

# Growing Faith

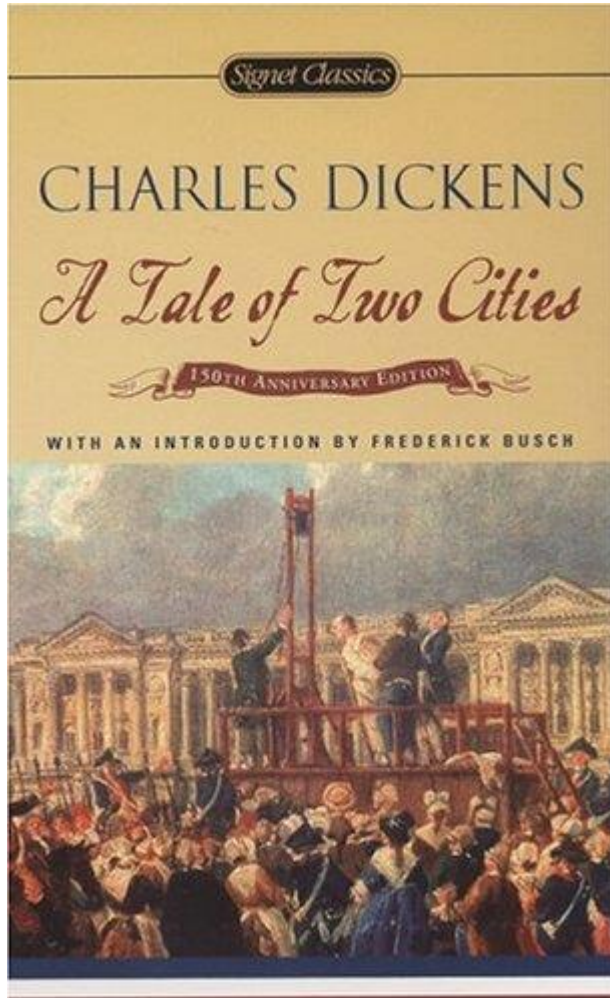
**Revd Nigel Genders**  
*Chief Education Officer*  
*@nigelgenders*



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

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GROWING FAITH

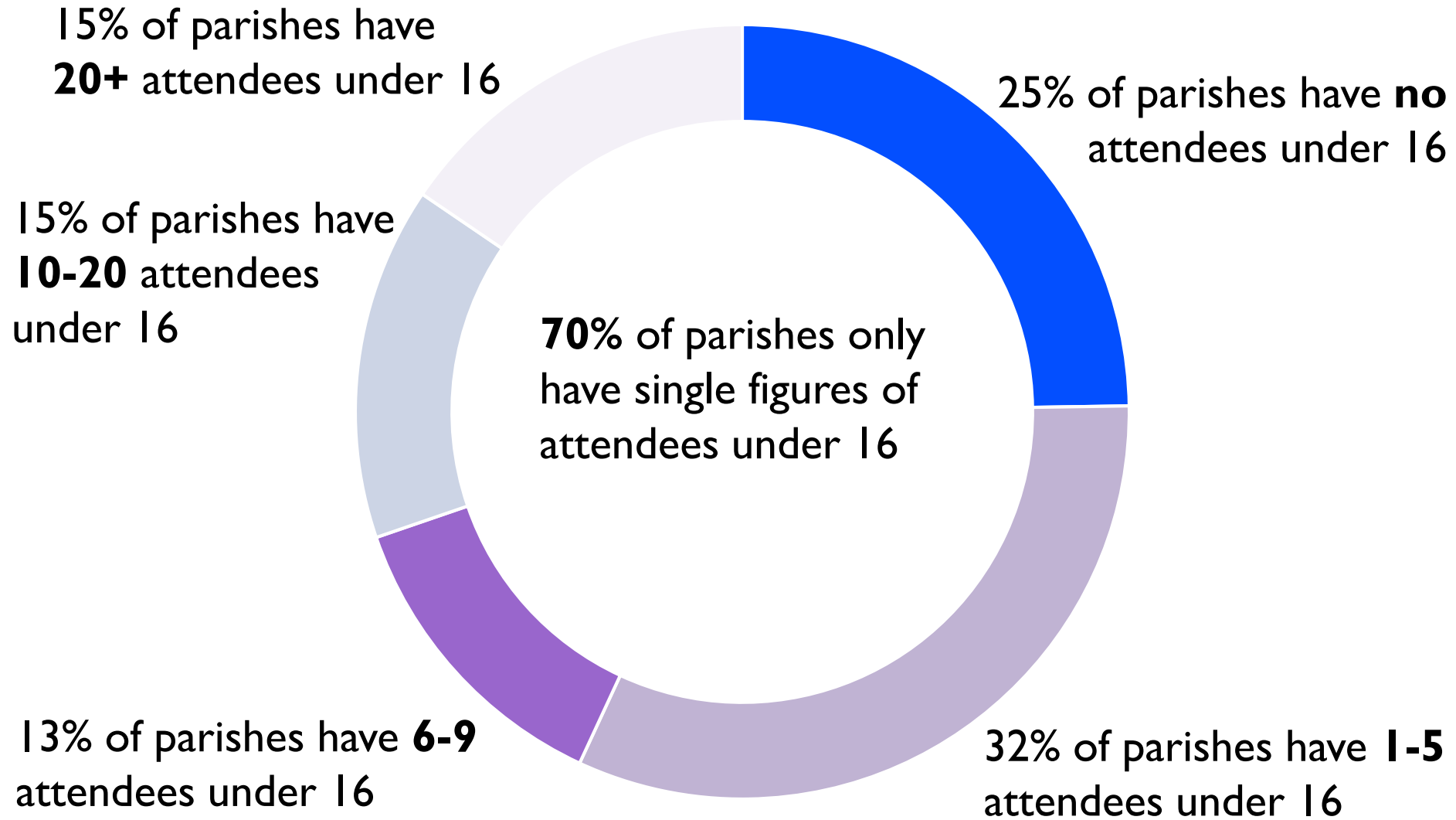


It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...

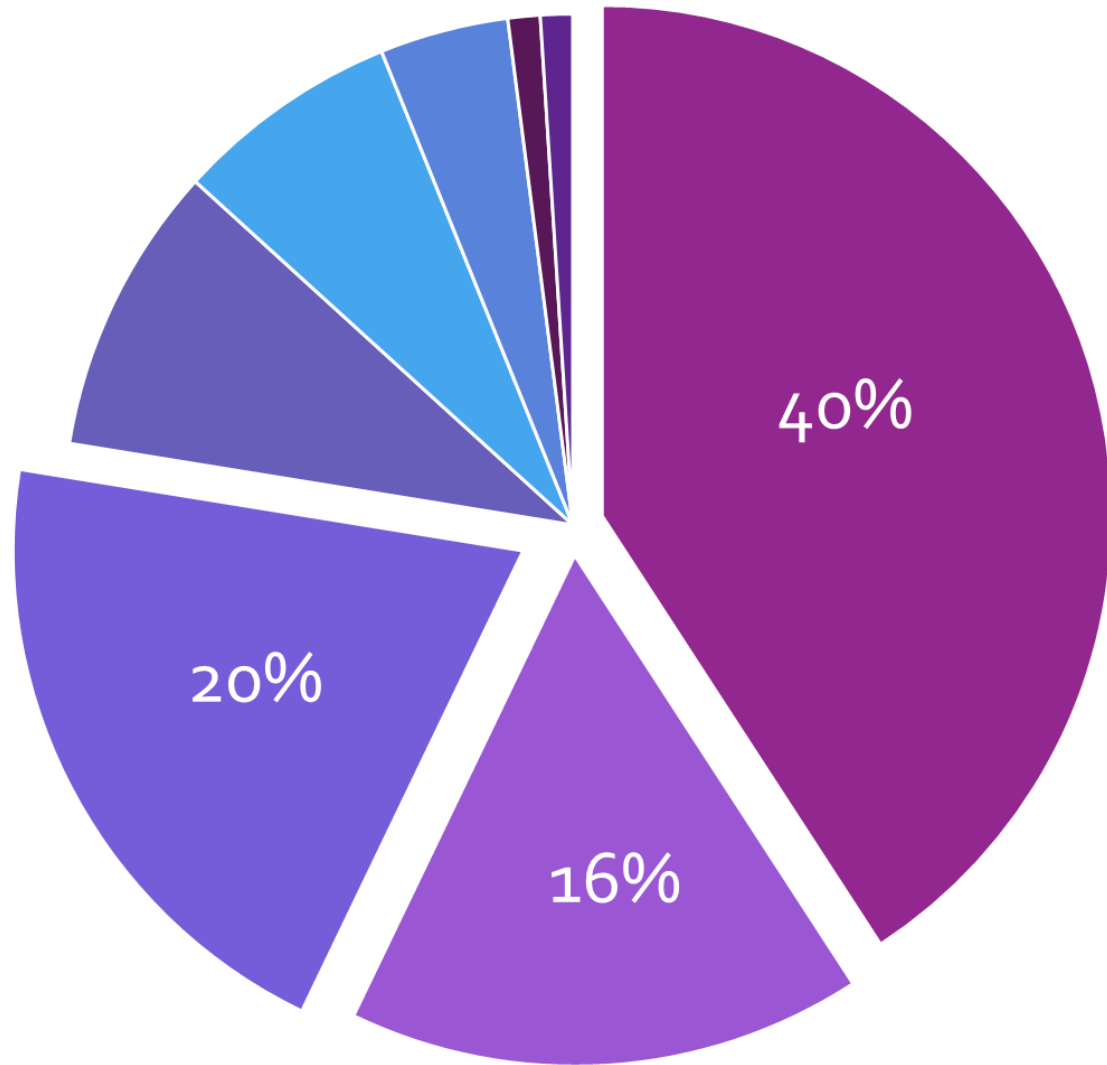
The spring of hope?

Or the winter of despair?

# Children and Young People per parish



## Age at coming to faith



Under 5 years ■ 5-10 years ■ 11-18 years ■ 19-24 years ■ 25-34 years ■ 35-44 years ■ 45-54 years ■ 55+ ■ Don't know

## Age at coming to faith

Under 5 years 40%

5-10 years 16%

11-18 years 20%

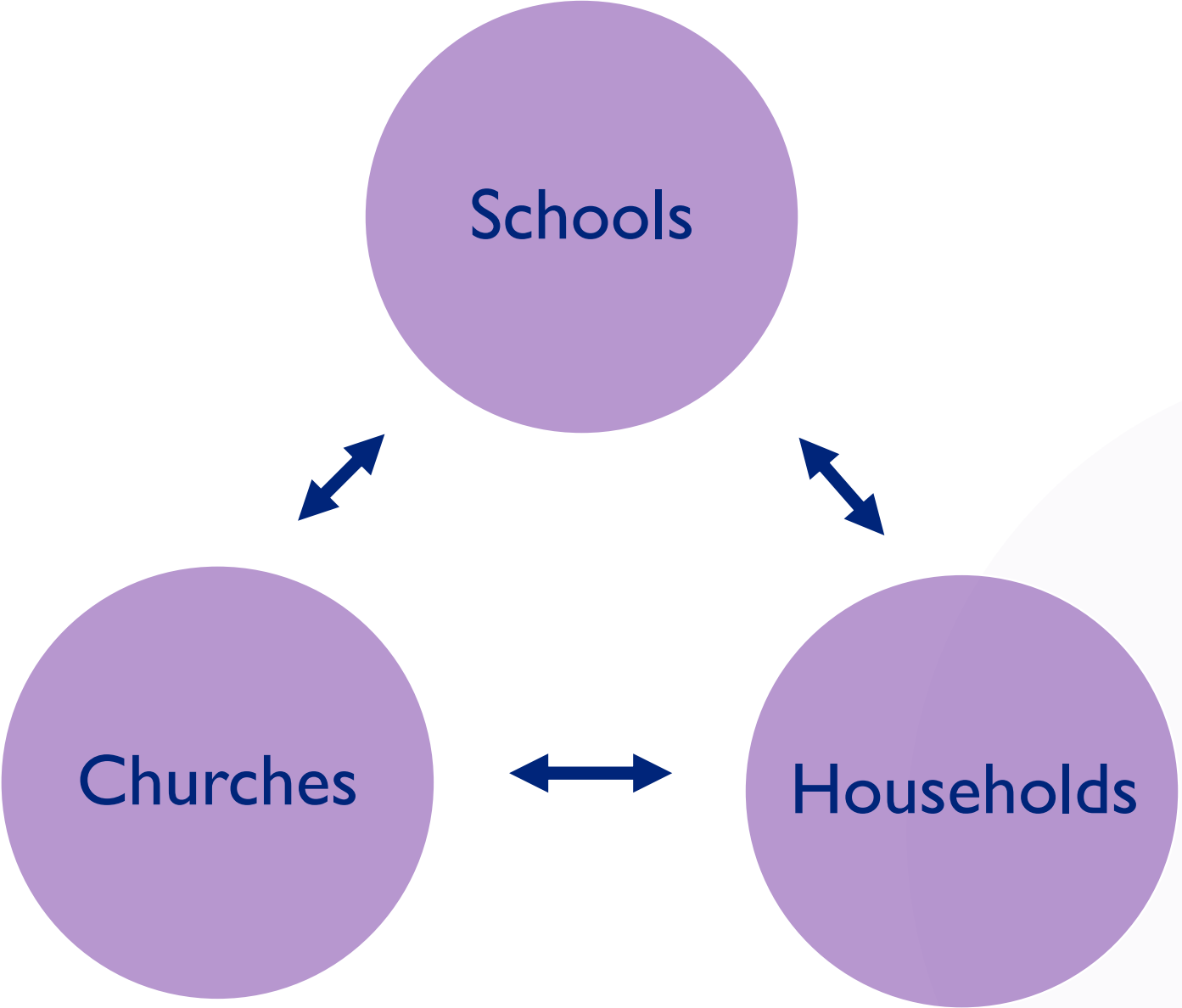
Total under 18 76%

# Growing Faith

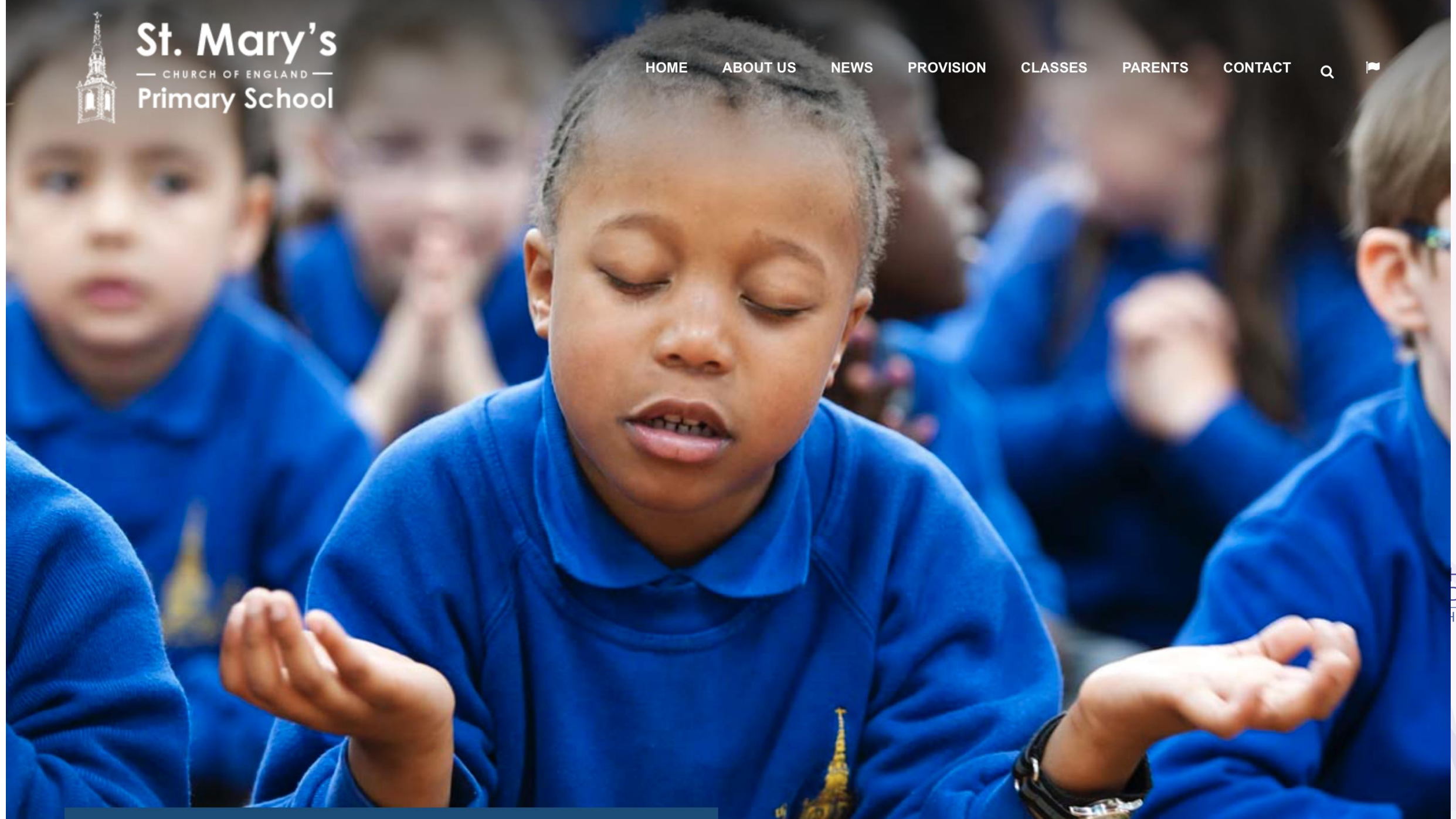
- Not an initiative or a centralised programme but an adventure.
- A vision for transforming church culture such that ministry with children and young people is prioritised and woven through the structures of each diocese, and forms a central strand of every parish, fresh expression, deanery or diocesan mission action plan.

# Growing Faith

- No synod, committee or council ever votes against ministry with children and young people but evidence suggests that we continue to fail to invest time and resource in it effectively.
- Year on year congregations are getting older and the number of children and young people in our churches is in catastrophic decline.









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THE PROJECT



UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

This is a substantial resource to support your teaching of Christianity in Religious Education



# Young Leaders

# 0-16s across Church of England

Children attending Church on Sunday 95,800

Children attending Church of England  
schools Monday – Friday 1,080,000

# 0-16s in Church in Gloucester Diocese

Children attending Church on Sunday 1,400

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

# Who or what influences the way you think about faith or religion?

Family  
73%

Friends  
36%

Teachers  
36%

TV & the  
media  
23%

The News  
21%

Info or videos  
online  
11%

Celebrities  
9%

youth  
workers  
9%

# Faith at Home

**90%** of Anglican parents think it is important to pass faith on to their children,

but only **29%** think of it as their responsibility



***Growing Faith:* seeking to reprioritise and change our church culture.**

1. Connected communities
2. Spiritual encounter
3. Imaginative practice

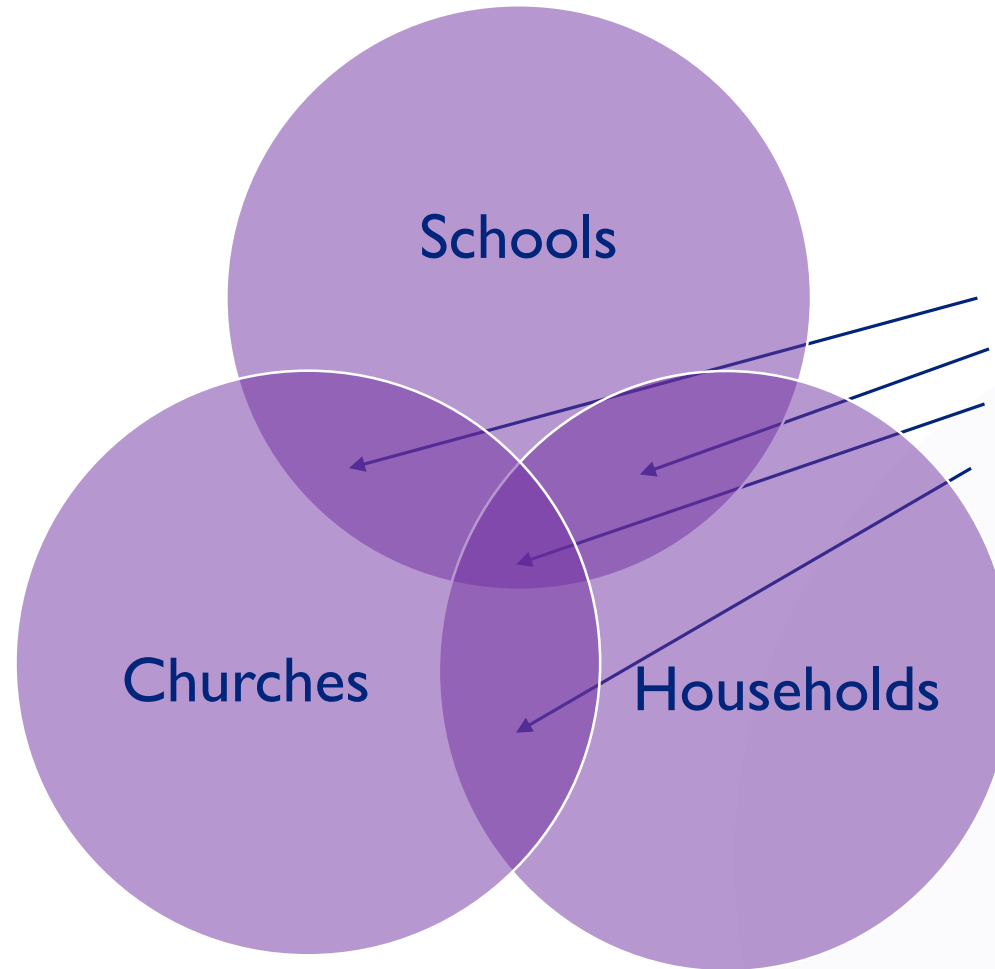


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GROWING FAITH

The  
*Growing Faith*  
Intersection



Our primary focus  
for Growing Faith  
is the intersection  
between 2 or  
more of the  
elements

Our understanding of young people's faith development is that it much more likely to happen, and be sustained if it happens in the intersection

# Faith across the intersections:

- Encouraging opportunities to explore faith together.
- Normalising faith rather than problematising it.
- Embracing children and young people's passion for the environment, social action, courageous advocacy to enthuse and enable children and young people's spiritual development and growth in faith.

# Faith in the Nexus - The Research Question

How do church primary schools (working in collaboration with churches and other interested stakeholders), facilitate opportunities for the exploration of children's faith/ spiritual life in the home?

Dr Ann Casson, Dr Sabina Hulbert, Dr Mary Woolley

Prof Bob Bowie, Director of National Institute for Christian Education Research



**KEY QUESTION:** What are we “seeing” happening that may contribute to the exploration of faith in the home?

- Talking: about faith, prayer, the Bible & the big questions
- Play: acting out Bible stories; collective worship
- Making time and space for reflection and prayer
- Encounters with scripture: multi-media
- Faith in action: food banks & refugee work
- Experiences of church

# KEY POINTS OF CONNECTION – THE CHURCH YEAR IN SCHOOL

The types of things you'd expect **kind of nice dates in the calendar** (Parent)



I become the biggest hypocrite because .... **right from when she started I've gone to all the Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festivals, all services.** And it's really what I **remember** from being at school myself. ... And I quite like it. It's lovely. (Parent)

WHAT DOES THE PATTERN OF THE CHURCH YEAR LOOK LIKE TO CHURCH SCHOOL PARENTS?

HOW COULD WE BUILD ON THAT PATTERN OF ATTENDANCE TO ENCOURAGE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FAITH AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

# FRUITFUL AREAS TO EXPLORE FURTHER

School

Reflection/prayer | Religious Education | Worship

Spiritual leadership in schools: senior leaders, external agencies, & pupils

Home

Faith conversations | Prayer | Social justice

Church

Families engagement in Christian festivals | Messy Church  
Church and socio economic need

Para church

Open the Book | Godly Play | Prayer spaces

# Discussion:

1. How could you involve families more in the work Church schools do on Christian ethos, values, collective worship, prayer and reflection, the Church year in school?
2. Children and young people have a passion for the environment and fighting climate change. How could you use that to enthuse and enable children and young people's spiritual development and growth in faith?

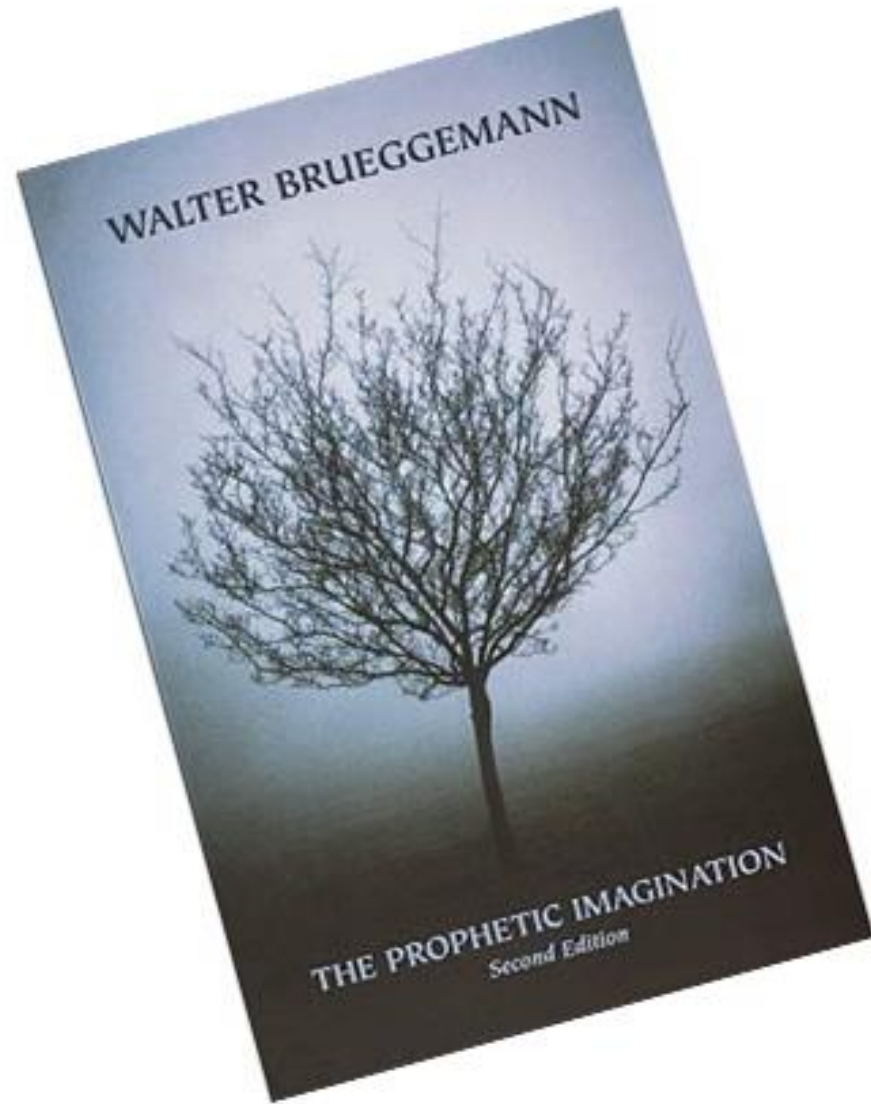
# IMAGINATIVE PRACTICES



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“...to nurture, nourish  
and evoke a  
consciousness and  
perception **alternative**  
to the consciousness  
and perception of the  
dominant culture around  
us.”

“The *imagination* must come before the *implementation*.

Our culture is competent to **implement almost anything** and **imagine almost nothing**.

It is our vocation to keep alive the **ministry of imagination**”

# New box, Old box...?



"...Growing Faith requires 'thinking in a new box', not merely innovating within the existing box..."

It requires an intentional choice to look for new ideas together rather than accept the same old ideas repackaged as new resources and products."

# IMAGINATIVE PRACTICES

- Share one new idea you have had, seen or tried in relation to ministry with children and young people.
- What might it mean to ‘think in a new box’, rather than merely innovating within the existing box?

# IT'S AN ADVENTURE

1. Connected communities
2. Spiritual encounters
3. Imaginative practices

*Gloucester Diocese is one of 7  
Trailblazers for Growing Faith –  
talk to Rachel Howie for more*



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