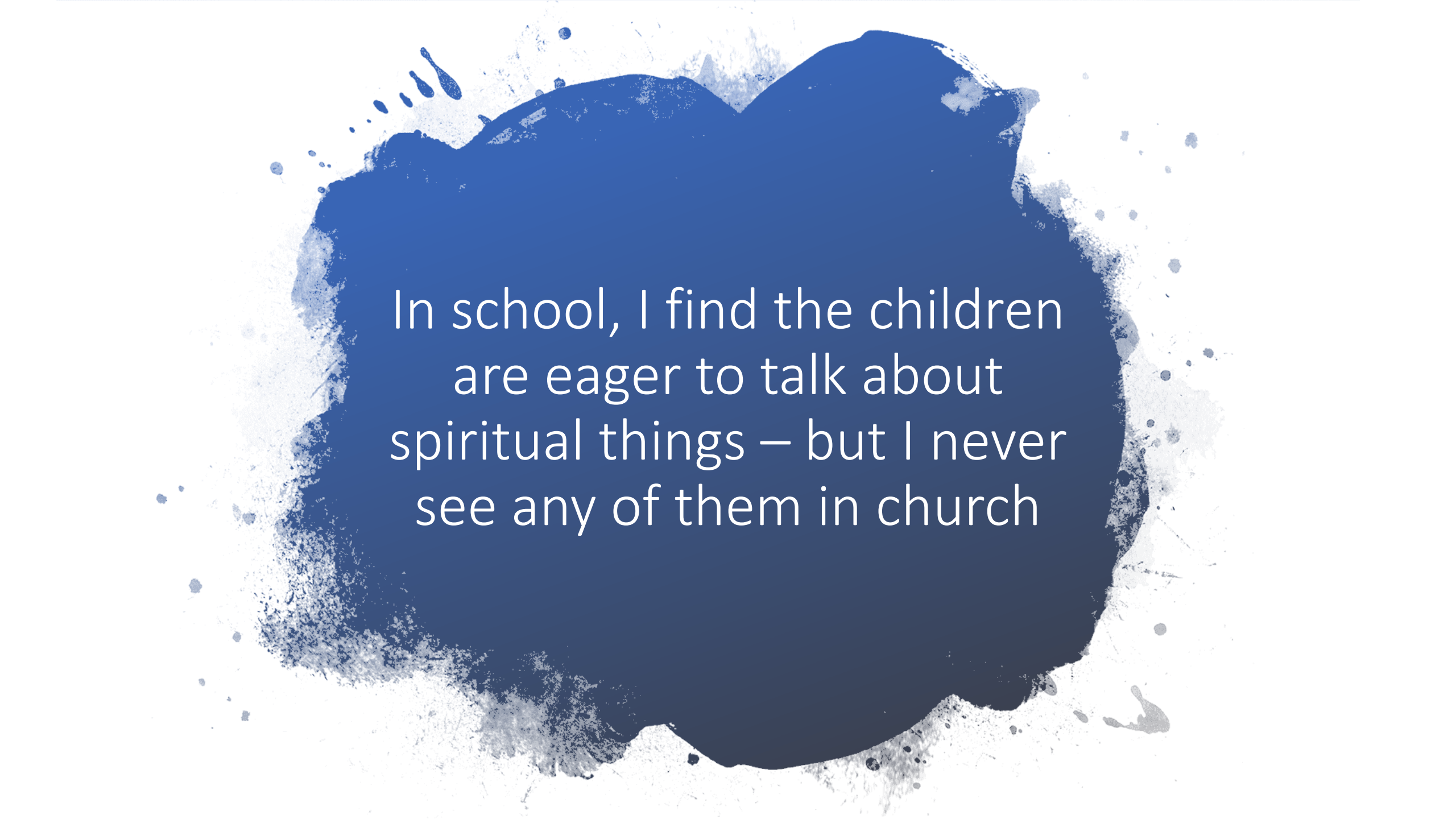
Reaching out to those who are beyond the church walls

# 0-16s in Church in Gloucester Diocese

7 churches (out of 390) with more than 25 0-16s

Children attending Church on Sunday 1,400

Children attending Church of England  
schools Monday – Friday 18,500



In school, I find the children  
are eager to talk about  
spiritual things – but I never  
see any of them in church

# What are the odds?

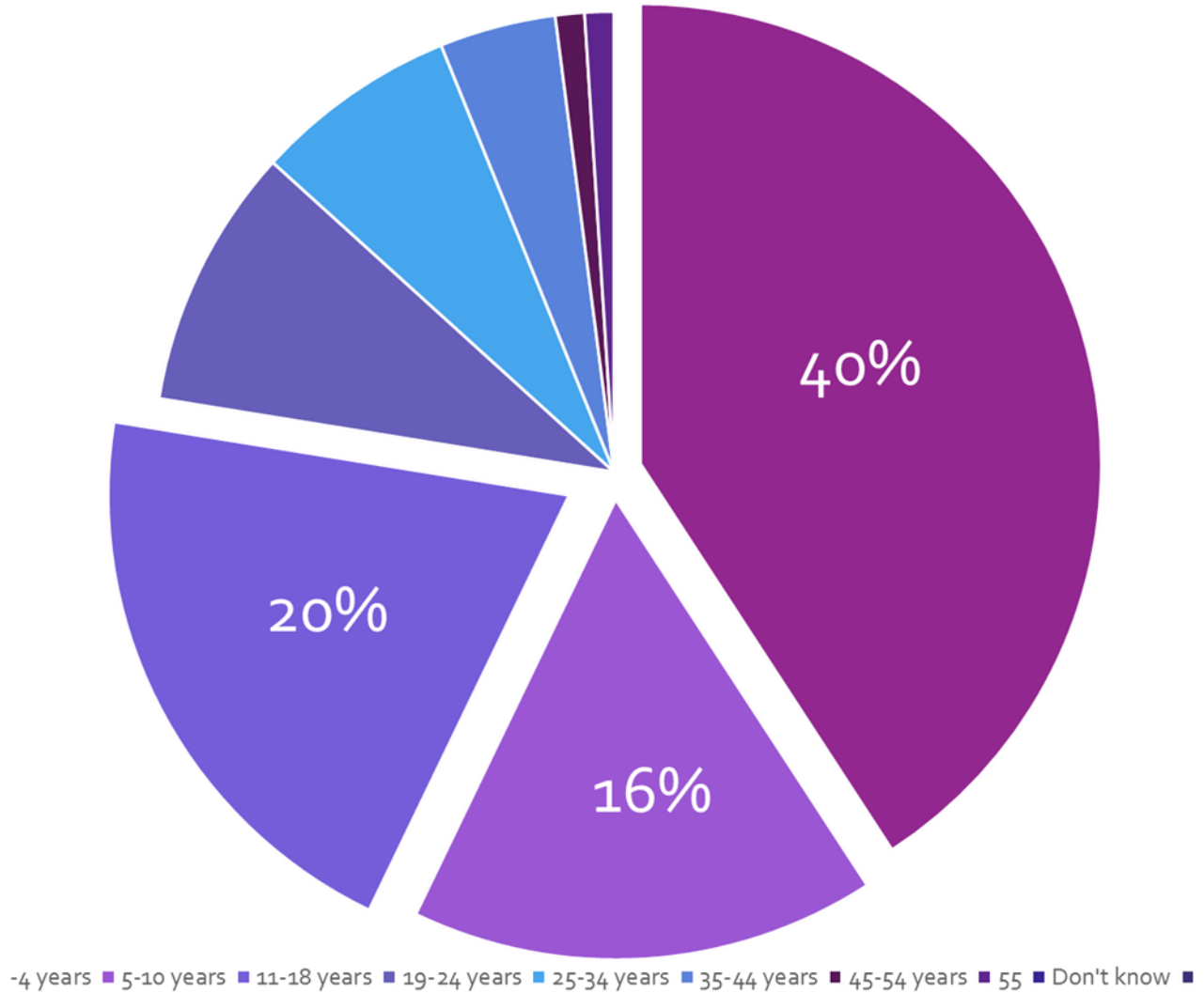
Non-religious parents successfully pass on a lack of faith while two religious parents have a 50% chance of passing on their faith

(Voas and Crockett, 2006)

# AGE AT COMING TO FAITH

- Under 5 years 40%
- 5-10 years 16%
- 11-18 years 20%

Age at coming to faith



# What do we know? Dr Rebecca Nye

**Spirituality is common and natural for children of all faiths and none**

**Children often won't use the same vocabulary as adults**

**Authenticity matters much more than convention**

**Often ... it consists of children exploring issues at the difficult edges of their understanding**

**engaging with existential questions about death, aloneness, identity, freedom, purpose and meaning**

# What do we know?



Early years are vital in helping to root and grow faith.



Parents have the biggest influence on the faith of children.



90% of Anglican families think it's important to teach children about our faith, but only 29% think it is their responsibility.



Only 50% of children brought up in a Christian home still follow the faith as adults.



What gets in the  
way?

sure foundations

# children's spirituality

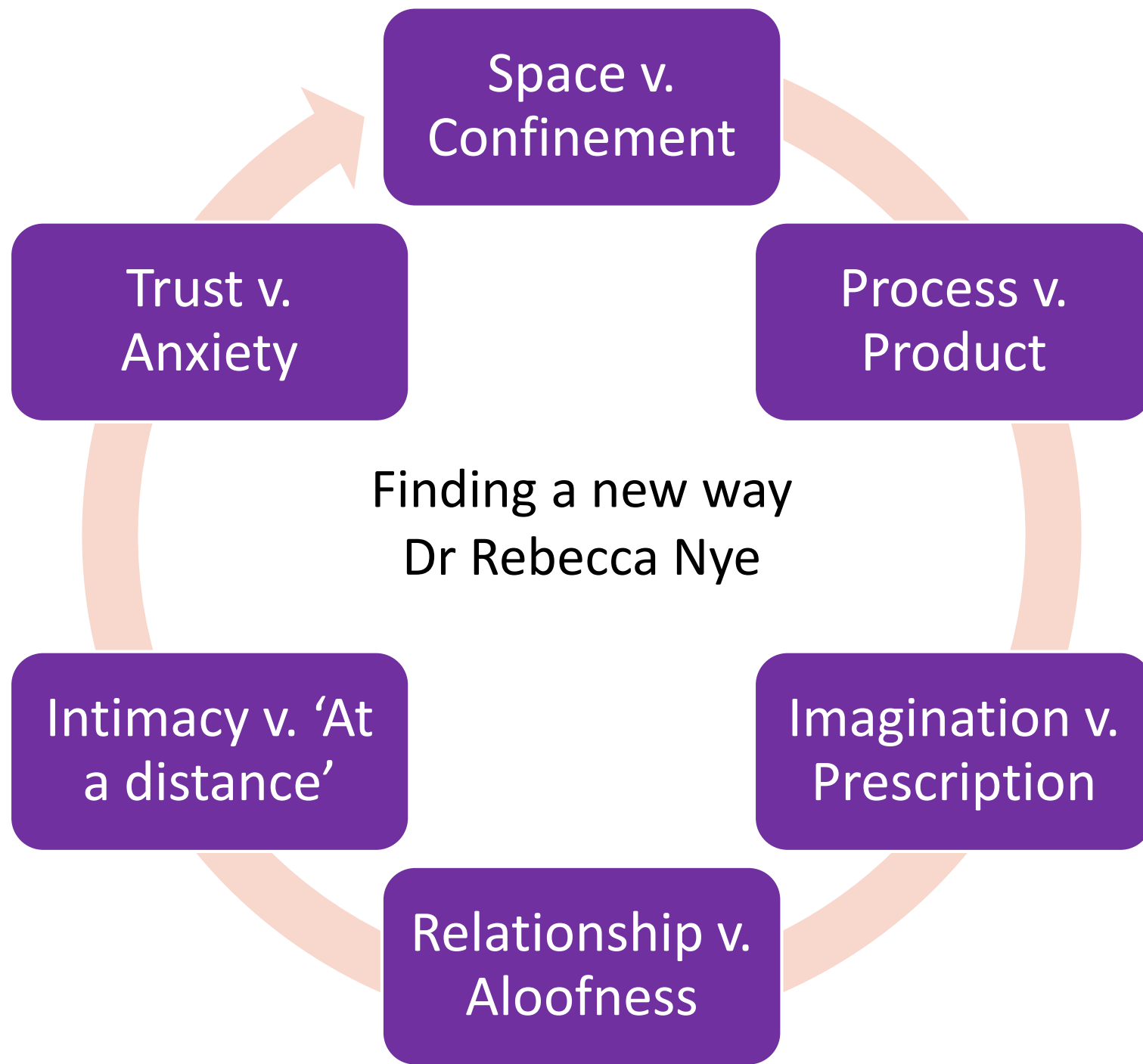
what it is and why it matters

for the  
mission of the  
which will be welcomed  
by all working in  
this field."

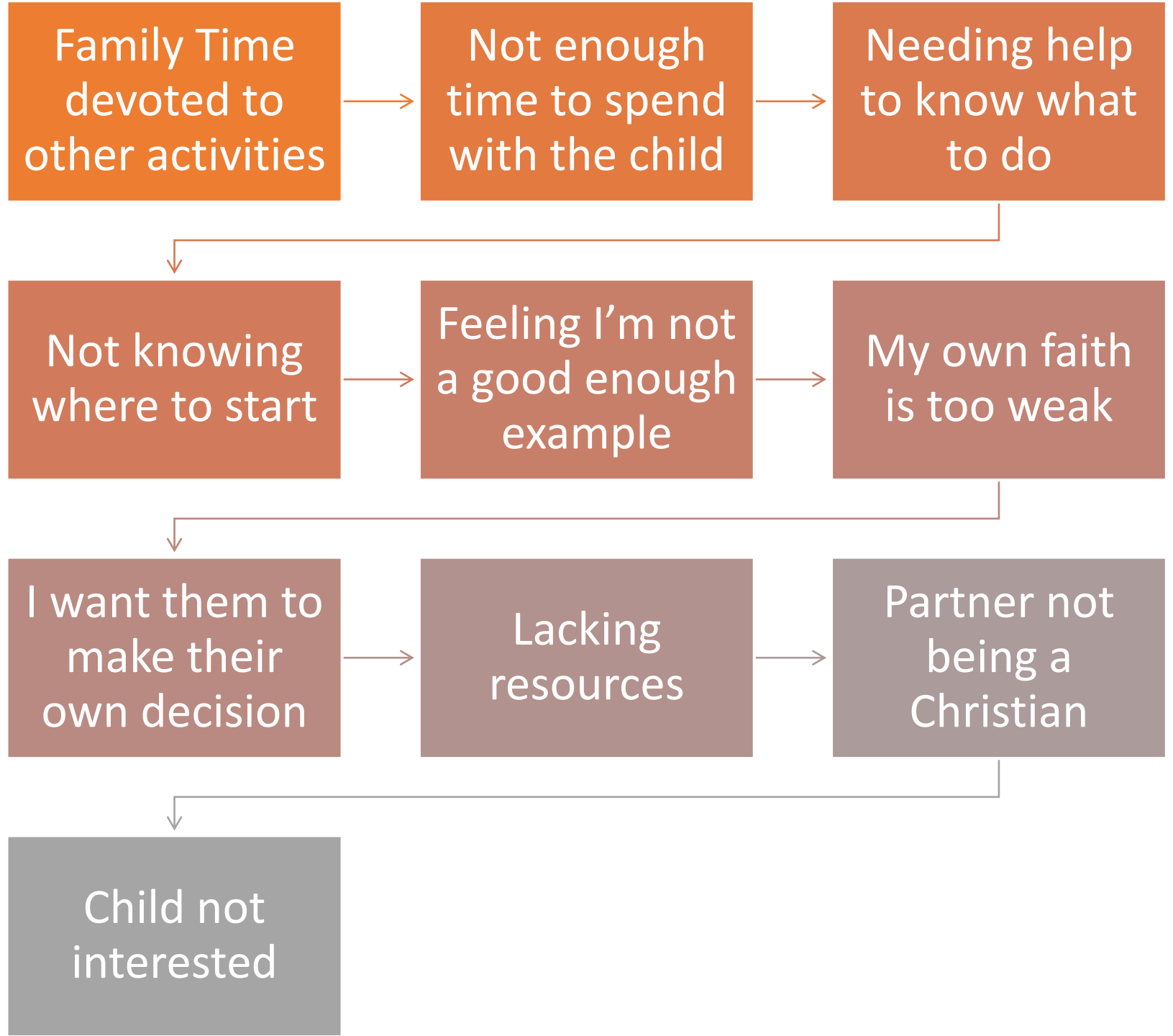
AUSTER McGRATH

Rebecca Nye

ENDANGERED



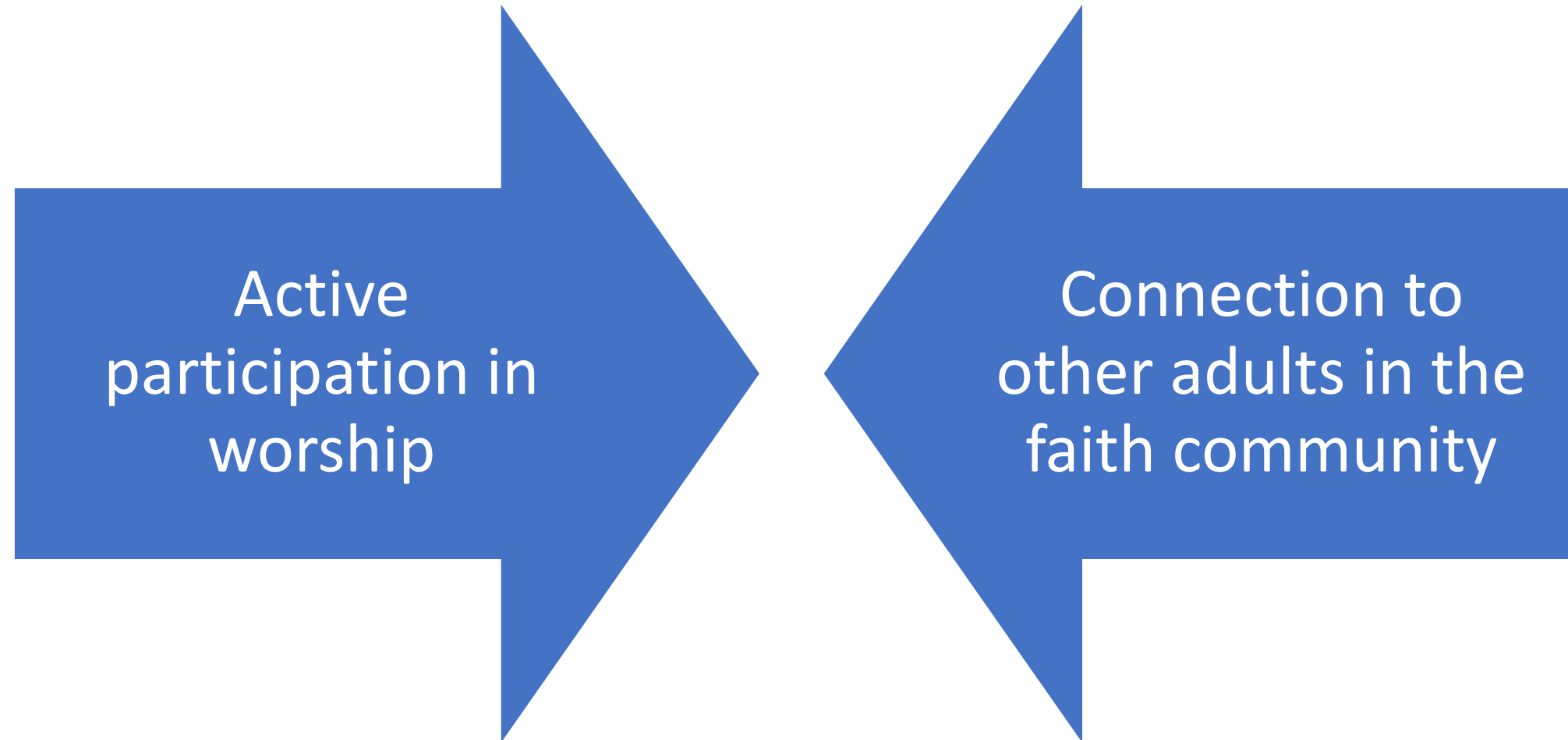
# What Christian parents say gets in the way





What gets in the  
way?

After the influence of parents, research shows the biggest indicators of young people growing into an adult faith are:





## Adult fears....

I'll be infantilized

I'll lose everything that's  
precious

I'll have to make a fool of  
myself

It'll change everything

It won't be proper worship

Inclusion. Equality. Space. Leadership





**Accessibility**

## Near or Far?

Language

Visual

Sensory

Music

Relevance





Ring the bell



# What parents say

I realise I need to make an active decision to nurture faith in the family; it won't happen by itself.

It would be great to have other parents to chat to and share experiences with, both for reassurance that we're normal in our struggles and also to share ideas that have been helpful in encouraging our children

What the  
curate said.....

The church in England is  
**REALLY MISSING**  
—— those in their ——  
**20S AND 30S**  
—— and ——  
**TODDLER GROUPS**  
are one of the **best ways**  
**TO REACH THEM**

# Range of toddler groups

Be distinctively Christian →

Scary:  
— IT WASN'T VERY —  
**FRIENDLY**  
— and the —  
CHURCH PART WAS  
**rammed**  
down your throat

Ideal:  
— You are **aware** it is a —  
**CHRISTIAN GROUP**  
— and there is a —  
**LOVELY SENSE OF**  
**togetherness**

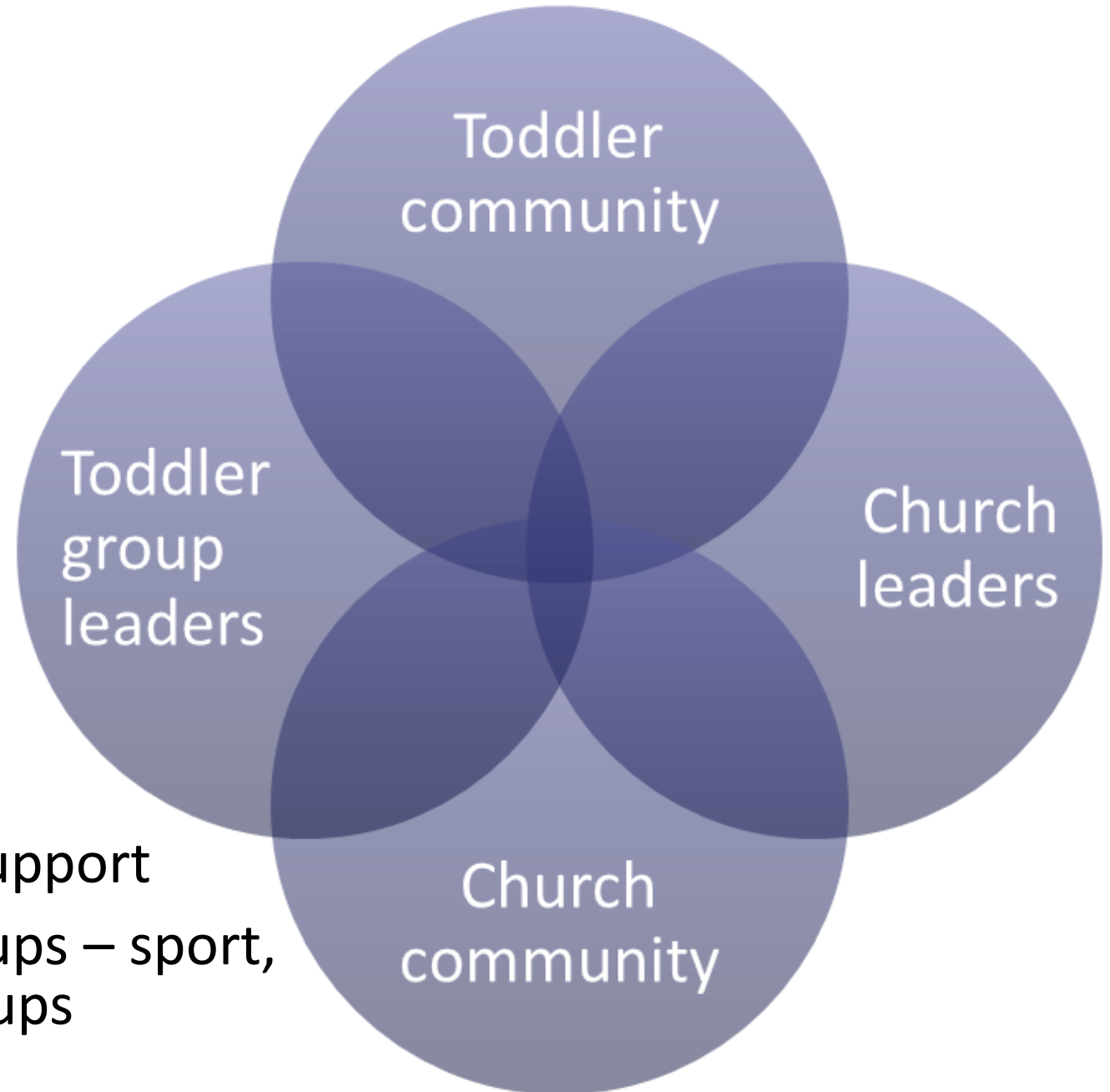
Could do better  
The group could do with  
**MORE STRUCTURE**  
— <sup>IT'S A</sup> **BIT SAD** —  
**A BIT TIRED**

Safe:  
**VERY WELCOMING**  
**and thoughtful**  
— **BUT** —  
**WOULDN'T KNOW**  
— this was a —  
**CHURCH-RUN**  
toddler group

Love and serve young families →

# Linking church and community

- Christenings/baptisms
- Messy Church
- Toddler Praise
- Who Let the Dads Out?
- Starting a prayer group
- Friendship
- Practical and pastoral support
- Engaging with local groups – sport, uniformed, interest groups



It's not another  
thing to do.....  
It's learning a way  
of being

Life is  
MESSY





This **platybus** is  
for all of us!

Thank you