

Online children's work: Making it effective



kitchen
table
project

Inspire a faith that lasts

These are challenging times for churches, and children's work is no exception. How can we build connection and continue to help nurture children's faith during this season?

We love these fantastic ideas from Sarah Holmes, an expert in children's faith formation, who researched the online provision from 100 churches to identify the most important factors.*

* Dr Sarah E. Holmes (Lecturer of Early Childhood Studies at Liverpool Hope University) systematically reviewed the online children's work provided by one hundred UK churches from a range of denominations, using a framework underpinned by theories of learning and faith development. Together with focus groups and an online survey, the aim was to gather beneficial insights and good practice to help churches during this season. See her full paper at www.nurturingyoungfaith.org/post/bridging-the-gap-during-covid-19 Our thanks to Sarah for enabling us to share this material.



What's your format?

Keep it simple to access

It's easier to play a single video than a whole sequence of separate ones. And make sure it's easy to find on your church website!

Establish your aims and purpose

If your main aim is discipleship, make full use of your video to provide activities that enable the child to connect with God. Entertainment is fun, but children already have many other choices of entertainment available.

Keep it short

10 to 15 minutes is ideal. It's very difficult to produce 30 to 40 minutes of material that holds the child's attention and helps build their faith.

Dial up your delivery

Imagine you're there in the room with them. Be lively, vibrant and engaging as you speak.

Be authentic

Your online sessions don't need to be perfect. Perfection is hard to relate to and can leave children feeling they aren't 'good enough' to have faith, and parents that they aren't qualified to support their child's faith if they can't do it like you.



Maximise your impact



Make it interactive

Listening passively is not a great way to learn. Invite children to shout out responses when key words are said in the story, pause the video while they draw a response to what's been said, or to take part in acting out the Bible story.



Be quiet!

Including some times of quiet space is very effective in helping children reflect, ponder, and connect with God in their own way. Use background music, an object or image as a focus.



Encourage curiosity

Children learn best when they are curious, playful and exploring. Present your Bible passage or teaching in the form of a dialogue where you are pondering and wondering, allowing the children time to reflect and imagine for themselves.



Mix it up

As well as Bible readings, prayer and a craft, how about worship, testimonies, liturgy, communion or discussion?



Make it tangible

You could occasionally deliver some items related to the content to the families in advance, for them to use during the scheduled session.



Connect and engage



Have a chat

Use Zoom calls before, during or after your session is broadcast so children can discuss content together.



Connect informally

Maybe a separate 'drop in' Zoom time for a chat, or a family quiz or challenge.



Build community

Incorporate videos or pictures of children or adults doing song actions, weekly challenges, memory verse recaps, Bible readings or prayers. This can convey a strong sense of community and belonging.



Make it two-way

Invite children to pass on prayer requests, thanksgiving or news items to the children's team for inclusion in the session.



Worship together

Film some children taking part in the worship and encourage those at home to join in alongside them – creating a sense of a shared experience.



Make the most of liturgy

Record multiple voices saying parts of liturgy at the same time. When the children join in, they'll feel part of something bigger.



Cross-pollinate your groups!

Older folk could share brief testimonies or record a prayer for the children, or you could prompt the children to make encouraging cards for others in the church.



Support families

Affirm parents and carers

Use different church communication channels to emphasise the value of parents as disciplers of their children, to encourage and pray for them in their role.

Build in family time

Encourage children to pause the video at a key point to discuss it with their family or do an activity together.

Make it bespoke

Suggest how activities could be adapted for older or younger children, or for those who don't enjoy art or action songs for example.

Chat to parents

Ask them how you can support them in nurturing their child's faith. Find out how they are getting on generally.

Give them ideas

Help parents see how they can easily encourage their child's faith as part of daily life – maybe by briefly praying together in difficult situations, or modelling the parent's faith journey by allowing their child to see them reading the Bible, praying or worshipping.



It's a team effort!

Parents are the single biggest influence on their children, and that's true when it comes to faith, too.

At home, children can experience how faith is lived out in daily life with all its ups and downs. And they can see first-hand what it means to live in relationship with God.

Check out the **Kitchen Table Project** or contact us for loads more resources for churches and parents to help build faith at home.

 kitchentable.org.uk

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