

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY

*An assessment of the overall wellbeing
of children and families ministries in the
Presbyterian, Cooperating and Union
churches of Otago and Southland.*

April 2018



A BRIEF SUMMARY

The Task:

To review the children and families ministries in the churches of the Southern Presbytery in order to:

- find out what is currently happening in the churches
- gather current data and stories
- suggest next steps and guidelines for the future

Who was involved?

- A review group was commissioned by Synod and the Southern Presbytery in November 2017: Christine Harrex and John Schoneveld (co-convenors), Cheryl Harray, Margaret Larsen, Rose Luxford and Nancy Parker.
- 62 parishes completed a survey in February/March 2018 (88.6% response)

How was the information gathered?

- An online survey
- Follow up emails and phone calls

What information was gathered?

Three areas were covered:

1. Church services
 - a. Numbers
 - b. Involvement
 - c. Programmes
 - d. Types of services
2. Wider church life
 - a. Involvement of children in wider church life
 - b. Community programmes
 - c. Relationships and connections
3. Support and resourcing
 - a. Session/Parish Council support
 - b. Financial support
 - c. Use of resources and training

In addition, churches were asked to identify their three greatest challenges and reflect on what they can celebrate.

The report highlights five different aspects of children and families ministries in the churches of the Southern Presbytery:

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The report includes:

- Statistics
- Comments from respondents
- Stories from parishes
- Quotations from other relevant research

As part of the report comparisons are drawn with two other similar surveys.

1. A 2015 Snapshot of Children's Ministry in the Anglican Diocese of Christchurch
2. The 2016 Scripture Union New Zealand Children's Ministry survey

When comparing results we need to keep in mind that the SUNZ survey was voluntary, covered the whole of New Zealand and represented all denominations. The Christchurch Anglican survey, like the Southern one, was for a particular denomination and was representative of all Anglican churches in their area.

The report concludes with some suggestions and recommendations for the future of children and families ministries in the Southern Presbytery.

1. VARIETY

OUR MINISTRIES TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES SHOW HUGE VARIETY.

The programmes provided for children in our Southern churches are many and varied. No two churches are doing exactly the same thing but many churches are doing something. It is clear that each church is doing its best to respond to the needs of the children they are in contact with.

SUNDAY MORNING NUMBERS

Southern churches are more likely to have preschool and primary aged children attending services than children in intermediate and high school age groups. While 13 churches have no pre-schoolers and 10 have no primary aged children, 24 have no intermediates and 21 have no high schoolers.

Average numbers of children aged 0 to 12 attending regular Sunday morning services.

Number of children	Number of churches	Percentage
0 to 5 children	23	44.2%
Between 6 and 10 children	8	15.4%
Between 11 and 15 children	8	15.4%
Between 16 and 20 children	2	3.8%
Between 21 and 25 children	5	9.6%
More than 25 children	6	11.5%

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

Median Weekly Attendance

	Southern Presbytery	Christchurch Anglican	SUNZ
Preschool	3	4	5
Primary	4	8	10
Intermediate	1	7	4

SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAMMES

72.6% of churches in the Southern Presbytery offer a Sunday morning programme for children.

These programmes vary enormously in size and structure. Some churches divide children into small age specific groups, others keep children of all ages together in one large group and some do a combination of large and small group time.

Structure of Sunday morning children's programmes

Separate preschool aged group	37.8%
Separate intermediate aged group	24.4%
One primary aged group	31.1%
More than one primary aged group	17.8%
All ages together	57.8%

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

Sunday morning programmes

Southern Presbytery	Christchurch Anglican	SUNZ
72.6%	61%	91%

**It's important that we don't make numbers our focus.
What is of more importance is whether we are helping our children develop faith.**

2. VALUE

CHILDREN ARE VALUED IN OUR CHURCHES.

*The general tone of responses to the survey questions indicated that children are highly valued. Churches **want** children, they **provide** for children and they work hard to **nurture** children. There is significant evidence that the message of Kids Friendly has been getting through over the last 8 years.*

CHILDREN IN SUNDAY SERVICES

The majority of churches include children in Sunday services for at least some of the time.

Approximately 50% of all Southern churches have their children aged 0 to 12 in church for between 10 and 30 minutes. This is encouraging because *"Christian thinkers and educators have long recognised that people come to faith primarily by engaging in the practises of faith....In being present, children will absorb the practises of faith, and master the work and play of worship. This can lead to a strong sense of belonging to the church, and a lasting commitment to the faith."*¹

INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN

Children are involved in Sunday services in a wide variety of different ways. These include:

- **PRACTICAL WAYS:**
 - Welcoming
 - Offering collection
 - Collecting communion glasses
 - Data projector/sound
 - Playing instruments
- **AS PART OF THE CONGREGATION:**
 - Call to Worship
 - Prayers
 - Singing
 - Readings
 - Communion
- **INTERACTING WITH OTHERS:**
 - Sharing during community time
 - Celebrations
 - Discussion
 - Drama
 - Talking about what they've learned

¹ Alison Sampson, "Welcome the Children," *Equip*, Issue 24 March 2015

- **PARTICIPATING IN RITUALS:**
 - Bell ringing
 - Lighting candles
- **CHILD CENTRED ACTIVITIES:**
 - Children's talks
 - Activity sheets

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

These ways of involving children are very similar to those listed in the SUNZ 2016 survey. The SUNZ report also makes this statement:

"We need to think about how we include children in a range of ways that significantly grow and nurture their faith. Whenever we involve children in an activity in church, we need to ask ourselves: How is this activity forming faith?"²

SPECIAL EVENT SUNDAYS

It is a common practice of our Southern churches to mark events in the church calendar with special services. 66.1% of churches have 2 or 3 of these a year. On these special event Sundays, higher numbers of children attend.

Median attendance

Age group	Special Event Sunday	Regular Sunday
Children 0 to 12	12	7
Teens/Adults	32.5	41.5

Churches are making the most of the increased attendance of children at these special events and are more intentional about involving them in the services. Christmas and Easter are the most commonly celebrated events but a range of other special events also feature.

- ❖ *5th Sundays are always something different.*
- ❖ *In 2017 we celebrated Easter, Matariki, Parihaka and Christmas.*
- ❖ *Parishioners are encouraged to invite a grandchild or a neighbour's child.*
- ❖ *Every month we hold a dinner gathering on a Sunday evening.*
- ❖ *Our biggest service would be Christmas Eve. We usually have a lot of people from the community including children.*
- ❖ *White Sunday is a big day and we have at least 20 children involved.*

² *He waka eke noa* SUNZ 2016, pg 14

OTHER SERVICES

Some churches are also experimenting with alternatives to regular Sunday services. They are finding that fresh expressions of worship on other days can be an effective way to include children.

The level of involvement of children in these services is significantly higher than in regular Sunday services. Children are fully involved and take a lead role in these services. There are more opportunities for interaction and a greater focus on being intergenerational.

Involvement of children

Leading in the service	40%
Music	60%
Interaction with others	60%
Praying with others	32%
Bible Reading	52%
Creative arts	60%

In a recent interview with SPANZ, Andrew Becroft, the current Children's Commissioner, said this:

*"There's been too much splitting kids off into separate activities...We need to be creative and proactive. Society will be all the better for it."*³

CHURCH AT PLAY

At St John's in Arrowtown, a new initiative called "Church at Play" has helped to build their children's ministry. Once a month on a Saturday afternoon, they run an all-age interactive event. The programme provides participants with activity stations, games, crafts and a meal. Each month they explore a different theme.

*They now have 50 regulars coming to Church at Play and between 10 and 15 children attend church on a Sunday morning.*⁴

MESSY CHURCH

In Macandrew Bay, a Messy Church service is held once a month on a Friday morning at 7.30 in the local school library. They provide breakfast and messy church activities for children and their parents in the hour before school starts. This is a joint Presbyterian and Anglican venture which started in 2011. Over time, interest has grown and now the parents of the children are contributing to the leadership of the event. This Messy Breakfast Church has been a successful way to build relationships with not only children in the community but with the primary school as well.

³ Jade Reidy, "Children's Commissioner talks church and career", *SPANZ*, Issue 72, Autumn 2018

⁴ <https://www.southernpresbyterians.nz/news/Church-at-Play-2-Apr-2018>

INVOLVEMENT IN WIDER CHURCH LIFE

A question all our churches need to consider is do we value our children enough to involve them in every part of church life? This is a challenge going forward for the Southern Presbytery. For many survey respondents, the involvement of children in the wider life of the church was a difficult question to answer. This is clearly an area for more input and resourcing.

Active involvement of children in church life

Intergenerational activities	42%
Serving in the community together	18%
Social events for all ages	57.4%
Mission projects actively involving children	24.6%
Hospitality actively involving children	16.4%
Church planning and direction	0%
Children are not involved	23%

- ❖ *This is a good challenge for us. We need to be more intentional about involving children in these ways.*
- ❖ *Our Kids Friendly review has encouraged us to ask children to submit their ideas in future goal setting and to consult with them on general matters concerning our church family life.*

He waka eke noa, the SUNZ 2016 report poses the following questions which would be useful questions for the Southern churches to consider.

"What would it look like to include children's input into the direction of the churches? What perspectives and depth might they bring to our conversations and mission experiences? How can they be involved in service projects in their local community or in acts of hospitality?"⁵

⁵ *He waka eke noa* SUNZ 2016, pg 19

3. VISION

OUR CHURCHES HAVE A VISION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Many individual churches have a very real sense of mission to children and these churches are making considerable investment in terms of time, finance and support.

BUDGETS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The survey results indicate that 83.6% of churches make adequate financial provision for children and families work. Respondents gave an overall impression of generosity regardless of whether there is a formal budget or not.

- ❖ *No set budget but generosity always.*
- ❖ *Well supported by a generous budget.*
- ❖ *What we lack in numbers, we make up for in finances.*
- ❖ *Often individuals in the parish will hear of a need and support it financially.*
- ❖ *We have money set aside but as yet no children in the church*

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Sessions and Parish Councils of Southern churches show support for their children and families ministries in a range of ways.

The highest levels of support are given through prayer, pastoral care and finance but there is room for growth in other areas such as supervision and/or mentoring of leaders and representation and/or reporting at Session/Parish Council meetings. Commitment to the Kids Friendly self-review process is an excellent way for Sessions and Parish Councils to demonstrate support for children and families work and the churches which have engaged in Kids Friendly self-reviews have found this a helpful process.

Support for children and families ministries

Prayer	86.9%
Pastoral Care	59%
Supervision of children's ministry leader	31.1%
Mentoring	14.8%
Representation at Session/Parish Council	32.8%
Regular reports at Session/Parish Council	42.6%
Commitment to the Kids Friendly Self Review	26.2%
Financial Support	72%

- ❖ *Our children's ministry is blessed by the support, help and encouragement from Session.*
- ❖ *Regular reporting is the key to Session understanding and supporting this vital ministry.*

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Churches want support for their work with children and families and are constantly looking for resources and ideas. When asked what support and resources they had made use of in the last two years, churches indicated that the highest levels of support came from Kids Friendly. Cheryl Harray's input has been greatly appreciated by many of our churches.

Support and resources used in the last two years

Kids Friendly advisor visit	59.3%
Kids Friendly monthly e-news and website	66.7%
Other children's ministry websites	53.7%
Children's Ministry Network gatherings	24.1%
Scripture Union Way2Go training	31.5%
PCANZ Safety Warrant of Fitness workshop	20.4%
Local resourcing and support from other people and churches in your area	27.8%
Synod funding	14.8%
Other funding	5.6%

- ❖ *Kids Friendly e-news is brilliant.*
- ❖ *The resources on the Kids Friendly are very good, creative and very useful.*
- ❖ *We had a very helpful visit from Cheryl and Brad as our Kids Club ranges from pre-schoolers to young adults. It would be good to have them again.*
- ❖ *The Children's Ministry Network meetings are a great idea – it's good to talk with others from different churches.*

- ❖ *Previous leaders have attended Way2Go and they have found it helpful.*
- ❖ *We receive Ministry of Education funding for mainly music.*
- ❖ *The parish has received Synod funding for a children and families worker.*
- ❖ *We would love to see more happening in our region to support and resource people who work with children and youth.*

An area for further development is to look at how we can increase support and resourcing at a regional level. People involved in children and families ministries want to feel connected to others doing similar work in similar contexts.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

Churches are providing many different programmes for children and families in their communities. CEC programmes in schools, mainly music for pre-schoolers and seasonal community events are the most common.

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

The SUNZ 2016 report suggests that this is also the case nationally.

- 52% of churches run mainly music or other preschool programmes
- 35% of churches are involved in local schools
- 24% of churches run family and community events

Pre-school programmes

mainly music	26.8%
Music and Movement	17.9%
Preschool play groups	17.9%

Primary/school based programmes

Boys or Girls Brigade	10.7%
ICONZ or IFG	3.6%
CEC programmes	32.1%
Other school based groups	8.9%
Other primary aged after school or evening groups	17.9%
School chaplaincy	17.9%
Other volunteering roles in a school	10.7%

Community programmes

Community events/programmes for families/whanau	23.2%
Arts & crafts/skills workshops	5.4%
Holiday programmes	14.3%
SUPAKidz camps	3.6%
Other camps	16.1%

Seasonal events

Light Party or other Halloween event	19.6%
Christmas event	64.3%
Easter event	39.3%

Other community programmes mentioned by respondents included:

- Community Choir
- Food Share/Meals ministry
- Young Mothers Group

CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Churches indicated that there are some connections and relationships developing out of these community programmes. They are seeing some participation in other church programmes and small groups, some attendance of both adults and children at Sunday morning services and some interest and involvement in other church projects.

- ❖ *A great relationship is developing with the local primary school.*
- ❖ *There are fringe people interested and attending sometimes, especially celebration Sundays, especially through the community choir.*
- ❖ *A lot of our church growth has come out of connections made through community involvement. We are seeing adults and children come to church as a response to their participation in mainly music, Bible in Schools and Alpha.*
- ❖ *Some progress but essentially we are still at the sowing seeds stage, building relationships. Building bridges to active church involvement is a work in progress.*

It's encouraging to see that community programmes are opening the way for connections to be made and relationships established but many churches expressed hope for more.

There is an opportunity here for focussed and specific training to give those working with children and families in the community a chance to discuss the challenges they face and share stories with each other.

- ❖ *We are still streamlining our impact as a church to co-operatively be involved in mission.*
- ❖ *Despite our efforts families still choose not to attend services.*
- ❖ *Very few children/youth/adults have transitioned from programmes to church.*

We need to ask ourselves:

- What expectations are realistic?
- What can we do to help build bridges between church and community?

This is a journey of tiny steps and we have to be prepared for the long haul. We also need to make *faith* the main goal, not *numbers*.

PORT CHALMERS

The United Church of Port Chalmers has only two families and 5 children but in 2017 they introduced two very low key programmes to start building relationships with their community. They began opening up their church for afternoon tea on Tuesdays. Parents can pick up their children after school and head over to the church for a snack, chat and play. A couple of regular families now turn up each week. They also started a Friday night Rumpus Room twice a month. The church building is turned into an intergenerational hang out space with games, activities, company and supper. Numbers fluctuate but everyone seems to enjoy it and be comfortable in the space. Word is getting around and people are glad of "something to do" in the neighbourhood.

4. VULNERABILITY

OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MINISTRIES ARE VULNERABLE.

We cannot be complacent with the current statistics of children in our churches and the contact we have with children in our communities.

- *40.7% of Southern churches have less than 5 children attending Sunday morning services.*
- *27.4% do not run a Sunday morning programme for children.*
- *23% do not have children involved in wider church life.*

GREATEST CHALLENGES

Churches were asked to identify the three greatest challenges they face in their children and families ministries. Two areas in particular were identified – the pressure of family commitments and ageing congregations. Making connections with the community, a desire for more children, lack of leadership and lack of time and energy also featured strongly.

The congregation's attitude towards children	3.2%
The availability of child friendly spaces	12.9%
The pressure of family commitments	51.6%
Lack of leadership for children's ministry	33.9%
Encouraging children's faith development	29%
Making connections with the community	37.1%
An ageing congregation	51.6%
Desire for more children	38.7%
Lack of time/energy	37.1%
Financial support	6.5%

There is no doubt that there has been a significant change in our culture. Members of the current generation are not able to commit themselves to the same level of involvement as that of earlier generations. There is also a significant drop off in our intermediate and high school aged children.

*"There are many reasons why teens and young adults don't attend church. One of the main reasons is increased competition for their time. The wide availability of activities on Sunday morning is a massive change from what was available in the 1970s, 80s or even the 90s."*⁶

Another area of vulnerability is the development of our children's faith. This is of great concern as surely our goal should be to foster faith that grows, deepens and sticks. A way forward could be to work at building a strong sense of belonging in our churches by being intentionally intergenerational.

⁶ Matthew Kowloski and Charlotte Hand Greeson, "Why Sunday School Still Matters – And Why it Still Works," www.buildfaith.org September 2017

"Bringing generations together within the church provides benefits and blessings on a variety of levels. Insights from research and pastoral experience tell us that being intentionally intergenerational:

...encourages greater faith in all generations

...fosters leadership regardless of age or stature

...utilizes the strengths (the wisdom, experience, and knowledge) of one generation to meet the needs of another generation."⁷

FAMILY COMMITMENTS

- ❖ *We are creating different ways to make connections with our very variable numbers.*
- ❖ *Generally families are very busy so who turns up week to week varies a lot and trying to organise participation in a Sunday morning service is nuts! We have to be patient and flexible.*
- ❖ *Our families are becoming increasingly busy and are choosing to do other things on Sunday mornings and this has significant implications for the future of our church.*
- ❖ *About half our Children's Church children come from one parent families and about half of them can only come to church every two weeks as they stay with parents alternatively.*

LACK OF LEADERSHIP

- ❖ *Many leaders are in the ageing bracket and recruitment of younger leaders is an ongoing challenge.*
- ❖ *Our leaders are very good but we need more people to help out.*

TIME/ENERGY

- ❖ *Some of the ageing congregation have the best ways of relating to children! It's the younger people who work and have time and energy pressures, and are reluctant to take on more responsibility.*

⁷ John Roberto, "Our Future is Intergenerational," *Christian Education Journal* 9, 2012

- ❖ *All of our children's leaders have busy schedules with their own families and most of us also work.*

AGEING CONGREGATION

- ❖ *We are a very small congregation and in the senior age group. We don't have the energy for a lot of new initiatives.*

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- ❖ *Making connections with people in the community is our ongoing and greatest focus.*
- ❖ *I feel challenged by the opportunities we see in our community and the fact that we can't do everything.*

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ *We have the full range of age groups covered in our programmes so it is imperative that we continue doing our best to encourage all our children in their faith journeys. It is vital therefore, that leaders have all the support needed to nurture children faithfully and effectively to become lifetime disciples. Kids Friendly and Scripture Union are invaluable in our support network.*
- ❖ *We feel concerned about helping our children's faith to keep growing as they move out of childhood into their teen years.*
- ❖ *We are not very intentional about being aware of where our children are in their relationship with God.*

AVAILABILITY OF CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES

- ❖ *Though our church has been recently renovated with specific dedicated children's learning spaces we are now stretched to accommodate an extra class.*

- ❖ *Because we use the local school for our services...it is not our space and we have to pack and unpack each week which takes a lot of time and means children's work can't easily be displayed.*

5. VIBRANCY

THERE ARE NUMEROUS VIBRANT STORIES OF THINGS HAPPENING WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN OUR CHURCHES

The children and families survey generated an amazing response. 62 out of 70 churches (88.6%) completed the survey and many people took the time to write detailed comments in response to the questions. Many wonderful snippets have been recorded which speak of life and health in our churches as children and youth are welcomed and included.

Responses to the survey leave an overall impression that people wanted to tell their stories. The last question encouraged respondents to reflect on 2017 and record what they could celebrate. We received five pages of answers to that question. Our Southern churches are embracing opportunities for all ages to worship, celebrate and serve together. It is clear that intergenerational connections are of paramount importance in growing faith and strengthening our congregations. The survey specifically focussed on children but we can celebrate the good news stories of churches reaching out to people of all ages.

20 CELEBRATION STORIES

WE CAN CELEBRATE....

...our strength in the local schools. Good relationships have been built over a long period of time. We have CRE for the whole year and run church services with Board of Trustees and staff support. These are always very happy occasions.

...our Christmas Eve service which involved 60 children in the cast and was attended by 165 children. At the free café after the service, a child was heard to say "Mummy, I want to find out more about God."

...the appointment of a new Children and Families Ministry leader and becoming a Kids Friendly church.

...the way our youth group is being trialled presently. We have had a baptism of one of our teenagers and Easter Camp has become a “must-go-to” for our youth.

...our Girls Brigade and Preschool group which are full of children. We celebrate being able to sow seeds in their lives which will come to fruition in the future.

...that although we have been a mainly older congregation with only a few children, we have had a younger generation attending. This has been a real blessing to us as they are committed enough to take on various roles in the church.

....our Angels and Heroes Light Party which was an amazing community event. We pulled out all the stops with generous entertainment, food, ice creams and fun. All ages worked together to show our kids that they are special and worthy of our free gift to them.

....our celebration services which were amazing, especially the Matariki service which involved the local school Kapa Haka group and was attended by a large number of families.

...the children we have growing in God – very exciting! We are beginning to see our strategy of having a seamless flow from pre-school to pre-work teenagers paying off with a good number of older teens and those in their 20s sticking with us.

....moving from no children to some children. This has been an encouragement and causes the church to refocus and recognise needs that are beyond those of a predominantly elderly generation.

...our new in-service approach as a way to provide for children. This comes after years of catering poorly for a dwindling Sunday School and one poor person struggling to deliver a programme in a cold unfriendly room to one or two children. Our new approach has allowed everyone to be more aware of the needs and reality of children's ministry. By having the children in the service or being catered for within eyesight, things have become more relaxed and visible, and a shared team approach has grown people's confidence to take the task on. We can build on that from here.

...the fact that our church does care about children and is willing to invest in the appointment of a family worker with responsibilities both within the church and in the local community.

...that our youth group got off to a great start in 2017 with 20 coming along. We still have consistent numbers. Most are unchurched. We are excited for the future and are looking forward to a camp in March.

...that our young people are growing more confident about being involved in church services. They are happy to be involved and the youth are keen to have more learning and connection with other youth groups in the town. They show a lot of commitment.

...that we ran a discipleship training camp for 9 to 13 year olds. During the week-long camp we saw the children become excited about following God because they experienced his presence and power for themselves. It was awesome to see them hungry for more of God.

.... The community meals we started in 2017. This was a real highlight. It has enabled fellowship with all the generations at church and has also been a time when people outside of church have come in.

...that after a couple of years of no Sunday School, we started one up again. We had two trained teachers who inspired and encouraged us by developing creative and fun lessons. Now the Sunday School has grown into 4 different classes and we have 7 talented leaders. The children love it. We also restarted our play group last year and this has been a wonderful support for our mothers and has created a link between the community and the church.

...fresh ideas from our recently employed Youth and Children's worker. We have a wide range of groups that cover a lot of different ages. We have also developed a really close relationship with the local primary school that is feeding in to our children's programmes. New families have come to church in the last year as well. We have a great community outreach with our Music and Movement programme and that too is starting to feed into some of our small groups and programmes.

...the families we have who are very committed to being involved despite their busy lives. Almost all of our families have one parent involved in teaching the children which is great and has led to a pastoral focus not just for the children but for the families as well. I believe our children have a strong sense of belonging. They are involved in most aspects of worship on a Sunday morning and feel comfortable being in an all-age worship space.

...that we fundraised to send a team to Vanuatu. The impact was a growing of faith throughout the whole church. Those involved in the planning saw God making a way. Those who supported were able to connect with people from a different generation in ways we have not seen before. It was an incredible blessing.

It would be great if churches kept sharing their stories. The new Southern Presbyterian website and newsletter could provide a way to keep on celebrating the wonderful things happening for children and families in our churches.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The responses to the survey make it very clear that we can celebrate the **VISION** churches have for children and families and the **VALUE** that is given to them. There are many examples of **VARIETY** and **VIBRANCY** in our children and families ministries but we also need to acknowledge the **VULNERABILITIES** we face.

The review raises some important questions:

1. *How are we building a strong sense of belonging for people of all ages in our churches?*
2. *How are we involving our children in every part of church life?*
3. *What are we doing to help our children develop faith?*
4. *What are we doing to build bridges between church and community?*

The review highlights some areas of need going forward:

1. *To increase support and resourcing at a regional level.*
2. *To provide focussed and specific input and training for people working with children and families in similar ministry contexts.*
3. *To help churches foster intergenerational relationships.*
4. *To encourage churches to share their stories of what is happening in their context with children and families.*

The review suggests some areas for future resourcing:

1. *Children's faith development*
2. *Intergenerational worship*
3. *Regional gatherings*
4. *Networking for children's ministry leaders*
5. *Enabling the contributions of children to church planning, mission and service.*

The review makes it clear that a significant level of support and encouragement has been given to our churches through the fulltime resource role filled by Cheryl Harray since 2010. In October 2017, Cheryl chose to reduce her hours to 75%. This creates an opportunity to be creative and focussed with the remaining 10 hours.

Going forward, we strongly recommend that 40 hours of funding for work with children and families is continued and that the 10 hours of funding now available be used to employ someone to work alongside Cheryl Harray to specifically target areas identified by this report.