



# How to ...

## Help young people get rooted

*Supporting children and young people to grow in faith rooted within the church community.*

The 2016, [Rooted in the Church research](#) sought to answer the question:

**“What helps root young people in the worshipping life of the Church of England so that they continue to engage with the Church as a place of spiritual nurture and growth into their adult years?”**

It concluded that churches needed to:

- recognise young people and young adults as equal members of the Body of Christ;
- become unconditionally welcoming places for children and young people;
- be inclusive of all ages in both leadership and worship;
- aim to build a culture of intergenerational relationships;
- explore the possibility of admitting baptised children to Communion before Confirmation;
- do more to support those who serve as youth and children’s workers, leaders and volunteers.

Drawing on these findings and much other research that has been conducted in this sphere we have highlighted four key things that can be done by the local church to help young people to grow up in faith rooted in the church.

### FOUR KEY STEPS TO TAKE

#### 1. Foster Peer Group Relationships

Young people need the opportunity to develop relationships with their peers through which they can explore faith together. Young people are more likely to be rooted in the church community if they have built friendships with other young people in that community. These relationships provide support and the opportunity for young people to grow in and explore faith together. They also serve to enable young people not to feel that they are the only young believer out there.

##### **Take action:**

Create a small group environment for young people.

*This could be as simple as a monthly gathering in the vicarage with pizza. A small group can begin with just 2 young people.*

Let the young people set the agenda – the primary objective is to build relationships and explore issues of faith together informally. This space should provide that – space, not be a lecture theatre where a theological exegesis is delivered.

See it in action in the Diocese of Bristol here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f706h0K9fl>

## 2. Involve and Listen to young people

Young people need to be active participants in the life of the church and have a voice that is listened to. Churches need to be genuinely all age communities, not places where provision for the young is a side show to the main event.

Invitation to participation should be genuine and not tokenism, but giving young people responsibility within the life of the church is a core way to develop their gifts and skills for the wider benefit of the church. Remember they will need support and mentoring and be patient if mistakes are made.

### Take action:

Read the following 'How to...' guides to explore ways to involve young people further:

[How to... Listen and involve children and young people](#)

[How to... Involve young people on the PCC](#)

[How to... Involve children and young people when appointing a new vicar](#)

Explore Communion before Confirmation through the [information here](#).

Review the ways you listen to the voice of young people in your church.

Seek out opportunities for young people to be involved in the life of your church and speak to them about these.

## 3. Role models

Young people need role models in their lives who demonstrate and model the impact of the Christian faith in their lives. These role models inspire, teach and accompany young people on their journey of faith. We need to create environments in our churches whereby adults speak openly and honestly about their faith with young people and informally intergenerational ally mentor them.

### Take action:

Challenge the congregation to take on the challenge of passing on the baton of faith to the next generation by informally mentoring the young people in your church.

Create opportunities for young people to learn about, understand and be inspired by the faith of the older members of your congregation.

Provide places where young people and adults can serve and grow in faith alongside one another. Good examples include: [a youth band](#), [a puppet team](#), [serving in mission](#).

Read about how to share the Gospel with young people here:

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/how-share-gospel-young-people>

## 4. Welcome and Accessibility

Young people in the church can experience many barriers to engaging fully in worship: *Do you explain the meaning of the liturgy in your services? Do you teach young people the words and meanings of the refrains? Is the language of your service understandable? Do you explain the symbolism within your acts of worship?*

Your services don't need to include laser light shows and smoke machines for them to be relatable to young people, but you might need to take action to ensure that young people feel welcome and included and are able to participate.

*Do you encourage questions to be asked? Are young people given a non-judgemental welcome when they arrive or are they approached like an alien? Are young people treated naturally or are they spoken down to and treated like a child?*

### Take action:

Consult with the young people in your church about your church services – what changes would they make?

Give the entire Sunday over to be led by young people and take notes about the way they lead that might be different to other Sunday's.

Ask the young people in your church to help train the welcome team.

## Moving forward

- Seek advice, support and training through Dan Jones; Diocesan Youth and Children's Adviser.
- Appoint a young people's champion to take forward the four key points in this guide. A role description for this is available from Dan Jones.
- Explore how you might start a youth or children's ministry – from scratch:  
<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/how-start-childrens-ministry/>  
<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/how-start-youth-ministry-scratch>
- Launch a Messy Church:  
<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/how-start-messy-church>
- Invest in developing All-age worship:  
<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/how-create-great-all-age-worship-service>
- Explore other resources available to help you: [Godly Play](#), [Explore Together](#), [All-In-Thing](#), [Roots](#), [It's Your Move](#),
- Consider: reaching out, not just focusing on retention; working with other churches to do something together; Sunday School for all ages'; inviting young people to lead services', starting a youth small group, taking young people away on a residential trip.

## Exploring further

The following reports, books and research papers will assist you with exploring further in this area of mission and ministry.

CofE: Anecdote to Evidence Report <http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/report>

CofE: Rooted in the Church Report <https://bit.ly/2veeB1g>

Youthscape: Loosing heart Report <https://bit.ly/2MdEWmL>

The Fuller Institute: Sticky Faith <https://bit.ly/2OEwu1i>

YFC: Generation Z Rethinking culture <https://bit.ly/2M2adZN>

Care for the Family: How to get your kids through church <https://bit.ly/2vwZQ97>

Talking Jesus Research <https://bit.ly/2M0M7hO>

Theos: Passing on faith <https://bit.ly/2O9C22V>

**Written by:** Chris Priddy, Head of Parish and External Relations and Dan Jones, Diocesan Youth and Children's Adviser.