Children in an Intergenerational Church Community: Lessons for the Church of Scotland from the Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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MTh Ministry Studies

August 2020

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Abstract

For over fifty years, the number of children participating in the life of the Church of Scotland has been declining, leading some to call for a reconsideration of the place of children in the Church. This dissertation begins that work by seeking to establish a theological rationale for the place of children within an intergenerational church community. Beginning with an exploration of how the societal changes brought about by universal education led to the birth of the Sunday School Movement, the development of an age-segregated model of church is outlined. It is shown that this has led to a situation where a child's experience of church is primarily educational, with an adult as teacher and child as learner, and in which relationships are used to influence a child towards a particular end. Attention is then turned to the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in search of normative criteria for an alternative model. Bonhoeffer's understanding of Jesus Christ as the incarnate, crucified and resurrected God-man, combined with his concepts of personhood, church-community and *Stellvertretung* ("place-sharing") are considered and it is shown that a child can and should play a full part in an intergenerational community. This leads to a call to the Church to move from age-segregation to intergenerationality, from an educational to an experiential model, from being unidirectional (adult-to-child) to mutual place-sharing, and from using relationships as means to gain influence to understanding relationships as an end in themselves in which Christ is revealed. 'Rules of art' are presented to outline the changes this requires in the mindset of the church, but also in its practice of worship, formation and hospitality. What emerges is a picture of church as an intergenerational space of hospitality, where all ages serve and are served by one another, experiencing formation through encounter with the living Christ present in their relationships.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The opening and closing scenes of the 1938 film *Day by Day* depict families attending a Church of Scotland congregation, and show multiple generations of adults and children worshipping together.[1] Portrayed as typical at that time, such scenes are not commonplace in today's Church of Scotland, where normal practice has become to separate adults and children during all or part of worship. Moreover, one in five of the Kirk's congregations have no children as part of their lives at all.[2] The Church has faced a steady decline in the involvement of young people. In 1984, around 124,000 children aged under eighteen attended a Church of Scotland congregation on a Sunday morning, with a further 112,000 in that age group attending a church-run uniformed organisation.[3] Twenty years later, the total number of under-18s involved had fallen to under 80,000[4] and by 2018 dropped further to 47,000.[5] This rapid decline in the numbers of children participating in the life of the Church of Scotland suggests that its current methods are not engaging today's children.

Confronted with this problem, the time has come for the Church of Scotland to re-evaluate the place of children in its life, and to consider the value in bringing different generations together again. This paper seeks to use the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a lens through which to

[1] Scottish Churches Film Guild, *Day by Day* (Ayr: Ayr Film Unit, 1938), 16mm film, 14 min, National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive Reference 5003.
[2] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2019* (Edinburgh: The Church of Scotland Assembly Arrangements Committee, 2019), 16.
[3] RD Kernohan, *Our Church: A Guide to the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1985), 82.
[4] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2004* (Edinburgh: The Church of Scotland Assembly Arrangements Committee, 2004), 38/1.
[5] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2019*, 44.

explore the question of what changes the Church of Scotland could make to include children in an intergenerational church community. Before turning to this task, two important pieces of groundwork are required: an understanding of the term 'intergenerational' and some background justifying the usefulness of Bonhoeffer as a conversation partner.

a) A Definition of 'Intergenerational'

James White defines "intergenerational religious experience" as "two or more different age groups of people in a religious community together learning/growing/living in faith through in-common experiences, parallel learning, contributive-occasions, and interactive sharing."[6] According to Holly Catherton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, it is this 'in-common' and 'interactive' nature that sets *intergenerational* church apart from another commonly used term, *multigenerational* church.[7] Whereas *multigenerational* implies only "that the church honours all generations and has programming for all generations"[8], the term *intergenerational* indicates an intentional interaction between different generations. It is important to make this distinction, as "while many churches are multigenerational and seemingly healthy on the surface, in reality, the generations are like ships in the night that pass by one another but rarely have meaningful contact and interaction."[9] Ross provides a helpful summary of a ministry which has moved beyond multigenerational to intergenerational:

> Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally brings the generations together in mutual serving, sharing or learning within the core

[6] James W White, *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theories, and Prescription for Inter-age Life and Learning in the Faith Community* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988), 18.
[7] Holly Catherton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross*, Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 19.
[8] ibid.
[9] Peter Menconi, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to www.com* (Littleton: Mt. Sage Publishing, 2010), 13.

> activities of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community.[10]

This highlights the significance of intentionality and mutuality in a ministry which is intergenerational, and so this will be taken as a working definition throughout.

b) The Relevance of Bonhoeffer

Why turn to the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer? With the exception of 'Theses on Youth Work in the Church',[11] there appear to be no writings of Bonhoeffer which directly address the topic concerned. There are, however, two principal reasons Bonhoeffer nevertheless offers a useful conversation partner for this topic: his church context and developments in recent scholarship.

First, the importance of Bonhoeffer's church context. Eberhard Bethge notes that at the same time Bonhoeffer began work on his dissertation,

> he began working with a children's Sunday school group… just as he was embarking on the heavy reading load demanded by *Sanctorum Communio*, he was devoting himself to a group of children who required a considerable amount of his time.[12]

Ministry among children and young people of this sort continued to be part of Bonhoeffer's life wherever he travelled. In Barcelona, he made personal visits to the homes of children to revitalise a Sunday school and devoted much of his time to being with them.[13] In New York, while at Union Theological Seminary, he led the Abyssinian Baptist Church's Sunday school and "took part in countless discussions and in excursions with the church youth."[14] He was the

[10] Christine Ross, "A Qualitative Study Exploring Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry" (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 2006), 127.
[11] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 515-518.
[12] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 91.
[13] ibid., 109.
[14] Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906-1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 65.

European youth secretary of the ecumenical movement,[15] taught a confirmation class in Wedding[16] and organised "youth discussion groups" in London.[17] Thus, children and young people played an important role throughout Bonhoeffer's experience of church at the same time as he was developing many of his academic works. As Andrew Root puts it, "As Bonhoeffer wrote about the concrete church, he was doing concrete ministry with children."[18] Given that ministry among children and young people was a constant part of his life and that, for Bonhoeffer, "life and theology cannot be separated; theology is constructed from within real life and experience"[19], Root's claim that some of the ideas emerging in Bonhoeffer's theology "may very well have had their creative origins, or at least gained energy, in his children's/youth ministry experience"[20] seems reasonable.

There is evidence of the influence of children on Bonhoeffer's thinking in passages where he uses the example of a child to illustrate a theological concept. For example, in *Sanctorum Communio*, he uses a child to outline the difference between a society and a community: "Unlike the society, a community can support young children as well… young children in a community are part of their parents' will until they can will for themselves – a thought that would be absurd in a society."[21] The baptism of infants is used to demonstrate the objective spirit of the church-community.[22] In *Discipleship*, he uses the example of a child re-interpreting a father's instruction to go to bed to illustrate disobedience to a commandment of

[15] Andrew Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker: A Theological Vision for Discipleship and Life Together* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 91.
[16] Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 226.
[17] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 118.
[18] ibid., 43.
[19] Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 86.
[20] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 43.
[21] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 90.
[22] ibid., 241.

Jesus,[23] while in *Act and Being* the child is described as the eschatological form of humanity.[24] These examples, coupled with the prominent place of children in Bonhoeffer's church context, demonstrate that his ministry among children was a formative influence on his theology, making his work a fruitful source of insight in answering the task before us.

The second reason Bonhoeffer is relevant is the recent development of his ideas in the work of Andrew Root. Root first drew attention to Bonhoeffer's relevance to the field of youth ministry in 2007,[25] and followed this with an in-depth study of Bonhoeffer's life in 2014.[26] This work formed a centrepiece of the Church of Scotland's 'Year of Young People' celebrations in 2018.[27] Although Root's work on Bonhoeffer focuses on the area of youth ministry, it has already been further developed into related disciplines such as education.[28] Expanding this work further into the area intergenerational ministry is therefore both relevant and timely.

1.2 Aims

In 2017, the Church of Scotland's General Assembly encouraged every congregation "to consider how intergenerational work and ministry might be of benefit in their congregations and parishes,"[29] yet no theological framework to underpin and guide such considerations has been developed. This situation is not unique to the Church of Scotland. Allen and Ross note that interest in intergenerational ministry is increasing across the Western church – prior to

[23] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 79-80.
[24] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 159.
[25] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*.
[26] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker.*
[27] Church of Scotland, "Andy Root on Relational Ministry Reimagined: Part 1," YouTube Video, 52:58, October 24, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCwsIfZMUtU.
[28] Brant Himes, "Discipleship as Theological Praxis: Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a Resource for Educational Ministry," *Christian Education Journal* 8, no. 2 (2011): 263-277.
[29] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2017* (Edinburgh: The Church of Scotland Assembly Arrangements Committee, 2017), 14/1.

2000, James White's *Intergenerational Religious Education*[30] was "the only widely read book on intergenerationality and Christian settings," however the following decade saw almost a dozen books published on the subject.[31] They also note, however, that the lack of a sound theological basis is also widespread, describing intergenerationality as a "practice in search of a theory".[32] The development of a theological rationale for including children in an intergenerational church community is the principal aim of this paper. Though largely limiting its source material only to the writings of Bonhoeffer, the intention is that this work should set the foundations on which the Church can further build its theology of children and intergenerationality. It aims to present both an outline of the changes in practice the Church of Scotland requires to make, and a theological justification which advocates the need to take such action.

1.3 Methodology

It remains to establish the methodology to be used in achieving these aims. Richard Osmer outlines four tasks of practical theological interpretation[33] which provide a useful framework. The first task is "descriptive/empirical," involving gathering information on the current situation, which he broadly sums up with the question "What is going on?" Here, a 'mixed methods' research strategy combining both quantitative statistical data and qualitative data from document analysis will be used to establish a picture of the current practice of children's ministry and intergenerational ministry in the Church of Scotland. The second, "interpretive," task seeks to establish why the current situation is occurring, that is "Why is this going on?" and will seek to establish the history of how the status quo came to be. The third, "normative,"

[30] White, *Intergenerational Religious Education*.
[31] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 23.
[32] ibid., 99.
[33] Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

task answers the question, "What ought to be going on?" using the method of theological interpretation. In this instance, the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be used to interpret the place of the child in an intergenerational community in order to establish normative criteria. Finally, the "pragmatic" task seeks to establish practical action that will improve the current situation, corresponding to the question, "How might we respond?" Given the diversity that exists within the Church of Scotland, a broad 'model of practice' will be described, with 'rules of art' offered to paint a picture of what a pragmatic response might look like in a local congregation.

1.4 Outline

Osmer's method provides a conceptual framework which will form the basis of Chapters Two to Five. Chapter Two answers the descriptive/empirical question, demonstrating that intergenerational ministry is not given high priority in many Church of Scotland congregations. It will be shown that a more typical picture sees children separated from worship into an educationally focussed Sunday school, with adult-child relationships being unidirectional in the sense of teacher to pupil, and relational capital used to influence children towards particular beliefs or behaviours. The interpretive task of Chapter Three focuses on understanding why this came to be. Charting the history of intergenerationality from the early church in Acts, it will be shown that the educational mindset developed in line with the Protestant Reformation. It will be demonstrated that the reason children came to be removed from the bulk of the worship service included a desire to follow educational theories, a response to the rise of individualism and a trend for church growth theories, but largely grew out of practicality and convenience.

Chapter Four turns to Bonhoeffer in search of normative standards. His understanding that Jesus Christ is always God incarnate, crucified and resurrected, together with his claims that Christ is concretely present in the church-community in the relationship between 'I' and 'You' will be used to outline four normative movements the Church of Scotland should make: from age-segregated to intergenerational; from educational to experiential; from relationships as tools of influence to relationships as revelatory; and from unidirectional teacher-pupil relationships to mutual place-sharing. The pragmatic task of Chapter Five outlines four 'rules of art' to demonstrate the impact these movements must have on the Church's mindset and practices of worship, formation and hospitality. What emerges is a picture of an intergenerational community that meets primarily in a space and attitude of hospitality, where all ages serve and are served by one another.

1.5 Summary

The Church of Scotland is at a critical juncture, particularly in relation to its ministry with children, whose numbers are steadily declining. There is a need for change, but also for the Church to establish a theological framework for a new way of being, and this paper sets out such a framework urging a move to include children in an intergenerational church community. By exploring what the place of children in the Church of Scotland is and how it came to be that way, then turning to imagine what it could and should be like and how that might be achieved, the hope is to inspire the Church to rediscover the importance of intergenerational relationship that lies at the heart of what it is to be the family of God.

2. The Descriptive-Empirical Task: What is going on?

The first step towards considering what changes the Church of Scotland could make to include children as part of an intergenerational church community is to form a broad picture of the current situation. As the nurture of children is the responsibility of local parties (the parish minister and Kirk Session[34]) rather than part of a national scheme, there is great diversity in how children are involved from congregation to congregation. A detailed analysis of the exact situation in each congregation is beyond the scope of this project and is unnecessary in fulfilling the task in question. Instead, the aim of this chapter is to paint a 'broad brushstrokes picture' which fairly summarises the situation typical across the Church of Scotland as a whole.

Osmer describes a "mixed methods" research strategy, combining both quantitative data from surveys and statistics, and qualitative data from, for example, document analysis.[35] This approach will be used for this descriptive-empirical task, drawing on quantitative data compiled by the Church of Scotland and its Councils, together with qualitative reports from a range of sources. It will be helpful to divide this descriptive task into two parts: the current state of intergenerational ministry in the Church of Scotland, and its current approach to children's ministry.

2.1 Intergenerational Ministry in the Church of Scotland

The only wide-ranging survey into intergenerational practice in the Church of Scotland was undertaken in 2016 and drew only 48 responses from over 1300 congregations – a response

[34] James T. Cox, *Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Committee on General Administration, The Church of Scotland, 1976), 128-129.
[35] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 49-53.

rate of under four percent.[36] The authors of the study were keen to point out the "wide geographical spread and roughly equal representation of rural, town, suburban and city churches"[37] in the responses, indicating that the results could be taken as representative of the whole Church. This, however, ignores the likelihood that many congregations who undertake no intergenerational activity may have opted not to respond. Such a low level of response suggests that there is not presently a high awareness of, or priority given to, intergenerational ministry in the Church of Scotland. With that significant caveat, the survey can nevertheless provide some useful insights into the current situation.

Allen and Ross describe three useful terms in exploring the practice of intergenerationality in churches: intergenerational experiences, intergenerational outlook and intergenerational ministry.[38] 'Intergenerational experience' refers to experiences where several members of different generations are present and interacting in the given activity. An 'intergenerational outlook' is one in which the gifts brought by every generation to the others are seen as strengthening the whole church, while 'intergenerational ministry' uses these gifts, "creating frequent opportunities for various generations to communicate in meaningful ways, to interact on a regular basis, and to minister, worship and serve together regularly."[39] These terms will serve as helpful categories in describing the current picture in the Church of Scotland.

Twenty-six of the responses (around 54%) to the Church of Scotland survey indicated 'one-off' or irregular intergenerational events, typically held seasonally or annually.[40] These events were largely social in nature (such as a quiz, party or fête) and while they offered an

[36] Church of Scotland Guild, "Who's Working Together in Your Church?" (survey of Church of Scotland congregations, September 2016).
[37] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2017*, 14/3.
[38] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 20-21.
[39] ibid., 21.
[40] Church of Scotland Guild, "Who's Working Together in Your Church?"

intergenerational experience, they would not meet the definition of intergenerational ministry owing to their nature and irregularity. A small number of events reported were more focussed on service (namely "packing shoeboxes for Blythswood" and a climate change conference[41]), but the irregular occurrence of such events does not meet the "frequent opportunities" criterion in the definition of intergenerational ministry. Thus, it can be concluded that some congregations in the Church of Scotland provide occasional opportunities for intergenerational experience, but do not practice intergenerational ministry and could not be described as holding an intergenerational outlook.

Fourteen respondents (around 30%) reported regular and ongoing intergenerational opportunities for worship and service (including Messy Church, café church, all-age choirs and charitable activities) which could better be defined as intergenerational ministry.[42] Of these, five indicated intentional intergenerational involvement across the breadth of church life. (For example, one congregation had established an intergenerational management group to oversee a building project; another had intergenerational teams plan and lead worship on a weekly basis.) Such congregations clearly demonstrate an intergenerational outlook in their work and ministry. In contrast, eight respondents (around 16%) indicated that they undertook no intentionally intergenerational activity.[43]

The report highlights that some congregations practicing intergenerational ministry adopt a mixed approach, with times of generational segregation as well as integration.[44] For example, some offer intergenerational worship at particular seasons, on a monthly basis, or for part of the worship time only. Such a pattern is well established in the Church of Scotland – Finlay

[41] ibid.
[42] ibid.
[43] ibid.
[44] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2017*, 14/4-14/5.

Macdonald documents that by the second half of the twentieth century, "From time to time 'family services' might be held, which involved all-age worship" and that these would generally coincide with seasonal festivals.[45] Thus, there is a longstanding tradition in many congregations of attempting to make room for intergenerational experiences and ministry, even if only occasionally.

The results of the Church of Scotland's 2016 survey show that, even from a small and self-selecting sample group, there is a spectrum of intergenerational practice across the Kirk. A small number of congregations (only 5 were identified) have adopted an intergenerational outlook, offering regular opportunity for intergenerational ministry and experience across the life of the church. More congregations (over half of the small number who responded) are offering occasional opportunities for intergenerational experiences, but this has not permeated the culture of the congregation and it could not be said to practice intergenerational ministry. Some congregations offer a 'mixed economy' somewhere between the two. The majority of congregations – as indicated by the low participation rate in the survey – may be practicing no intentionally intergenerational work at all. Further evidence of a lack of intergenerational ministry can be found as we turn to the second part of the descriptive task and consider the typical approach to children's ministry within the Church of Scotland.

[45] Finlay A. J. MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2004), 83-84.

2.2 Children in the Church of Scotland

a) Sunday Schools

With the exception of the occasional 'family service' as outlined above, the typical pattern of involving children in the life of a congregation has largely been on an age-segregated basis. Macdonald notes:

> A typical mid- to late-twentieth-century Sunday worship pattern within the Church of Scotland involved children attending the first part of the service, during which the minister would address some words particularly to them, before they departed to the hall for Sunday School.[46]

This pattern is still normative across many congregations today. In the Church of Scotland's most recent publication on children's ministry, Suzi Farrant observes that "our services are generally structured in such a way that children are only present for the first couple of hymns/songs, a prayer and a children's talk before being ushered out to their own activities."[47] Older children and teenagers may not even spend part of the time in worship, says Farrant, but take part in their own activities for the duration of the Sunday service, while very young children may spend the entire time in a crèche. The activities children take part in have "borrowed educational methods from schools and created a curriculum, segregate[ed] according to age."[48] Even within children's groups or Sunday schools, the suggestion is that many further sub-divide by age group. A study by the Church's Mission and Discipleship Council found that "These groups tend to focus on teaching children bible stories with children being very much seen as recipients in need of knowledge rather than as people with an innate

[46] ibid., 83.
[47] Suzi Farrant, "Children and Young People in the Church" in *Learn: Children and Young People*, ed. Suzi Farrant (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2017), 9.
[48] ibid.

spirituality that needs nurturing."[49] The predominant model of children's ministry in the Church of Scotland, then, is educational, with adult teachers and child learners.

The adoption of an educational model – and even the nomenclature "Sunday school" – has two significant corollaries according to the Church of England, which follows a largely similar pattern. The first is that "For children there are implications that Christian learning is something which you finish and leave behind you in the same way as you leave school."[50] The age-segregated, educational model carries with it a suggestion that Christian learning is not (or at least need not be) life-long. One ecumenical report takes this idea further and argues that the consequences of this understanding has lasting effects into adulthood: "for some adults its association with formal and didactic methods of learning have acted as an effective roadblock to any progress along the path of religious and spiritual formation."[51] This could explain why "In the Kirk, a large number drift away before the age" at which they would normally be expected to request formal membership of the church.[52] The second consequence of the current model is that it "tends to put the teacher or leader into the role of the one who knows and the children into the position of those who need to know; teacher and taught, instructor and instructed."[53] This creates a further divide between the ages – older generations teach while younger generations learn – and implies that Christian learning is unidirectional from adult to child.

[49] Suzi Farrant, "Work with 0-25 Year Olds in the Church of Scotland" (paper presented at meeting of Church of Scotland Mission & Discipleship Council Children and Young People Working Group, Edinburgh, October 24, 2013).
[50] General Synod Board of Education, *Children in the Way: New Directions for the Church's Children* (London: National Society/Church House Publishing, 1988), 28.
[51] Consultative Group on Ministry Among Children, *Unfinished Business: Children and the Churches* (London: CCBI Publications, 2000), 22.
[52] Kernohan, *Our Church*, 84.
[53] General Synod Board of Education, *Children in the Way*, 29.

b) Recent Developments: Junior Church

Although an educational model of Sunday school is still commonplace, Doug Swanney observed a trend in the early 2000s for churches to adapt this model to include elements of worship and service, as well as learning, in a 'junior church'.[54] "These junior churches offer both teaching and praise," says Swanney, meaning they "are seen as being an integral part of the whole life of the church."[55] This shift in emphasis addresses some of the concerns around the implications of adult-to-child education, although "teaching" still plays a major part – Farrant notes that 46% of congregations still use a common educational curriculum.[56] Worship may be deliberately included, but it is worship with a group of peers of similar age, not as part of the wider congregation. The term 'junior church' serves in itself to highlight the inherent division by age, carrying the connotation that its participants are not yet part of 'grown-up church'. Whether a congregation offers a more traditional educational model, or incorporates additional elements of worship and service, separation by age-group remains a common factor.

c) Recent Developments: Relational Ministry

Root observes another development prevalent across the mainstream Western church: a focus on leaders building relationships with children.[57] This mirrors trends in wider society: "Personal relationships guide strategies of engagement in all other structures of culture, whether in family, government or larger society."[58] He does not doubt the importance of relationship and welcomes this focus in church groups, but he cautions that the current focus

[54] Doug Swanney, "Children First" in *Inside Verdict: A Changing Church in a Changing Scotland*, ed. Steve Mallon (Edinburgh: Scottish Christian Press, 2003), 69.
[55] ibid.
[56] Farrant, "Work with 0-25s in the Church of Scotland".
[57] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 21.
[58] ibid., 70.

on relational ministry in the area of youth and children's ministry focuses on individuals as the sum total of their interests[59] and views relationships as means to gain influence. He writes that, "Instead of seeking to touch the mysterious inner reality of relationships we have too often settled for using relationships as a means to influence kids toward certain ends."[60] In its work with children and young people, the church uses relationships for "cultural leverage" to encourage children to believe certain things or behave in certain ways.[61] These might be laudable ends with which the church should be concerned, but the approach fails to value the relationship in its own right: "we use relationships… to influence the interests of individuals, seeking to convert not their person, but their interests."[62] The risks entailed in such an approach include "making relationships only about personal influence, worship about individualistic emotion, and mission about volunteeristic service."[63] An influential Church of Scotland report in 2001 stated that, "Young people are crying out for the Church to recover the relational quality and integrity characterised by the grace and truth of Jesus."[64] This report set the tone for much of the age-specific work that followed in the church, making the risks that Root outlines a present reality for the Church.

d) Sacraments

The involvement (or otherwise) of children in one other area of the Church's worship merits particular consideration – the sacraments of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper. Baptism in the Church of Scotland does not depend on age and is open to infants.[65] In 2018, over 90% of

[59] Andrew Root, *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013), 48.
[60] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 10.
[61] ibid., 72.
[62] Root, *The Relational Pastor*, 49.
[63] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 79.
[64] Church of Scotland, *Church Without Walls: Report to the General Assembly 2001 by the Special Commission* (Edinburgh: Parish Education Publications, 2001), 23.
[65] Kernohan, *Our Church*, 30-32.

Baptisms in the Church of Scotland were of children.[66] The whole congregation is usually asked to make a commitment to welcome the child and to "share with them the knowledge and love of Christ."[67] Since 1992, the Church of Scotland has permitted baptised children to partake in the Lord's Supper.[68] In 2018, however, only 2,968 of the Church's 47,251 children received Holy Communion[69] – this is around just six percent. Added to that, more than three quarters of congregations reported having no children take part within the last year.[70] In a 2017 survey, one significant reason given by congregations who do not include children in the Lord's Supper was that "Children were not present in worship, or were in their own groups when communion took place."[71] This demonstrates just one impact of operating an age-segregated model: while both sacraments are open to children, far fewer participate in the Lord's Supper than are baptised. Separation according to age therefore denies the majority of the Church's children the opportunity to encounter God in the Sacrament.

e) Consequences

At the turn of the century, a wide-ranging report into the life of the Church of Scotland suggested that "all the excellent youth work of two generations has been frozen out of Church life because we have failed to build relationships of friendship across the generations."[72] The recommendation was made "that congregations determine to integrate children and young people into the life of the congregation."[73] Two decades on, the fact that age-segregation for

[66] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2019*, 47-48.
[67] Panel on Worship of the Church of Scotland, *Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1996), 92.
[68] Macdonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, 89-90.
[69] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2019*, 44.
[70] Church of Scotland, *Together at the Table* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Mission and Discipleship Council, 2019), 4.
[71] ibid., 5.
[72] Church of Scotland, *Church Without* Walls, 23.
[73] ibid.

part or all of worship remains the norm suggests that many congregations have taken few or no steps towards changing this situation. Farrant critiques that "children are missing out on part of the richness and diversity of the Church and an encounter with God through participation in worship, and the church is missing out on the joy, exuberance and questioning spirit of children."[74] It is not only the spiritual life of the child that is diminished by age-segregation, but the whole church that is impoverished. This, combined with statistics showing decline in the numbers of children involved in the church for more than half a century[75], demonstrates a growing dis-ease with the status quo.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has explored 'What is going on?' in relation to involving children in intergenerational community in the Church of Scotland. It was demonstrated that the practice of intergenerational ministry is neither widespread nor given sufficient priority. A small number of congregations have adopted an intergenerational outlook, although a larger number offer occasional opportunities for intergenerational experience. Some congregations offer a mixed economy of age-separation and intergenerational experience, while many congregations do not consciously undertake intergenerational practices.

It was shown that a more typical scenario is one in which children attend a short section of the worship service, which may be tailored toward them, before retiring to activities determined by age-group. This may take the form of a "Sunday school" built on an educational model, or a "junior church" which may also have structured elements of worship and service, though

[74] Farrant, "Children and Young People in the Church", 9.
[75] Church of Scotland, *Church Without Walls*, 23.

education still plays a major part. Relationships in this context often serve the purpose of influencing a young person towards a particular set of beliefs or behaviours. It was also noted that although children account for the vast majority of baptisms, opportunities are not widely available for their participation in Holy Communion. Consequences resulting from this model can include creating the impression that Christian learning is for children (and therefore not adults), creating a 'teacher-pupil' divide between generations, and a lack of opportunities for children to experience encounter with God and for the whole congregation to benefit from the presence of all ages. The current situation in the Church of Scotland could be summarised as age-segregated rather than intergenerational, educational rather than experiential in mindset (where the learning is unidirectional from adult teachers to child learners) and where relationships are used for influence towards a particular end. Chapter Three now seeks to understand how this situation came to be.

3. The Interpretive Task: Why is this going on?

According to Osmer, "The interpretive task of practical theological interpretation draws on theories… to better understand and explain why certain events are occurring."[76] Having answered the question, 'What is going on?' it is necessary to understand *why* this is the case prior to considering 'What ought to be going on?' Before reflecting on any changes that could be made to the current situation described in Chapter Two, then, it is important to understand why and how the Church of Scotland adopted an age-segregated model. Are children separated from the congregation by age because of theological conviction, educational theory, practical expediency, or a combination of these and other factors? The answer to questions such as this will determine to what extent change is possible or, indeed, desirable. This chapter seeks to answer these interpretive questions by exploring the historical development of the place of children in both the church and in surrounding society.

3.1 Historical Development

a) The Early Church

Churches have not always separated children from adults. It will be helpful to trace a brief history of the place of children in the church stretching back to the earliest churches of the first century. Acts records the church of the first-century meeting in in homes,[77] as do some Pauline letters.[78] Andrew Clarke draws attention to the significance of the home as the context of the early church: while the house provides a physical location for meeting, the family living in the

[76] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 7.
[77] e.g. Acts 2:46, 5:42, 16:32, 20:20.
[78] e.g. Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, Philemon 2.

home provides the "social context," that is the basis of a congregation.[79] Whole families, including children, would be present during the church meeting,[80] meaning that "children observed the faith commitments of their parents in real, concrete ways."[81] The presence of all ages in the faith community is demonstrated, for example, when children accompany their families to bid farewell to Paul as he left Tyre.[82] Allen and Ross summarise that "all generations were typically present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger, and for support and service."[83] Children were not only present in the church community but were full members of it – John Pridmore makes this case citing Paul's exhortation to children in Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21:

> Paul could hardly have addressed the children in the terms he does unless it was taken for granted that they were fully members of the Christian community. Their status as members of the Church is as sure of that of their parents for the whole Christian household is ἐν τω κυρίω [in the Lord].[84]

The earliest churches, then, were inherently intergenerational in experience, ministry and outlook, with whole families – including children – present and regarded as full members of the community. This remained the normative situation in the church "throughout most of Christian history until fairly recently."[85] The key consideration of this interpretive task will be to determine when – and more importantly, why – this situation changed.

[79] Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 160-162.
[80] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 82-84.
[81] M. Scott Miles, *Families Growing Together* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990), 12.
[82] Acts 21:3-6.
[83] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 84.
[84] John Pridmore, *The New Testament Theology of Childhood* (Hobart: Ron Buckland, 1977), 185.
[85] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 35.

b) The Reformation

According to Allan Harkness, the shift began at the time of the Protestant Reformation and its stress on "the Word" which required a more formal educational approach.[86] Allen and Ross agree: "Prior to the Reformation… the masses were taught their father's trade and learned of life and faith through home, church and community. The Reformers' focus on *everyone* being able to read Scripture…ushered in mandated schooling for all."[87] Scotland was said to be an "early leader" in the cause of universal schooling for children[88] as is recorded in the Church of Scotland's First Book of Discipline in 1560: "Of necessity therefore we judge it, that every single church have a schoolmaster appointed… to teach grammar and the Latin tongue."[89] The Reformers noted that "the youth and tender children shall be nourished… in presence of their friends,"[90] thus paving the way for age-segregation within education. It must be noted, however, that this was not yet a separation of ages in the worship life of the church – indeed, the First Book of Discipline states that "men, women and children would be exhorted to exercise themselves in the Psalms, that when the church convenes, and does sing, they may be the more able together with common heart and voice to praise God."[91] This demonstrates that while the Reformation introduced the idea of age-segregated learning in its desire for universal education, the worshipping church community immediately post-Reformation continued to be intergenerational.

[86] Allan G. Harkness, "Intergenerational Christian Educaton: An Imperative for Effective Education in Local Churches (Part 1)", *Journal of Christian Education* 41, no. 2 (1998), 7.
[87] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 36.
[88] Brian V. Hill, "Is it Time We Deschooled Christianity?", *Journal of Christian Education* 63 (1978): 6.
[89] "The First Book of Discipline (1560)", accessed May 18, 2020, www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLs/bod_ch03.htm.
[90] ibid.
[91] ibid.

c) The Sunday School Movement

The establishment of a school in each parish took "some time" to achieve,[92] but these parish schools were "where children from all backgrounds learned to read and write"[93] and were the first step towards the establishment of the Sunday school. By the mid eighteenth century[94], churches in Brechin and Calton in the Barony had established Sunday evening schools for "destitute children" who did not receive schooling during the week, and it was common practice for parish schoolmasters to "assemble their classes on Sunday mornings and lead them in prayer before conducting them to church."[95] By the 1780s, Sunday schools had opened in Glasgow and Aberdeen "to provide basic educational training for children who received no schooling on weekdays" because they were employed in factories or whose parents could not afford school fees. These schools employed professional, salaried teachers and were concerned with general – not just Christian – education.[96]

A "second phase of Sunday school expansion" began at the end of the eighteenth century as "there was a distinct switch of evangelical interest from foreign to home missions."[97] Through the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home' more religiously-focussed Sunday schools were established across Scotland, led now by unpaid, voluntary teachers. These met "after public worship" and in their earliest days were intergenerational in outlook: "Old and young, men and women, boys and girls, were invited to attend, they did attend in their

[92] Harry Reid, *Reformation: The Dangerous Birth of the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2009), 246-248.
[93] Swanney, "Children First", 69.
[94] Pre-dating the establishment of the Sunday School Movement by Robert Raikes in Gloucester.
[95] Callum G. Brown, "The Sunday School Movement in Scotland, 1780-1914", *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 21 (1981): 3-4.
[96] ibid., 4-5.
[97] ibid., 9.

multitudes."[98] While largely operated by independent societies, these Sunday schools came to be attached to particular congregations by the 1870s, and generally took place in church halls.[99] The shift in curriculum from general to Christian education was completed following the creation of a national education system in 1873, causing the churches to re-evaluate the purpose of Sunday schools. In this new context of universal schooling, it was decided that the role of the Sunday school should be to "maintain religious education among young people,"[100] reducing their attendees largely to the children of church members.[101] In this manner, the Sunday school became less of a missional outreach of the church, and was re-purposed as the locus of Christian education for children within the church.

Although by the end of the Victorian era children in the Church of Scotland could attend Sunday schools for the purpose of religious education, there was not yet a complete separation of children and adults in the church. Sunday schools tended to meet "before dawn or after dark"[102] and certainly outside of the church's worship time. Given that it is now almost universally the case that Sunday schools meet concurrently with worship,[103] thus age-segregating the congregation, how and why did this come about? At least four reasons can be listed as contributing factors: dependence on educational models, church growth strategies, the rise of individualism and practical expediency. These will now be examined in turn.

[98] William Porteous correspondence to Lord Advocate, February 21, 1798, quoted in Brown, "The Sunday School Movement in Scotland", 10.
[99] Brown, "The Sunday School Movement in Scotland", 14-15.
[100] ibid., 17.
[101] ibid., 19-20.
[102] ibid., 19.
[103] Farrant, "Children and Young People in the Church", 9.

3.2 Contributing Factors to Age-segregation

a) Educational Theories

In the 1960s and 1970s, theories of cognitive development developed by Jean Piaget and others brought about changes in secular school education, including the use of the five senses through the likes of visual aids, kinesthetics and group participation, as these were deemed more suited to the way children learn.[104] Given the centrality of 'teaching' within the reformed tradition of worship and the existence of Sunday schools as instruments of Christian education, churches "began to think about ways these new ideas about school could be translated into congregational religious education."[105] Teaching in the context of the worship service was centred around the sermon, an almost uniquely aural experience, and "it was simply deemed age inappropriate for children to sit through 'boring' hymns, prayers and/or sermons when they could be more actively involved in teaching and activities that accommodated shorter attention spans and more body movement."[106] Allen and Ross note that this "seemed to be based on pedagogically sound rationale,"[107] though Harkness highlights that such an approach fails to realise the differing nature of 'education' in the context of a faith community as opposed to a classroom.[108] Nevertheless, a desire to offer the best in Christian education for the church's children by adopting the educational development theories of secular education meant moving the timing of Sunday schools to coincide with the worship time and separating the congregation by age.

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[104] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 39.
[105] David M. Csions and Ivy Beckwith, *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2013), 30-31.
[106] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 40.
[107] ibid.
[108] Harkness, "Intergenerational Christian Education (Part 1)", 10.

b) Church Growth Strategies

A further change brought about by the introduction of universal education was that for the first time, children and young people began spending more time with their peer group than with their families.[109] Young people became "preoccupied with their own peer world."[110] The church responded to this by establishing organisations targeted at groups of peers of a similar age.[111] In 1883, the Boys' Brigade was founded in Glasgow[112] and grew to become an international organisation for children and young people with "quite exceptional influence" in Scottish life.[113] There followed a number of other uniformed organisations and parachurch groups for children and young people, and their success in reaching out to the general population brought about a "distinct change" in the composition of Sunday schools, these becoming more exclusively for the children of churchgoing families .[114]

Given the numerical success of these parachurch organisations, which operated in 'sections' aimed at specific age groups, Kara Powell argues that the church sought to adopt a similar approach of ministry specialised to different age groups in the hope of reaching greater numbers.[115] Allen and Ross relate this to 'church growth strategies' which have been published over several decades. These, they say, see numerical growth as "tied directly to attracting families with children."[116] The argument goes that offering an "exciting, entertaining hour of children's church" can attract children to becoming part of the group, and this means their parents are more likely to attend worship. Csinos and Beckwith agree that such strategies

[109] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 32.
[110] ibid., 33.
[111] ibid., 34.
[112] "Our History", accessed May 19, 2020, https://boys-brigade.org.uk/our-history/.
[113] Kernohan, *Our Church*, 82.
[114] Brown, "The Sunday School Movement in Scotland", 19.
[115] Kara Powell, "Is the Era of Age Segregation Over?" *Leadership* 30 (2009): 43-48.
[116] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 41.

viewed children's ministry as "vehicles for church growth" existing to "serve the needs of adults and make the church attractive to families in the neighbouring community."[117] Some widely-used church growth strategies, such as Donald McGavran's Homogeneous Units Principle[118] actively encouraged seeking homogeneity in church settings as a tool for outreach, and many churches grouped people according to age or stage of life accordingly.[119] Churches looking to the success of parachurch organisations and following church growth strategies therefore saw a necessary part of their outreach to families as involving offering age-specific activities for children and young people at the same time as worship. Congregations seeking to grow were therefore encouraged to segregate by age.

c) The Rise of Individualism

As observed above, the introduction of universal schooling brought with it a trend towards spending more time with peers than with traditional family structures. This led to the rise of what Root calls the "self-chosen relationship"[120] – that is, primary relationships were not pre-determined by familial or community structures but chosen from a peer group on the basis of what each party gains from the relationship. The importance of the self-chosen relationship, coupled with a surrounding society heavily invested in consumer marketing, led to a "consumer rationality where people encountered both institutions and individuals with consumeristic expectations."[121] This results in an "individualistic outlook" that primarily seeks to meet personal, rather than communal, needs.[122] Allen and Ross see this as one of the main reasons for generational segregation within the church – it is more convenient for the church to meet

[117] Csinos and Beckwith, *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus*, 29-30.
[118] Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).
[119] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 41.
[120] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 42-45.
[121] ibid., 55.
[122] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 42.

the expectations of children, teenagers and young adults as consumers by offering groups and programs tailored to each age group.[123] In seeking to meet such individual needs and desires in smaller, more age-specific groups, those groups might perceive a higher 'quality' of service, as demanded by their consumeristic expectations.[124]

Another consequence of the rise of individualism and the self-chosen relationship was that the individual dimension of faith came to be prioritised over the communal.[125] Particularly in evangelical Christianity, argues Joseph Hellerman, the gospel message was individualised, with an emphasis placed on Jesus as a "personal Saviour."[126] Root agrees, and points to the success of the preacher Billy Graham across the Western world as evidence of this:

> [Given] the arrival of the self-chosen relationship, Graham's message of a Jesus who can be trusted as an intimate friend was strikingly relevant. Choosing with whom to be in intimate relationship had become the task of living in a modernised and globalised world, so choosing friendship with Jesus made perfect sense.[127]

Hellerman reasons that this stress on faith as a self-chosen, personal relationship left the church with "little social capital… to encourage our people to stay in community and grow together."[128] This has "diminished the crucial importance of the faith *community* in the spiritual formation of believers."[129] As this increasingly became the culture of the church, the benefits of keeping all ages together in community were given less priority, and a separation of the faith community by age became more possible and even inevitable. The rise of individualism and the self-chosen relationship therefore paved the way for a segregation of the church community

[123] ibid., 43.
[124] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 55.
[125] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 43.
[126] Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 143.
[127] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 47.
[128] Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*, 143.
[129] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 43.

by age as the importance of communal faith gave way to an emphasis on personal faith and congregations tried to best meet the consumer expectations of individual worshippers.

d) Practical Expediency

In seeking to explain why Sunday schools began to meet during the worship time, Macdonald offers a much more straightforward reason, again finding its roots in the Reformation and its emphasis on "the Word." He specifically notes the importance of the sermon in reformed worship. He writes:

> Silence and concentration become basic requirements for listening to a serious sermon, perhaps lasting up to half an hour, and the presence of lively children will certainly not be conducive to creating such an atmosphere.[130]

He points out that even the design of many Church of Scotland buildings focussed on a high, central pulpit conveys the message that "Sunday worship is an adult activity".[131] This led to an understanding in churches that it would be mutually beneficial for the ages to be separated: adults would be free from the distractions children could cause and could commit their attention to the sermon, while children could be educated in the Christian faith in an environment more welcoming and suitable for their needs. Evidence of this thinking could be found in a 1982 report which sought to admit children to receiving the Lord's Supper: "there was a clear recognition that the children should be of an age 'to sit through the service without unduly disturbing the good order of worship'."[132] One of the thoughts uppermost in the minds of the report's authors was that the presence of children may prove disruptive for adults. Swanney observes this attitude changing, but notes that it is not yet possible to say that "the issue of 'noisy' or 'disruptive' children" has been "resigned to the annals of history" in every church.[133]

[130] Macdonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, 84.
[131] ibid.
[132] ibid., 88.
[133] Swanney, "Children First", 70.

A significant reason that congregations began to and continue to separate children from adults, then, is one of convenience and practicality owing to a perception that the presence of children would be distracting for adults.

Macdonald also traces the small numbers of children receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to Reformation roots.[134] The *First Book of Discipline* set requirements on those intending to receive Communion that they should be able to recite the Lord's Prayer, the articles of belief and the Commandments.[135] This developed into a "pre-Communion examination" and an understanding that "spiritual knowledge and moral worthiness were pre-conditions of participation."[136] Children were deemed to not yet possess such knowledge. He goes on to observe that the Church of Scotland no longer requires such examination to take place for adults, but the assumption remained that children were not yet ready. He describes this as perpetuating in children "the notion of Communion as a prize for those who passed the intellectual and moral tests."[137] The Church attempted to pass enabling legislation in the early 1980s to admit children to participate in the sacrament, but this did not receive majority support, and such a change eventually came about in 1992.[138] He notes that "In a culture of inclusiveness there is inevitably administrative untidiness"[139] and that many congregations therefore choose to keep the ages apart as a matter of convenience and practicality.

[134] Macdonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, 84-90.
[135] "The First Book of Discipline (1560)".
[136] Macdonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, 84.
[137] ibid., 87,
[138] ibid., 88-90.
[139] ibid., 90.

3.3 Summary

In this chapter, it has been shown that the current situation as described in Chapter Two is a relatively recent development in terms of the church's history. The early church was shown to be (albeit unintentionally) intergenerational in outlook, and this remained the situation until the Protestant Reformation. The importance placed by the Reformers on everyone being able to read the Scriptures led to the introduction of universal education, in which the church in Scotland played a leading role. Sunday schools were introduced as a means of general education, but as state schools became the norm, these were repurposed as groups solely for Christian education. Throughout most of this time, the worshipping community remained at least multigenerational, with age segregation occurring only within the last century.

Four theories were offered as contributory factors towards Sunday schools moving to take place concurrently with worship, leading to a widespread separation according to age. Two of these theories saw the change occurring as a response to societal developments as the church mirrored contemporary developments in educational theory and as a response to the rise of individualism. The other two theories saw the change occurring as a matter of practicality, in following a church growth strategy or in seeking to prevent bored children becoming a distraction during a sermon. Each of these may have been more or less influential in any given congregation and all played a part in leading to the separation of age-groups. That said, the evidence presented by Macdonald and Swanney suggests that practical convenience is the most significant reason that many congregations continue the practice. It is noteworthy that none of the reasons for the church losing its intergenerational character finds its roots in theology – they are all pragmatic rather than doctrinal. A theological rationale for 'What ought to be going on?' should therefore provided a basis from which to challenge and change the status quo. The

first steps towards such a theology, here drawing on the works of Bonhoeffer, is the task of Chapter Four.

4. The Normative Task: What ought to be going on?

Thus far, it has been shown that the Church of Scotland has adapted a model of age-segregating children and young people from the adult congregation, mainly for reasons of practical convenience and a desire to follow educational theories. Several problems in this model have been revealed, most critically the sharp and sustained fall in the number of children involved in the life of the church. If the current approach is no longer regarded as fit for purpose, the key question facing the church becomes, "What ought we to do instead?" This is the normative task facing this chapter.

Osmer offers some advice: "In discerning what we ought to do in particular episodes, situations, and contexts, we will do well to use an explicit approach to forming and assessing norms."[140] He suggests three such approaches useful in establishing normativity: theological interpretation, ethical reflection and deriving norms from good practice.[141] Osmer makes clear these approaches need not be mutually exclusive,[142] but it is instructive to consider which are best suited to the context under consideration. Ethical reflection, according to Osmer, serves "to guide action towards moral ends"[143]. Although there may be ethical considerations and implications, that is not the primary task faced here, so this approach is not directly relevant and can be discounted. The majority of current literature on intergenerationality draws heavily on good practice as its source of normative criteria[144] and while this will be informative, there is no need to repeat such an approach here. The relevant approach which has been underutilised

[140] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 139.
[141] ibid., 139-161.
[142] ibid., 160.
[143] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 161.
[144] See, for example, Holly Catherton Allen, ed., *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018) or Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, which largely rely on the study of existing practice.

in this field, and which will therefore be the focus of this chapter, is that of theological interpretation.

Osmer draws a distinction between theological interpretation and other forms of theological reflection (such as biblical studies or dogmatics) in that "theological interpretation focuses on the interpretation of *present* episodes, situations, and contexts with theological concepts."[145] In Chapter One, the relevance of the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a source of such theological concepts was outlined. Thus, the approach taken in addressing the normative task in this chapter will be to use theological concepts from Bonhoeffer to interpret an approach to including children in an intergenerational church community within the Church of Scotland. John de Gruchy suggests that Bonhoeffer's theology progressed through a series of three questions: "Who is Jesus Christ?" leading to "Where is Jesus Christ?" and finally to a question of ethics or application.[146] This chapter will explore Bonhoeffer's first two questions, while Chapter Five will go on to consider questions of application. In exploring these first two questions, Bonhoeffer's ideas of the person of Christ, of church-community and of *Stellvertretung* will be drawn out as the theological concepts which can inform the Church of Scotland's theological interpretation of the place of children in the church.

[145] ibid., 139.
[146] John W. de Gruchy, "Bonhoeffer", in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 361-367.

4.1 Who is Jesus Christ? – Incarnate, Crucified, Resurrected

a) Framing the Question

Root observes that the starting question most often prompted by educational models of working with children and young people is "How? How is God present in Jesus? How is Jesus both divine and human? How does God atone for the world's sin in Jesus?"[147] This same 'how' language also informs current changes in practice, such as a focus on relational ministry ("we do ministry *how* Jesus did it; Jesus became incarnate, so that is *how* we do it.")[148] Root's concern is that it is possible to "know how to have faith in Jesus and yet never move from knowledge to trust," or even that it is possible to be able to answer every imaginable 'how' question, yet still not believe.[149] This concern resonates with Kernohan's observation that a number of young people in the Church of Scotland, having acquired knowledge about Jesus in Sunday school, do not go on to make a profession of faith or become communicant members of the church.[150] Bonhoeffer was also alert to the dangers posed by asking 'how' questions. In lectures on Christology he gave in Berlin in 1933, Bonhoeffer argues that 'how' questions are the incorrect starting place for any theology.[151] Joel Banman summarises Bonhoeffer's concern: "When theology occupies itself exclusively with "how" questions, it ceases to be about God's word and becomes instead a human system of thought."[152] The impersonal nature of the 'how' question denies the transcendence of Jesus Christ,[153] reducing him from a living

[147] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 86.
[148] ibid., 88.
[149] ibid., 86.
[150] Kernohan, *Our Church*, 83.
[151] Bonhoeffer, *Berlin*, 299-303.
[152] Joel Banman, "Discipleship as a "Who" Question: Bonhoeffer on Reading Scripture as the Call of the Present Christ," *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought and Practice* 26 issue 1 (2019), accessed June 6, 2020, https://hail.to/laidlaw-college/publication/9JERFLO/article/NriUue4.
[153] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 87.

reality to "a mere object of knowledge."[154] A living faith will require a starting question which is concrete, not theoretical.

For Bonhoeffer, that concrete question is 'who' rather than 'how' – "Who is Jesus Christ?"[155] This question presupposes a living reality and "expresses the otherness of the other"[156] thus affirming the transcendence of Christ. As Bamnan puts it, "the answer to the "who" question is not and can never be merely words… the "who" question reminds us that Christ is always beyond the words that we might say about him."[157] Moreover, the answer to the 'who' question is necessarily a person – such a question points towards relationship rather than knowledge. In addition to honouring the transcendence and personhood of Christ, the question *Who is Jesus Christ?* also points towards his presence.[158] Bonhoeffer points out, "Only because Christ is the Christ who is present are we still able to inquire of him."[159] That is to say that the 'who' question presupposes Christ's immanence – it is a question that is asked (and can only be asked) in the presence of Christ. Root takes this further and suggests that in asking this question, we are drawn not only to Jesus but to others: "The who question acknowledges a present Christ who is calling you to join in God's mission in the world… By encountering Christ in the Who? I am opened to the Who? of my neighbour."[160] That Christ is present in relationships with others is a recurring theme of Bonhoeffer's to which we shall return.

Banman draws out one further implication of the 'who' question in Bonhoeffer's work – it changes our understanding of discipleship and Christian formation. If Jesus is not studied in

[154] Banman, "Discipleship as a "Who" Question."
[155] de Gruchy, "Bonhoeffer," 361.
[156] Bonhoeffer, *Berlin*, 303.
[157] Banman, "Discipleship as a "Who" Question."
[158] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 87.
[159] Bonhoeffer, *Berlin*, 310.
[160] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 87.

terms of 'how' but known as 'who', then discipleship "means much more than a programme for growing in morality or character. It is not a question of what I can do to become more like Jesus."[161] Rather, discipleship is "a lifelong "who" question… a question that ultimately interrogates *us* as we are transformed into the image of the one who calls us to follow him."[162] Bonhoeffer emphasises the point: "The call to discipleship is a commitment solely to the person of Jesus Christ."[163] Discipleship cannot, therefore, be contained in a programme or educational curriculum, for a relationship entered into on that basis would be a relationship with an idea, not with the living Christ.[164]

Reframing the starting question from 'how' to 'who' makes clear that Jesus Christ is not a detached reality to be studied through the acquisition of knowledge, but a living, present reality to be experienced in relationship. Applying this concept to the place of children within an intergenerational church community reveals the first normative principle learned from Bonhoeffer: for children (and, indeed for all ages) **church should primarily be experiential rather than educational**, that is to say a place where the living, present Jesus Christ is encountered. This is not a claim that there is no place for programmes of Christian education for they may prove to be places of encounter, but rather that ministry must be motivated by relationship with the 'Who?' rather than study of the 'How?'.

Having established the correct question to ask – *Who is Jesus Christ?* – attention now turns to Bonhoeffer's answer. Root provides a concise summary of Bonhoeffer's response: "Jesus Christ is: the incarnate, crucified and resurrected God-man. These three can never be divided;

[161] Banman, "Discipleship as a "Who" Question."
[162] ibid.
[163] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 59.
[164] ibid.

they must remain linked."[165] What normative criteria can be learned from exploring these three intertwined aspects of Jesus' person?

b) Who is Jesus Christ? – The Incarnate

Bonhoeffer's first answer to the question *Who is Jesus Christ?* is that Jesus Christ is God become human.[166] Clifford Green notes that Bonhoeffer prefers the term *menschwerdung*, "becoming human", over the term incarnation, demonstrating that Bonhoeffer's emphasis was not on Christ taking on flesh, but on Christ taking on humanity.[167] This means three things for Bonhoeffer, according to John Godsey: that "God has taken upon himself bodily all human being," that "divine being cannot be found otherwise than in human form" and that "in Jesus Christ, [hu]man[ity] is made free to be really [hu]man before God."[168] The consequence of the first of these points is that "all human beings as such are 'with Christ' as a consequence of the incarnation."[169] Christ's incarnation means, therefore, that "there is complete equality between persons" and a shared solidarity between humans, because God stands in solidarity with humanity.[170] The second point implies that "the incarnation reveals that the concrete place where we encounter the *who* of God is in the nearness of our fellow sisters and brothers"[171] and this will be explored further in the question *Where is Jesus Christ?* In relation to the third point, Bonhoeffer writes:

> God loves human beings. God loves the world. Not an ideal human, but human beings as they are; not an ideal world, but the real world… God becomes human, a real human being. While we exert ourselves to grow beyond our

[165] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 88.
[166] Clifford J. Green, introduction to *Ethics: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 6.
[167] ibid.
[168] John Godsey, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 270.
[169] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 217.
[170] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 89.
[171] ibid., 90.

> humanity, to leave the human behind us, God becomes human; and we must recognise that God wills that we be human.[172]

This is one of the most significant revelations of the incarnation for Bonhoeffer: it reveals God's desire for humanity to be fully human. Green views this as a reversal of the Augustinian maxim that "God became human in order that humans might become divine" in that, according to Bonhoeffer, "God became human so that human beings could become truly human… their true dignity is to be truly human, as Jesus… was truly human."[173] Jesus Christ the incarnate one reveals the heart of God for humankind, and opens the presence of God to humanity.

Taking Bonhoeffer's insights into the meaning of Christ's incarnation together leads to a significant corollary for the church's understanding of children: the child is "already ontologically what God desires him or her to be: human."[174] In recognising that "God wills that we be human,"[175] we must also recognise that, owing to their innocence and being "less obscured by Western individualism," there is none more clearly human than a child.[176] Children, therefore, are not future or 'junior' members of the church community, but full members; not disciples in training, but disciples. Being fully what God desires them to be – human – children and young people should be afforded a place "to claim their humanity in worship and service of the human God" [177] and this means all ages must share together in the life of the church. As Jesus called his disciples to "change and become like little children,"[178] so the humanity of the whole church is enhanced by the participation of children in its life. Bonhoeffer's profession that Jesus Christ is God become human and his conclusion that God wills humanity to become more fully human, coupled with a recognition that there is none so

[172] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 84.
[173] Green, introduction, 6-7.
[174] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 92.
[175] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 84.
[176] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 49.
[177] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 92.
[178] Matthew 18:1-4.

fully human as a child, calls for a recognition of the essential place of the child in church leads to a second normative claim: **the church should be primarily intergenerational, not age-segregated**.

c) Who is Jesus Christ? – The Crucified

For Bonhoeffer, it is not enough to answer the question *Who is Jesus Christ?* only with the incarnation without also answering that Christ is the one who suffered and died publicly[179] – the crucifixion is an inevitable consequence of incarnation. As the suffering and dying one, Christ "does not withdraw from reality… but experiences and suffers the reality of the world at its worst."[180] Bonhoeffer repeatedly asserts, "What happened to [Christ] happened to all of us,"[181] implying that the church must not shy away from the realities of the world but should stand alongside Christ amidst the world's suffering. Geoffrey Kelly puts it this way: "To participate in the ministry of God, we must proceed into solidarity and oneness with others, standing where our suffering and guilty neighbour stands… only thus revealing who God is."[182] Here, Kelly demonstrates the consequence of recognising Jesus as the crucified one: his followers must enter into a depth of relationship with others which is prepared to suffer alongside them.

Root applies this to the field of youth ministry and suggests that the implication of Bonhoeffer's claim is not only that the church must stand alongside the suffering of its young people, but that it must also be prepared to "suffer from" them.[183] In ministering among young people,

[179] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 92-93.
[180] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 83.
[181] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 255. cf. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 88.
[182] Geoffrey Kelly, *Liberating Faith: Bonhoeffer's Message for Today* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 79.
[183] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 94-95.

adults in the church must be prepared not only to bear the suffering the adolescent might experience, but also be ready to accept a degree of personal suffering caused by the adolescent. The same must also be true when applied to children in an intergenerational community – the crucifixion shows the need for the community to enter into the suffering of the other, for all ages to offer one another "companionship in their darkest nights,"[184] but also to be open to the suffering of rejection, disruption or inconvenience that an intergenerational relationship may cause. Bonhoeffer's recognition of Christ as the crucified one who suffers the world's realities calls the church into a deep understanding of relationship, in which all ages bear the suffering of, but also the suffering from, one another.

d) Who is Jesus Christ? – The Resurrected

Paul wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain… If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."[185] It is important, therefore, to recognise Jesus as not only the incarnate and crucified, but also the resurrected one. Godsey draws attention to the meaning of this for Bonhoeffer: as the living, resurrected one who overcame sin and death, Jesus sets all of humanity free to live a new way in this world.[186] For Bonhoeffer, "what happened to Christ has happened for all,"[187] therefore in the resurrected Christ the whole of humanity is transformed.[188] According to Godsey, this makes God's transcendence a "this-worldly" transformative reality rather than an other-worldly concept[189] – Jesus Christ is not an "object

[184] ibid., 96.
[185] 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17
[186] Godsey, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 270-272.
[187] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 91.
[188] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 216.
[189] Godsey, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 272.

of religion"[190] but a transformative reality in this world. In this sense, Bonhoeffer described the meaning of Easter as "to live in the light of the resurrection"[191] which "refers people to their life on earth in a wholly new way"[192] and transforms humanity to be more fully human.

Root highlights the significance of this for a Western church culture often driven by programmes – the purpose of church should not be "cultural assimilation into a Christian life-style but being transformed by the person of Christ."[193] He argues that although most in the church would readily agree with this, the educational mindset of the church has too easily fallen into the trap of teaching children church practices or moral messages rather than freeing them to experience the transformative presence of the risen Christ. That "the incarnation is about transformation; humanity is given the power to be transformed only through the resurrected God"[194] should serve to remind the church that the transformative power of God is experienced, not learned. Bonhoeffer's understanding of Christ as the resurrected (and by implication, ascended) one highlights the transformational power of the presence of the living Christ, adding further evidence to the claim that the normative form of church should be experiential rather than educational.

4.2 Where is Jesus Christ? – Church-Community

Having recognised the presence of Jesus Christ as the incarnate, crucified and resurrected one, this leads directly to the question, *Where is Jesus Christ present?*[195] In his earliest works,

[190] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 364.
[191] ibid., 333.
[192] ibid., 447.
[193] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 98.
[194] ibid.
[195] de Gruchy, "Bonhoeffer", 362.

Bonhoeffer provides an answer to this 'where' question: Christ exists as church-community.[196] De Gruchy notes that in his later thinking, Bonhoeffer expands this understanding to say Christ "is at the centre of reality… at the centre of the life of the world" not "confined to religion or the Church."[197] This does not present an inconsistency in Bonhoeffer's answer to the 'where' question, but rather a continuity and development of his "theology of sociality," a theology described as "grounded in a social understanding of human existence."[198] For Bonhoeffer, it is not the Church as an institution where Christ is present, but the church-community and, as Root observes, "the church-community is not constituted in institutional operations or even liturgical practices but in the shared life of persons – in relationship."[199] An exploration of Bonhoeffer's answer to the question *Where is Jesus Christ?* therefore begins with his contributions to the understanding of personhood and relationship, for it is between the relations of persons in the church-community that Christ is concretely present in the world.

a) Personhood: The I-You Relationship

Bonhoeffer writes that "The concepts of person, community, and God are inseparably and essentially interrelated. A concept of God is always conceived in relation to a concept of person and a concept of a community of persons."[200] This interrelatedness means that an individual 'person' cannot exist in isolation, but only in relation to others. Here, he draws a distinction between a "metaphysical concept of the individual" (it is possible to conceive of an individual metaphysical object) and an "ethical concept of the person" in which "individual does not mean solitary. On the contrary, for the individual to exist, 'others' must necessarily be there."[201] He

[196] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 158. cf. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 111.
[197] de Gruchy, "Bonhoeffer", 362.
[198] ibid., 362-363.
[199] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 46.
[200] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 34.
[201] ibid., 50-51.

summarises this in saying "The I comes into being only in relation to the You"[202] – only through encountering the barrier of another's person is one's own personhood realised. Desmond Tutu outlines the same thought in relation to the African philosophy of *ubuntu*: "a person is a person through other persons."[203] De Gruchy points out that Bonhoeffer's language is also similar to Martin Buber's *I and Thou*, but Bonhoeffer's concept is "more ethical in character" – 'I' become a person not only because of the existence of 'You' but through responding to and relating to 'You'.[204]

Bonhoeffer cautions of an "intolerable thought," a heretical misunderstanding that could arise from his argument – this understanding of the I-You relation could seem to imply that one human being is the creator of the personhood of another.[205] Herein lies the distinction between an anthropological concept such as *ubuntu* and Bonhoeffer's theological concept: it is (and can only be) the action of God within the relationship of an 'I' and a 'You' that establishes personhood. Bonhoeffer writes:

> One human being cannot of its own accord make another into an I… God or the Holy Spirit joins the concrete You; only through God's working does the other become a You to me from whom my I arises. In other words, every human You is an image of the divine You… The divine You creates the human You.[206]

The consequence of this for Bonhoeffer is that the individual "belongs essentially and absolutely with the other, according to God's will"[207]. This again emphasises the relationship of person, community and God – personhood can be understood only in community with others, as enabled by God.

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[202] ibid., 54.
[203] Desmond Tutu, *In God's Hands* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 34.
[204] de Gruchy, "Bonhoeffer", 362-363.
[205] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 54.
[206] ibid., 54-55.
[207] ibid., 56.

A further consequence of every human 'You' being an image of the divine 'You' provides an answer to the question *Where is Jesus Christ?* Jesus Christ *is* where 'I' encounter 'You', in other words the concrete place where the living Jesus Christ is present in the world is in the relationship between persons. The 'who' of Jesus as incarnate, crucified and resurrected shows that Christ is in solidarity with humanity, is ontologically *pro me* (for me)[208] but because my 'I' exists only in relation to 'You' as an image of the divine You, Christ is also *pro* all others. As Green states, "God is not immanent in us, but is present in the social relationship."[209] The location of Christ's presence could therefore be described as "in between" persons because "he stands for and alongside the other, just as he stands for and alongside me."[210] Root provides the image in Figure 1 to illustrate this point.[211] To say that Christ exists "in between" is to say that Christ is present in the relationship between persons. Relationships are the place of revelation.

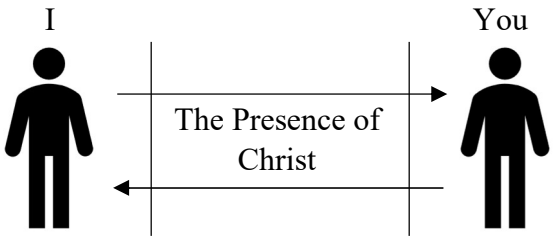

Figure 1: Root's representation of the concrete place of Christ's presence

There are two important implications in this for ministry with children in the church. The first is that the child must be recognised as an 'I' who requires the opportunity to encounter God in the 'You' of others and is also a 'You' in whom others can encounter God. Relational encounter such as this can, of course, take place in an age-segregated group, but enabling

[208] De Gruchy "Bonhoeffer", 362.
[209] Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 36.
[210] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 111.
[211] ibid.

relationships to cross generational boundaries opens the way for Christ to be met in new ways. Bonhoeffer writes:

> For Jesus the child is not merely a transitional stage on the way to adulthood, something to be overcome; quite the contrary, he or she is something utterly unique before which the adults should have the utmost respect. For indeed, God is closer to children than to adults… God belongs to children, the good news belongs to children, and joy in the kingdom of heaven belongs to children.[212]

This suggests that adults in particular would benefit from meeting God in the relational encounter with a child, further evidence of the benefits of an intergenerational rather than age-segregated community.

The second implication refers to relational ministry. It was noted in Chapter Two that there has been an increased focus on the relationship between children and their group leaders across the Western church and that these relationships have been used as means to influence children towards desired beliefs and behaviours. Root outlines the danger of this approach: "In such a practice the relationship does not matter so much as the end to which the relationship leads."[213] If, however, Christ is present in relationship between persons, then there is no 'end' to which the relationship leads – the relationship is in itself the end. Green quotes Bonhoeffer as saying, "One does not love God in the neighbour, nor are neighbours loved to make them Christian – neighbours are loved for their own sake, and in this love of the human companions one serves the will of God."[214] Relationship with Jesus Christ cannot be attained outside of relationship between persons. Root makes clear how this must change the Church's understanding of relational ministry:

> [It] is not about a program of conversion, it is never about closing the deal or moving them forward; it is not about helping them "get it" (whatever "it" might be). It is only, most beautifully and powerfully, about being together, sharing

[212] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Barcelona, Berlin, New York: 1928-1931* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 352.
[213] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 115.
[214] Green, *Bonhoeffer*, 58.

> life before God and understanding that in our shared connection of common humanity Christ is present.[215]

He continues, "the theological commitment to relationships in relational ministry should be solely because in our connection to one another as I and you Christ is concretely present."[216] Himes draws attention to the significance of this for the church: in "relating to the other as the divine Other relates to You… the church takes on the very nature of Jesus Christ."[217] Thus Bonhoeffer can describe Christ existing as church-community[218], the second answer to the question *Where is Jesus Christ?* This reveals a further normative claim for intergenerational church community: **relationships are revelatory and must never be used as tools for influence**.

b) Relationships: Community with Others

The interrelatedness of person, community and God means for Bonhoeffer that "In God's eyes, community and individual exist in the same moment and rest in one another."[219] This 'resting in one another' distinguishes a community from a club or society – while a society consists of disparate individuals acting in their own interests in an attitude of "mutual inner indifference",[220] a community is a "concrete unity"[221] where "Common feeling, common willing, and common responsibility are forces of inmost cohesion. The basic attitude is mutual *inner interest*."[222] Bonhoeffer introduces a benchmark to tell the difference between a community and a society: "Unlike the society, a community can support young children as

[215] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 116-117.
[216] ibid., 117.
[217] Himes, "Discipleship as Theological Praxis", 267-268.
[218] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 121.
[219] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 80.
[220] ibid., 91.
[221] ibid., 78.
[222] ibid., 90.

well."[223] He outlines that even young children can sense belonging to a community "through an act of love, trust or obedience" and by participation in the life of the community. [224]

Paul Moore outlines the cyclical nature of discipleship in a Christian community as blessing, belonging, believing, behaving as in Figure 2:[225]

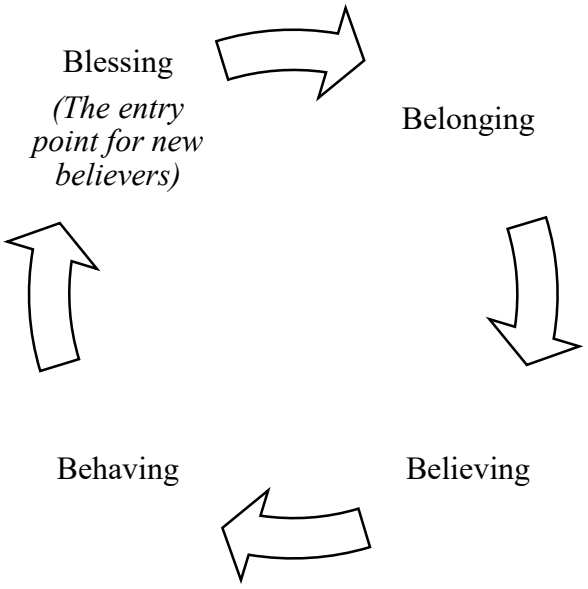

Figure 2: Moore's Cycle of Discipleship

Members of a community receive God's blessing, through this come to feel a sense of belonging to the community, in time adopt the beliefs of the community and behave as disciples to bring God's blessing to others. Bonhoeffer demonstrates that even young children can sense the blessing and belonging at the beginning of this cycle, so are already on the journey of discipleship. Root sees this as further evidence that children are not future or junior members

[223] ibid.
[224] ibid.
[225] Paul Moore, *Making Disciples in Messy Church: Growing Faith in an All-Age Community* (Abingdon: BRF, 2013), 17-18.

of a church community, but full and present members.[226] He outlines the implications of this for the church:

> If our churches are more than religious societies, and instead are life-communities, children cannot be excluded or minimised, for as persons who are loved and who love, they find their way deep into communal existence, for they share in its life.[227]

For the church to exist as community, even young children need to be taken into the life of the community. That the church debates issues such as the inclusion of children in worship, or their participation in the Lord's Supper, is indication of the church operating as a society rather than as community. Root continues, "In Bonhoeffer's mind the church with a rich children's ministry is the church that is a community, where the life of young people is taken into the life of the community, where their person is shared in."[228] Children are not free to share in the life of the community, to sense belonging to the community if they are segregated from the community by age. Bonhoeffer's understanding of what constitutes a community establishes as normative for children in the church community that they should be present to the full life of the community, and this means that the default composition of the church should be intergenerational rather than age segregated.

c) The Church-Community: The Example of Baptism

Community is where Christ is present in the world, in the relational encounter between 'I' and 'You'. Bonhoeffer states, however, "Community with God exists only through Christ, but Christ is present only in his church-community, and therefore community with God exists only in the church."[229] Green is keen to point out that "this does not mean that an institution calling

[226] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 50.
[227] ibid., 50-51.
[228] ibid., 51.
[229] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 158.

itself church defines where Christ is communally present."[230] Rather, it is Christ who defines where the church exists – where Christ exists as church-community, there is the church. As Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."[231] In line with his reformed tradition, Bonhoeffer identifies the proclamation of God's word and the sacraments as acts of the church-community in which Christ is concretely present.[232] A look at Bonhoeffer's understanding of one such act – the sacrament of baptism – will serve to help further understand his concept of church-community.

Bonhoeffer notes that protestant baptism is infant baptism, but that baptism is also an act demanding faith. Since the children being baptised cannot themselves articulate a personal faith, "we must conclude that the subject that receives the sacrament in faith can only be the objective spirit of the church-community."[233] His conclusion is relevant to the normative task under consideration and is worth quoting at length:

> It follows that the faith of the child is the faith of the whole church-community. Baptism is thus, on the one hand, God's effective act in the gift of grace by which the child is incorporated into the church-community of Christ; on the other hand, it also implies the mandate that the child remain within the Christian community. Thus, the church-community as the community of saints carries its children like a mother, as its most sacred treasure.[234]

This image of a mother carrying her children is a defining characteristic of what it means to be church-community. In the caring act of mothering, the child is "taken into the life of the community… giving the whole church-community familial shape in its practical life."[235] To be part of the church-community means not only to be physically present in the same space, but to be relationally present to one another's person.

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[230] Clifford J. Green, introduction to *Sanctorum Communio: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 14-15.
[231] Matthew 18:20.
[232] Godsey, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 69.
[233] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 241.
[234] ibid.
[235] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 54.

Bonhoeffer continues: "Infant baptism is no longer meaningful wherever the church can no longer envision 'carrying' the child."[236] Baptism without the discipline of community he calls "cheap grace."[237] There is clearly a criticism here of the practice of baptising a child who has no connection to the church community, but Root sees a similar failing in the church's practice of age segregation: "We have sought programmes, not communities, for our children to be housed… The whole church then gives over its responsibility for 'carrying' to a program."[238] In investing Sunday schools with almost sole responsibility for the spiritual upbringing of children, the church-community "hypocritically baptise the child in the sanctuary but then outsource the 'carrying' to a program."[239] It was noted in Chapter Two that it is normal practice in the Church of Scotland for the whole congregation to make a commitment to the upbringing in faith of the child at an infant baptism, and the warning here is that this commitment cannot simply be devolved to a small group of leaders or detached from the wider community. The church-community can only 'carry' a child in faith when that child is known and part of the life of that community. It is through immersion in the life of the church "that children encounter Christ existing as church-community"[240] as their persons encounter other persons in Christ. This again suggests that the normative mode of the church should be that of an intergenerational and experiential community.

Bonhoeffer later returns to the subject of children and baptism in his exploration of the dialectic of act and being. In the sacramental act, an act of God performed by human beings, the resurrected Christ is seen "in the neighbour and creation" and the "future reveal[s] itself in faith

[236] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 241.
[237] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 44.
[238] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 55-56.
[239] ibid., 56.
[240] ibid.

which determines the present" meaning the "human being 'is' in the future of Christ."[241] Baptism is thus an eschatological act, and "To-let-oneself-be-defined by means of the future is the eschatological possibility of the child."[242] From this understanding, Bonhoeffer can declare that "Baptism is the call to the human being into childhood, a call that can be understood only eschatologically."[243] This is not only a statement of the value and worth of the child, but an assertion "that it is the very form of the child that is normative."[244] Consequently, according to Root, "a sign of a congregation's faithfulness, its very act to *be* towards *eschatos*, is… its willingness to embrace children."[245] The place of the child, therefore, should be at the centre of the church-community, again pointing to the importance of intergenerationality.

e) Place-sharing

There is one further idea, which Green describes as "one of Bonhoeffer's fundamental theological concepts,"[246] which will be instructive to explore as it demonstrates what should characterise I-You relationships in the church-community: *Stellvertretung*. This literally means to deputise or substitute in place of another, but Green believes that such a literal translation "would barely approach Bonhoeffer's meaning" as this would imply a secondary role, whereas Bonhoeffer's understanding is rooted in Christology.[247] It is a concept Bonhoeffer uses to refer to God's free action on behalf of humanity in the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ: "His entire living, acting, and suffering was *Stellvertretung*. All that human beings were supposed to live, do, and suffer was fulfilled in

[241] Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 158-159.
[242] ibid., 159-160.
[243] ibid., 159.
[244] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 76.
[245] ibid.
[246] Clifford J. Green, footnote in *Sanctorum Communio* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 120 n29.
[247] Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer*, 56.

him."[248] In his incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus stands in the place of humanity, representing God before humanity and humanity before God. Green therefore believes that the translation "vicarious representative action" better translates Bonhoeffer's understanding of *Stellvertretung*.[249] Root offers the term "place-sharing" as a further improvement in translation, "believing it points to the ministerial (and Christological) direction Bonhoeffer wishes."[250] The incarnate, crucified and resurrected Christ shares the place humanity is in. As application to a ministry context is under consideration, this translation as 'place-sharing' will be used hereon.

Bonhoeffer draws the concept of place-sharing from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. On the cross, Jesus "takes the suffering of the whole world onto himself and overcomes it. He bears the whole distance from God… Christ suffers as the vicarious representative [place-sharer] for the world."[251] Christ shares the place of humanity, representing human sin and suffering before God, and God's grace and love before humanity. It is through this place-sharing that true human community is restored.[252] Bonhoeffer describes "Christ the mediator as the one who exists *pro me*. That is his nature and his mode of existence"[253] The very essence of Christ as the one who is *pro me*, who is for humanity, is place-sharing. He "simultaneously shares in the place of God and humanity, because his person is the place of divine and human union."[254] Jesus is the place-sharer of God and humanity.

[248] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 258.
[249] Green, footnote in *Sanctorum Communio*, 120 n29.
[250] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 43-44 n4.
[251] Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 90.
[252] De Gruchy, "Bonhoeffer", 363.
[253] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Centre* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1960), 60.
[254] Root, *The Relational Pastor*, 161.

The result of this essential characteristic of Christ is that place-sharing "is the life-principle of the new humanity,"[255] one which "gives Christian basic-relations their substantive uniqueness."[256] Christian relationships, then, should be characterised by place-sharing. Root outlines what this means for relationships within the church-community:

> It is not enough to simply meet the other in a kind of benign relationship – being nice, sharing a laugh and being happy that the other is present – while ignoring the other's poverty (emotional, financial, spiritual, cultural, or physical) and pain. To stop here is to stop short of relationship. Rather, relationship, empowered by the humanity of God, demands action that is responsible for the very humanity of the other. Therefore, to be in a relationship is to take full responsibility for the other, standing in his or her place, becoming his or her advocate.[257]

In the same way that Christ shares the place of humanity, the call to Christians is to share the place of the other by sharing fully in their life. Luther described a similar idea, saying that, "Everyone should 'put on' his neighbour and so conduct himself towards him as if he were in the other's place."[258] To illustrate what he means by this idea, Bonhoeffer turns as an example to the relationship between a father and child as one of place-sharing: "A father acts on behalf of his children by working, providing, intervening, struggling and suffering for them. In so doing, he really stands in their place."[259] In the same way, to truly relate to the other, to place-share, members of the church-community must stand ready to intercede, provide, advocate for and suffer alongside one another. In this way, the church-community is not only structurally "with-each-other" but also actively "being-for-each-other."[260]

There is an interesting parallel in language between Bonhoeffer's distinction of being "with-each-other" or "being-for-each-other" and the distinction drawn in Chapter One of being

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[255] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 147.
[256] ibid., 157.
[257] Root, *Reimagining Relational Youth Ministry*, 126.
[258] Martin Luther, quoted in Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 63.
[259] Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 257-258.
[260] Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 178.

"multigenerational" or "intergenerational." Churches which are multigenerational, that is where different generations are present but not interacting, could be described as being "with-each-other". As the generations do not interact, however, relationships of place-sharing would not easily form in such a setting. In these contexts, adult-child relationships tend to be unidirectional from adults to children, as described in Chapter Two. Only through intentionally intergenerational community can relationships of place-sharing form between adults and children – they can only be "for-each-other" when they know each other. Such relationships need not be unidirectional, but more mutual – at times the adult may stand in on the child's behalf (for example, by advocating on the child's behalf where the child cannot) and at other times the child may stand in on the adult's behalf (for example, by voicing questions before God in a way an adult would not). This relationship, though not necessarily symmetrical,[261] is borne from a mutuality that recognises the personhood and discipleship of both adult and child. Adopting Bonhoeffer's concept of place-sharing can best take place when the whole church-community is not only "with-each-other" but "for-each-other" and this means bringing the generations together in an interactive way and in a spirit of mutuality. Bonhoeffer's concept of place-sharing again brings out the importance of relationship, but adds one final normative standard: **relationships should not be unidirectional, but be characterised by mutual place-sharing**.

4.3 Summary

This chapter has focussed on an exploration of two core questions in the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Who is Jesus Christ?* and *Where is Jesus Christ?* In framing the first question as 'who' rather than the more typical 'how', it was shown that Jesus Christ is a living presence to

[261] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 126.

be experienced rather than an object of knowledge to be studied. Bonhoeffer's answer to the 'who' question, that Jesus Christ is incarnate, crucified and resurrected reveals God's desire that humanity become more fully human, and that in dying and rising with Christ, humanity is transformed by his presence. This shows that children are already ontologically what God desires them to be: human, and that their place as persons and disciples should be recognised in the fullness of church life, and that the **church should primarily be experiential rather than educational**.

Attention then turned to the question, *Where is Jesus Christ?* Bonhoeffer demonstrated that Christ is present in the relational encounter between distinct persons, between an 'I' and a 'You'. There is therefore no 'third thing' to which a relationship should lead: **relationships are revelatory and must never be used as tools for influence**. To allow children and adults to encounter one another as 'I' and 'You', the church requires to move away from age-segregation and towards intergenerational community. This shows the need for community, and Bonhoeffer outlined the ability to involve even young children as a marker of community. His thoughts on baptism were outlined to illustrate the importance of the place of a child within the whole community – the community must 'carry' the child as a mother. This calls the church to place children at the centre of the life of the church-community and asserts that **the church should be primarily intergenerational, not age-segregated**.

Attention then turned to Bonhoeffer's concept of *Stellvertretung*, here translated as place-sharing. Whereas an educational focus can lead to an imbalance in relationship between adult teachers and child pupils, the principle of place-sharing called the church to move to a more mutual way of intergenerational relating. As Christ shares the place of both God and humanity, so his disciples are called to place-share for one another. This requires a depth of relationship,

knowing one another as family rather than as acquaintances, meaning that the church community must move beyond being "with-each-other" to "being-for-each-other." Space must be made for intergenerational interaction which allows such depth of relationship to be formed. Therefore, **relationships should not be unidirectional, but be characterised by mutual place-sharing**.

This brief survey of the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer has revealed four main normative movements that the Church ought to make relating to the place of children in its life: a move from an educational to an experiential mindset; a move from age-segregation to being intergenerational; a move from unidirectional (adult to child) relationships to mutual place-sharing; and a move from relationships used as tools of influence to relationships as the place of revelation. The question of how to begin to make such movements is the final, pragmatic task facing the next chapter.

5. The Pragmatic Task: How might we respond?

Osmer describes the pragmatic task of practical theology as "the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable."[262] In this case, the task concerns the changes the Church of Scotland requires to make in order to bring about the four movements described in Chapter Four: from age-segregated to intergenerational, from educational to experiential, from unidirectional (adult-to-child) relationships to mutual place-sharing and from relationships used for influence to relationships as revelatory. Given the diversity of current intergenerational practice in the Church of Scotland outlined in Chapter Two, ranging from a small number of congregations operating with an intergenerational outlook through to a larger number of congregations practicing no intentionally intergenerational work, it is not possible to offer a single set of strategies which can serve to bring about change across the whole denomination. Rather, it will be for each congregation to establish the change appropriate to their context.

Osmer offers assistance by suggesting two ways of answering the pragmatic question in a generalised sense which can guide church leaders in devising and implementing local strategies for change: models of practice and rules of art.[263] He describes models of practice as offering leaders "a general picture of the field in which they are acting and ways they might shape this field towards desired goals."[264] Rules of art offer "more specific guidelines about how to carry out particular actions or practices"[265] taking into consideration "both the actual empirical condition of the church and a vision of what it might become in the emerging context."[266] This

[262] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 175-176.
[263] ibid., 176.
[264] ibid.
[265] ibid.
[266] Richard Osmer, quoted in Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 198.

chapter will proceed by addressing the need for the Church of Scotland to establish a new model of practice rooted within a theological understanding of intergenerational ministry before offering some rules of art for how the specific changes outlined in Chapter Four may be realised through a change of mindset, and in the practices of worship, formation and hospitality.

5.1 A Model of Practice Rooted in Theology

It was demonstrated in Chapter Three that the current model of practice for children's ministry in the Church of Scotland came about owing to reasons of educational theory, church growth strategy, societal change and practical convenience. Notably missing from this list is theological conviction. It was reported to the General Assembly of 2017 that "there is a felt need for the Church of Scotland to develop, articulate, and employ a strong theological framework for its work with children and young people."[267] The report highlighted the need for the church to develop a theology of "the place of children and young people within the life of the church community."[268] If change is to be achieved at congregational level, such theological groundwork should be a priority so that the Church of Scotland can articulate clearly its understanding of the place of children.

The case has been made here that such a theological understanding should place children within an intergenerational church community, bringing to an end many of the practices of age-segregation developed over the last century. This would mark a significant shift in church life for many congregations – a change Osmer would describe as "revolutionary" rather than "evolutionary" in that "the deep structure of [the] organisation is altered. This is experienced

[267] Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2017*, 20/17.
[268] ibid., 20/19.

as a major jolt to the system and involves significant and rapid change."[269] He describes three levels within the congregation who would be affected by this change: "individual, group and total system."[270] Within a congregation, attention must be paid to all three levels: individual members, key groups including children's groups (in most cases, Sunday schools) and the Kirk Session, and the "total system" – the dynamic of the congregation as a whole. Including individuals in shaping the process of change is "one of the most important ways" leaders can keep them on board[271] and the same can be true for groups who can be "a formidable line of resistance" or "a key source of change."[272] It is therefore necessary that while the Church of Scotland as a denomination must establish a clear theological understanding of the place of children in an intergenerational church community, local leadership will be required to involve all stakeholders in establishing the model of practice best suited to their local context in implementing change.

This paper has sought to begin the work of establishing a new model of practice by articulating a theology of the place of children in an intergenerational church community. The four movements outlined show that by structuring the church's worship and activities in an intergenerational (as opposed to both an age-segregated and a multigenerational) way, relationships of mutual place-sharing can form between adults and children, revealing to them the presence of the living Christ as an experiential reality. It now remains to offer some rules of art for each of the four movements as a means to exploring what this may look like in the context of the local congregation. This is not an exhaustive list, but intended as a signal of the direction of travel the Church of Scotland should take.

[269] Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 202.
[270] ibid., 203-204.
[271] ibid., 204.
[272] ibid., 205.

5.2 From Age-segregated to Intergenerational: Mindset

Rule of Art: Make 'intergenerational' the default position in church life.

In the same way that the Lund Principle asks churches of different denominations to consider "whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately,"[273] churches should adopt a default position of making the whole of church life intentionally intergenerational, except when there is a significant and justifiable reason not to. This flips the current assumption outlined in Chapter Two around – rather than most time in church being age-segregated (as in Sunday schools) with exceptions for intergenerationality (such as a family service), the opposite would become true. It is important to note that this does not preclude activities grouped by age where this is necessary (such as a legal minimum age to act as a charity trustee) or appropriate (for example, discussions on some sensitive topics may be considered inappropriate for younger children). These, however, should only form aspects of a church life which is predominantly intergenerational.

Allen and Ross argue more strongly in favour of "a both/and proposition, not either/or."[274] They argue that some aspects of ministry "flourish better in segregated settings… for example, learning the books of the Bible, group sleepovers, discussions regarding pornography and issues concerning the apocryphal books certainly call for age-appropriate settings."[275] They add that part of becoming an intergenerational community is recognising the value in the time ages spend apart, such as in age-segregated learning or youth groups.[276] Root takes the opposite

[273] Faith and Order Commission, *Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order* (London: John Roberts Press, 1952), 6.
[274] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 186.
[275] ibid.
[276] ibid.

tack: "If we are to confess, as Bonhoeffer has led us, that meaningful relationships are the concrete location of Christ's presence, then… youth ministry as "youth group" may not need to exist."[277] For the Church of Scotland, this may also mean recognising that Sunday school as it is currently constituted may not need to exist. Root goes on to acknowledge there are occasions and circumstances in which it is desirable to create time spent with age-cohort peers, but urges that this should be the exception rather than the rule.[278] It will be for each congregation to decide for itself where the appropriate balance lies in affording opportunities for age-specific gatherings, however, in moving from being predominantly age-segregated to being predominantly intergenerational, churches must embrace as a rule of art making 'intergenerational' the default position of church life.

This means that being intergenerational is not a programme, not another activity to be added to church life. Instead, it is a paradigmatic understanding which shapes all aspects of church life. Allen and Ross describe it as a "new *mindset*" as opposed to "a new *model* of ministry,"[279] while Brenda Snailum says intergenerational "is not something churches do – it is something they become."[280] For the Church of Scotland, this means addressing a significant area where the church has struggled to include all ages and tackle head-on the fact that only six percent of children in the church participate in Holy Communion. For the church to be truly intergenerational, for the place of children to be recognised as disciples, children must also be present at and partaking in the family meal. This is just one example of a specific change which many churches would require to make. Others may include finding ways for all ages to be incorporated in the decision making processes of the church, creating opportunities for all ages

[277] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 208.
[278] ibid.
[279] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 178.
[280] Brenda Snailum, "Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry Within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?" *Christian Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (2012): 165-181.

to engage in service of the community, and reimagining the church's outreach and mission as an invitation to participate in the life of an intergenerational community of relationship. A significant task for local church leadership will be identifying which aspects of church life require changes to allow them to become intergenerational.

5.3 From Educational to Experiential: Worship

Rule of Art: Incorporate all 'spiritual styles' in worship to enable people to experience the presence of the living Christ.

It was noted in Chapter Two that there is a division in many Church of Scotland congregations between a time of worship addressed to children and a time addressed to adults. If the generations are to be brought together in intergenerational worship, it is important that the worship time is no longer divided by appeal to age-groups, as if each age group is expected to sit through the time devoted to the other. Rather, the whole time of worship should involve the whole congregation, regardless of age (which is not to say that different people of different ages will all engage with the totality of worship in equal measure). Allen and Ross provide a helpful prompt: "Leaders who want to nurture an intergenerational culture must consider each element of the typical worship liturgy with one question in mind: How can children, teens, emerging adults, young adults, middle adults and older adults be drawn in more fully?"[281] They suggest creating an intergenerational team representative of the congregation to assist in planning worship as a means to keep this question at the forefront.[282]

[281] Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 199.
[282] ibid.

Csinos presents research suggesting it is a mistake to think that certain activities or acts of worship appeal to children simply on the basis of age.[283] Rather, he finds, children connect with God in different ways which he groups into four "spiritual styles" labelled word, emotion, symbol and action.[284] 'Word' refers to those who "focus on their intellectual thinking of God… Their ability to engage in rational thinking is their primary means for connecting with God and understanding the world."[285] Those with a 'word' spirituality connect with God through, for example, stories, the words of hymns/songs, discussing a Bible study or studying Bible maps.[286] 'Emotion' refers to those for whom feelings are at the core of spiritual experiences.[287] Those with an 'emotion' spirituality might meet God in, for example, dance, drama and responding to music by clapping or raising hands.[288] A 'symbol' spirituality is "mystical in the way it values symbols and their abilities to connect people with the transcendent"[289] and can connect with God through, for example, looking at nature, reflecting on images or icons, lighting candles or reflecting in silence.[290] Those with an 'action' spirituality "believe that they need to do more than just pray for the world – they must actively and radically seek to transform it"[291] and experience God's presence through, for example, raising money for a cause or petitioning on issues of social justice.[292] Brian MacLaren points out that adults also experience God according to these same styles.[293] Most worship in the Church of Scotland is predominantly 'word' focussed,[294] so worship leaders will have to actively plan to include other

[283] David M. Csinos, *Children's Ministry That Fits: Beyond One-Size-Fits-All Approaches to Nurturing Children's Spirituality* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 2-4.
[284] ibid., 49.
[285] ibid., 52.
[286] ibid., 159-160.
[287] ibid., 56-57.
[288] ibid., 160-161.
[289] ibid., 61.
[290] ibid., 161-162.
[291] ibid., 65.
[292] ibid., 162-163.
[293] Brian D. MacLaren, afterword to *Children's Ministry that Fits*, by David M. Csinos (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 157.
[294] Macdonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, 84.

the other styles. This should engage the whole congregation more, not just children. Ensuring that all four of these spiritual styles are incorporated into a service of worship, then, should enable the whole congregation to experience God, regardless of age.

5.4 From unidirectional teaching to relationships of mutual place-sharing: Formation

Rule of Art: Reimagine 'education' as formation through experiencing the living Christ.

The case has been made here that the church should move from an educational to an experiential mindset, but this does not mean that Christian learning is not important. Farrant cautions that "we need to learn about our faith" but that this should not take the place of the worship service or "just be for children and young people."[295] Instead, she imagines learning in "a community of faith with everyone seen as a fellow pilgrim regardless of their age and experience."[296] Moore outlines three modes of learning as in Figure 3: formal (such as in a classroom), which is both intentional and traditional but not practical; non-formal (such as in an apprenticeship), which is both intentional and practical but less traditional; and socialisation (such as how we learn to speak our mother tongue), which is both practical and traditional, although from the learner's perspective may not seem intentional.[297]

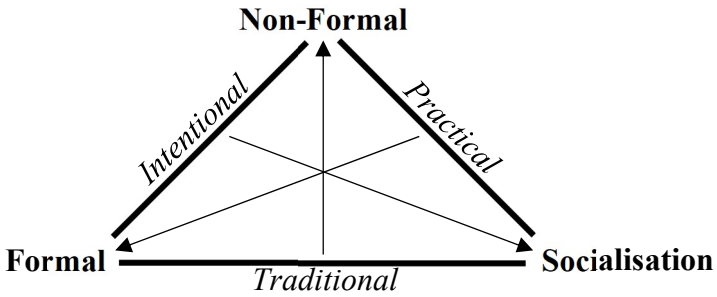

Figure 3: Moore's Three Modes of Learning

[295] Farrant, "Children and Young People in the Church", 9.
[296] ibid.
[297] Moore, *Making Disciples in Messy Church*, 36-37.

The church, he claims, has emphasised formal learning to the exclusion of the other modes.[298] Sunday schools and Bible classes are evidence of this. Rather, he calls for "an immersive learning experience involving socialisation and non-formal learning through observation, imitation, [and] experiment."[299] Within the church-community, learning can take place in practical ways as different ages witness one another experiencing the presence of the living Christ. Mariette Martineau, Joan Weber and Lief Kehrwald describe how this can look:

> When a middle-schooler sees that a young adult is genuinely learning and growing in his faith, this provides a powerful witness to the young adolescent. Similarly, when a middle-aged adult sees a youngster have an 'aha' moment of faith, it freshens and enlivens the faith of the mature adult. When the whole community learns the same things at the same time, it strengthens the sacred nature of the whole community.[300]

In this way, the relational experience of meeting Christ in the other is formational and the congregation can live up to its baptismal obligation to 'carry' its children like a mother. Congregations must, therefore, be prepared to let go of the current educational apparatus and reimagine 'education' as formation through experiencing the living Christ together. In doing this, they will free adult-child relationships from a one directional, teacher-pupil understanding, and pave the way for relationships of mutual place-sharing to flourish.

5.5 From relationships used for influence to relationships as revelatory: Hospitality

Rule of Art: Curate place-sharing relationships as the location of Christ's presence.

Christ is concretely present in the relationship between an 'I' and a 'You', and therefore such relationships should not seek to influence the other towards some end but recognise that the relationship is in itself revelatory. Root describes the job of ministry as "the curating of these

[298] ibid., 38.
[299] ibid., 39.
[300] Mariette Martineau, Joan Weber and Lief Kehrwald, *Intergenerational Faith Formation: All Ages Learning Together* (New London: Twenty-Third Publications, 2008), 62.

places, these in-between spaces, through the facilitation of locales that allow people to share in each other's needs, to see each other as persons."[301] He points out that no minister can create such places as "they are outgrowths of the work of the Holy Spirit," but although they cannot be created, they can be curated.[302] A family may recognise that it is not the house (as a material place) that makes them a family, but the relational bonds between them that is the place of their shared life and pay attention to activities and practices which enhance those relational bonds. In the same way, the church must recognise that it is not the material place that makes the community a church, but the relational bonds between them, and those in ministry must be "attentive to curating places where the sharing of persons can happen,"[303] that is to pay attention to the activities and practices which enhance those relational bonds, "and in all of this to confess the presence of Christ."[304] These activities and practices may vary according to local context and tradition, but Root lists prayer[305] and story[306] as universal in helping to curate relationships for "through prayer, discord [between generations] can be transformed into a bond of understanding and love"[307] and stories "draw out our person by connecting our own story with the story being told."[308] A core task of ministry in curating places of relationship is developing the prayer-life of the congregation and creating opportunities for people to share their own stories.

Karen Jones questions Root's approach, charging that a purely relational model requires those in ministry to "expend enormous amounts of energy" causing them to "lose focus and

[301] Root, *The Relational Pastor*, 163.
[302] ibid.
[303] ibid.
[304] ibid.
[305] ibid., 169-184.
[306] ibid., 185-202.
[307] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 202.
[308] Root, *The Relational Pastor*, 191.

passion."[309] She continues with a warning that this can lead to young people feeling marginalised if they have not received sufficient attention. Root, however, readily acknowledges that place-sharing relationships "are too complicated and meaningful to allow us to encounter many other persons, sharing in their sufferings and joys at the level demanded for relational transformation."[310] One person cannot enter into place-sharing relationships with the whole congregation. Rather, "Bonhoeffer pointed us toward a relational ministry of place-sharing that is a *community activity*, a congregationwide ministry."[311] It is not the job of those in leadership roles to try to relate as a place-sharer to the whole congregation, but to ensure that each member of the congregation is in a place-sharing relationship by curating spaces in which this is possible. Root describes this as being "a good matchmaker"[312] – developing a knowledge of the congregation and identifying common interests or activities that may allow a relationship to deepen. Those in youth or children's ministry roles must understand themselves "not as the pastor to youth [or children] at the church but as the pastor to the congregation who gives special attention" to youth or children.[313] The church will require youth and children's workers (both paid and voluntary) who see their role as "bridging the gap"[314] between adults and children, curating the place of relational encounter between generations and ensuring that every child can be in a place-sharing relationship with an adult in the congregation. The question for those in ministry becomes one of how to curate such spaces.

[309] Karen Jones, "Holistic Pastoral Care", in *Christian Youth Work in Theory and Practice: A Handbook*, ed. Sally Nash and Jo Whitehead (London: SCM Press, 2014), 170.
[310] Root, *Reimagining Relational Youth Ministry*, 199.
[311] ibid., 201.
[312] ibid.
[313] ibid., 214.
[314] ibid., 216.

Nouwen suggests that the key practice which will enable this is hospitality.[315] He does not limit this term to the reception of a guest in a home, but rather regards it as a "fundamental attitude towards our fellow human being"[316] in which a "free" and "friendly" space is offered.[317] In offering hospitality, persons discover their true selves and enter into a different quality of relationship. Nouwen is keen to point out that "Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place."[318] This echoes Root's approach: the relationship is not to influence the other, but is the concrete place where the living Christ can bring about transformation. Hospitality is therefore an essential practice of a church which wishes to curate space for place-sharing relationships between generations. Congregations must make space for people to practice hospitality to one another with no agenda attached, for example, by sharing meals together (with no added purpose such as learning or fundraising).

Steve Griffiths offers a contrary view, arguing that Jesus did not model a relational ministry of this kind.[319] He acknowledges the value Jesus placed on relationship, but states that he did not do this by "spending *chronos*-time with individuals" but by "seizing *kairos*-moments."[320] Jesus would "transform lives by teaching – and then move on."[321] Jones agrees, arguing that Root's approach "minimise[s] the importance of proclamation that characterized the entire earthly ministry of Jesus."[322] Nouwen, however, would counter that the creation of a free and empty space through hospitality creates the conditions for us to recognise such a *kairos*-moment:

> If we expect any salvation, redemption, healing and new life, the first thing we need is a receptive place where something can happen to us. Hospitality, therefore, is such an

[315] Henri JM Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1996), 43-53.
[316] ibid., 45.
[317] ibid., 49.
[318] ibid.
[319] Steve Griffiths, *Models for Youth Ministry: Learning from the Life of Christ* (London: SPCK, 2013), 5-6.
[320] ibid., 10.
[321] ibid.
[322] Jones, "Holistic Pastoral Care", 170.

> important attitude… We cannot change other people by our convictions, stories, advice and proposals… This conversion is an inner event that cannot be manipulated.[323]

Root goes even further and issues a reminder that the aim of ministry is not to bring about transformation, "for this is solely the work of God,"[324] but rather to share the place of the other. In curating spaces for place-sharing through the practice of hospitality, time spent together becomes more than *chronos*-time as the transformative presence of Christ gives that time a *kairos*-quality.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has considered the pragmatic question of how to move the Church of Scotland from where it is now to where it ought to be in terms of including children in an intergenerational church community. It was noted that this needs to begin by establishing a robust theological framework for such change, which would allow each congregation to develop a model of practice suited to their context. As an indicator of the direction of change required, four 'rules of art' were offered which could help local congregations in implementing change. The first recognised that to move from being age-segregated to being intergenerational requires making 'intergenerational' the default in church life, particularly in practices where the Church of Scotland finds this difficult, such as in the sharing of Holy Communion. The second rule of art urged congregations to move from an educational to an experiential mindset by including all 'spiritual styles' in worship to enable people to experience the living Christ in community through word, emotion, symbol and action. Thirdly, to move from unidirectional teaching to relationships of mutual place-sharing, congregations need to reimagine 'education' as formation through experiencing the living Christ, which will mean letting go of many current

[323] Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 52-53.
[324] Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, 192.

practices such as Sunday school. Finally, church leaders can help move from relationships as tools for influence to relationships understood as revelatory by curating place-sharing relationships as the location of Christ's presence through the practice of hospitality and the sharing of prayer and story.

Putting these rules of art together, a picture begins to emerge of how intergenerational church communities might look. It is easy to imagine that the focal point of the congregation's life would be a place of hospitality, for example regular and frequent shared meals where all ages are involved in preparation, service and sharing together. Such gatherings would not be regarded as 'extras' but would form the core of what it means to be church-community, offering space for the development of place-sharing relationships, the sharing of one another's stories, and for Christian formation as all ages experience the living Christ present among them. This place of hospitality would also be missional, as the congregation extends an invitation to others to share in the free and friendly space. In the same spirit of hospitality, the congregation would ensure that its times of worship offered a space for all, by the incorporation of all four spiritual styles and by creating opportunities for all ages to share in prayer, learning and story together. This brief portrait and the rules of art does not present a definitive or exhaustive picture, but serves to demonstrate the type and scale of change required if the Church is to fully include children within intergenerational church communities.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

This paper set out to explore the changes the Church of Scotland could make to include children in an intergenerational church community, using the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer for theological interpretation. Chapter Two was descriptive in nature and outlined the current state of intergenerational and children's ministry across the Church. Results of a survey demonstrated a varied picture of intergenerational activity across the Church, with a very small number of congregations identified as being intergenerational in outlook. Furthermore, a response rate of under four percent showed that intergenerational community is not currently given high priority. The more typical picture uncovered saw children spend a short time in the worship service before leaving to take part in educational activities in a Sunday school or junior church. As well as segregating ages, this led to an educational focus, with unidirectional adult-to-child relationships used as tools of influence.

Chapter Three sought to understand how this situation came to be. It was noted that from the earliest Christian communities of the first century through much of Christian history, churches were inherently intergenerational. This began to change at the Protestant Reformation as an emphasis on reading the Word led to the development of age-specific education. Churches opened Sunday schools to offer general education, and these were repurposed for Christian education when state education became widely available. Four reasons were identified as factors contributing to Sunday schools moving to take place concurrently with worship, namely a desire to follow educational stage theories, as part of church growth strategies, a response to the rise of individualism and, most significantly, as a matter of practicality and convenience.

It was noted, therefore, that the current situation developed from pragmatic and societal considerations and not from a theological rationale.

The development of a theological rationale for change lay at the heart of Chapter Four, using Bonhoeffer's answer to the questions 'Who is Jesus Christ?' and 'Where is Jesus Christ?' Framing the principal question as 'who' rather than 'how' served as a reminder that Christ is a person whose presence can be experienced rather than a mere object of knowledge. Bonhoeffer's answer – that Christ is the incarnate, crucified and resurrected God-man – revealed God's desire that humanity be fully human, and that in participation in the dying and rising of Christ, humanity is transformed by his presence. This demonstrated that children already meet God's ontological desire and that their place as persons and disciples should be recognised. In response to the 'where' question, it was shown that Christ is concretely present in the relationship between an 'I' and a 'You', making relationships the place of God's revelation. Bonhoeffer highlighted the ability of even young children to participate in community, and his understanding of baptism showed the importance of the place of the child within the whole church-community. This called for relationships characterised by *Stellvertretung* – here translated as place-sharing. Taking all of this together led to the claim that the Church of Scotland should move from an age-segregated to an intergenerational mindset, from an educational to an experiential focus, and from unidirectional relationships used for influence to place-sharing relationships as revelatory.

Chapter Five then began to paint a picture of how congregations might respond to this. Four 'rules of art' were offered, identifying changes required in the church's mindset, worship, formation and hospitality. It was argued that the default mindset of the church should be intergenerational, with age-segregation only taking place where limited and compelling

reasons necessitate it. Four spiritual styles (word, emotion, symbol and action) were advocated as a way of including all ages in worship which expected to experience the living Christ. The call was made to reimagine education as formation through encounter with Christ in place-sharing relationships, making this a whole-community activity. The practice of hospitality was put forward as a means of curating spaces where place-sharing relationships could develop, and Christ's presence be experienced. From this emerged a picture of churches as intergenerational communities sharing and serving together in regular acts of hospitality.

It has been shown, therefore, that the Church of Scotland can develop a strong theological rationale for change which rediscovers the church as an intergenerational community of hospitality. In moving from an age-segregated to an intergenerational mindset and an educational to an experiential focus, the Church will need to let go of its long-established Sunday school model and take action to ensure that children are welcomed and included in the celebration of Holy Communion. By taking steps to centre the community around acts of hospitality, such as by regularly preparing and sharing meals together, relationships of mutual place-sharing will develop between ages and generations. Ensuring that children are included in this community will be of benefit to both adults and children alike, and will serve to build up the whole body of Christ.

6.2 Next Steps

This paper aimed to set out a theological rationale for the inclusion of children in an intergenerational community. It has, however, been limited in scope, looking only to the writings of Bonhoeffer in the normative task. To develop a stronger theological framework, this would need to be expanded, looking across the breadth of scripture, tradition and the

academy to answer the normative question. To take one example, while Bonhoeffer confesses Christ as the incarnate, crucified and resurrected one, he is less explicit in recognising Christ as ascended or coming again.[325] Griffiths argues that the Ascension is the "most neglected" aspect of Christology, yet is also the most important in that it is only because the resurrected Christ is ascended that humanity is able to experience his presence today.[326] This understanding is implicit in Bonhoeffer's thinking, but the inclusion of scholars who place more emphasis on these other aspects of Christ's person would serve to strengthen understanding and could reveal new insights. The framework established here is imagined only as the first steps towards a comprehensive theology of the place of children in an intergenerational church community which the Church of Scotland requires to develop.

In a similar way, the four 'rules of art' are intended only as a first step towards helping local congregations begin to imagine a more intergenerational future. The specifics of what this will look like and how it will be achieved need to be worked out by each congregation taking full account of their own local context. Resources need to be developed which will assist local leadership to reflect on these questions if any significant change is to take place.

The Church of Scotland is facing a crisis in terms of the involvement of children in its life, as numbers continue to fall. This could, however, be a moment of great opportunity for the Church to part with age-segregation and rediscover that "It is in and through togetherness that we are the community of Christ; it is in and through participating with other bodies (even loud, wiggly ones) that we are taken into communion with the living Christ."[327] By reimagining churches as hospitable spaces of intergenerational relationship, built on a solid theological

[325] For example, the ascension is mentioned only twice in *Sanctorum Communio*, and not at all in *Act and Being*, *Discipleship* or *Ethics*.
[326] Griffiths, *Models for Youth Ministry*, 87-105.
[327] Root, *Bonhoeffer as Youth Worker*, 202.

foundation, the church will be well-placed to extend an invitation to all to take their place in the family of God.

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