Is Marjorie Reeves' 'Children of the Future' (1943) *the* Children's Ministry strategy we've all been looking for?

Module: TMM42360

Name: Rebecca Joanne May

Date of submission: 31st May 2022

Word count: 15,042

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the regulations
of the MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission
Children, Young People and Family Specialists

Statement of originality

Except for those parts in which it is explicitly stated to the contrary, this dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree at this or any other academic institution.

Signature: *Becky May*   Date: 26.5.2022

Photocopying and inter-library loans

I agree that this dissertation may be made available for reading, photocopying and inter-library loans

Signature: *Becky May*   Date: 26.5.2022

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a disruption in the activity of many churches and children's ministries internationally. A side-effect of this disruption ~~in activity~~ was to create a pause, a moment when the church could ask questions about the strategy they were employing, and what changes they could and should make.

This research project identified a booklet published in 1943, 'Children of the Future' (COFT) and set out to discover whether this could be the strategy that addresses the issues raised through reflections over the Covid-19 pandemic period, or over a wider period of dissatisfaction with children's ministry in the UK. This was conducted through a piece of research which drew on the traditions of grounded theory, qualitative research through the eyes of practical theology and thematic analysis, to form a methodology appropriate to the limitations of a study of this size.

Five interviews were conducted and subject to a thorough thematic analysis. Further analysis of COTF was then carried out to explore the degree to which it provided answers to the questions and issues raised in the interviews, and to ascertain whether COTF was worthy of further consideration and research on a larger scale. The project identified sufficient correlation between the themes raised in the interviews and in COTF to propose that further research is warranted, but that it is not only a new strategy that is needed, but a new understanding of children's ministry and the identification of new priorities too.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

In October 2021, research carried out in Brazil, Canada, UK and US asked the question, "Do we need a new plan for children's ministry?" and concluded, "that there is an urgent need for church leaders and para-church organisations to prioritise ministry amongst children, and to formulate clear strategies for the way ahead." (Holmes et al, 2021, p.3).

This multi-agency research proposed that:

"Pre-pandemic it would seem that institutions such as schools and churches felt confident in their orientation towards ministry with children. There were plans in place, with some awareness of the need for review, but all appeared to be working to a plan. However, the pandemic has caused complete disorientation and for many it has highlighted pre-existing situations as dysfunctional or ineffective." (Holmes et al, 2021, p.4)

Thus, this research focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children's faith formation and some of the underlying issues which this period exposed. There are further arguments as to why the church may need a new strategy for ministry to and with children and there is much statistical data for the need to change tack. Perhaps best-known is the statistic used by Scripture Union that 95% of children are not in regular contact with the church. This is illustrated further by Peter Brierley's UK Church Statistics which identifies a decline in usual Sunday church attendance from 12.4% of under 15-year-olds, in 1980, to an estimated 4.2% in 2020 and a predicted 2.9% in 2030 (Brierley, 2021, Table 13.6.1). That said, Sunday church attendance is only one measure of engagement with the church and the Christian faith. Further arguments have been identified by some of the key voices over the last thirty years or so, and these will be explored further in Chapter Two. When holding all the data together, however, it clearly points to the fact that the church's work with children isn't working, and a new strategy must be found.

During the 'pause' opportunity that the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic gave us, my own reflection set me on a trail to discover what was being said within the church at the last most disruptive period: World War II. This in turn led me to discover a

small booklet, written by Marjorie Reeves PhD in 1943: 'Children of the Future'. What is fascinating is that despite the date of this work falling four years into World War II, Reeves does not once mention the war, or its impact on children, which raises many questions about her motivation. This, together with a wider understanding of Reeves and her work will be further explored in Chapter Three.

Whilst Reeves does not refer to her work as a 'strategy,' she does propose a clear plan for action. It is the intention of this research project to investigate whether it may, indeed, provide the strategy we need.

Limitations of Study

In pursuing this question, it is recognised that this is a large area for research, and one which cannot be fully answered within the constraints of a project of this size, both in terms of the length of the essay and the time available for the research. As such, these limitations have affected the methodology selected for research, and the conclusions reached are offered as a hypothesis for further research. This is further described in Chapters Four and Seven. It is also acknowledged that many of the wider ideas and themes raised here are only briefly touched upon and worthy of far greater consideration. I have endeavoured to make it clear where this is the case.

Definitions and Terminology

Strategy

This research project is concerned with the strategy we apply to children's ministry. Neither Reeves nor the interviewees used the word strategy, although it remains central to this question. Jim Currin defines strategy and its place in mission and ministry, recalling, "Robin Gamble wrote, 'Strategy, that is to say a good plan of action that is likely to lead to success, is not a substitute for the Spirit, it is rather a tool of the Spirit… The picture of Jesus' ministry and that of the apostolic church is that of sound strategies, careful thought and planning." (Currin, 2004, p.3-4). Furthermore, "Developing a strategy for mission and evangelism is simply about putting thought, prayer, order and planning into the God-given task." (Currin, 2004, p.8).

Children's ministry

Throughout this essay, the term 'Children's ministry' will be used to describe and define all aspects of the church's work with children, both within the life of the church and further afield.

Children of the Future

For conciseness, 'Children of the Future' will be abbreviated to COTF throughout this essay. Further terms specific to COTF will be clarified and defined in Chapter Three.

We

Across this project, there are terms when the word 'we' is used to describe the church. In chapter 3, I explore in more detail issues of reflexivity and acknowledge my own role both as researcher / writer, conducting this research, and interested person, with a role within the church.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

With a research subject this broad, it could be possible to look at almost everything that has been written in relation to children's ministry and find common themes with those raised in COTF. Instead, I have chosen to focus on those significant works written over the last 80 years (since the publication of COTF), at a strategic level. These include titles which talk about the need for change and for a new strategy, as well as those which describe how we have got to this point. In essence, this literature review seeks to answer the question: 'Who are the key voices who have spoken on this subject in the intervening years and what have they contributed to the discussion?' Largely, this focuses on those authors writing within the UK context. A great amount has also been written elsewhere, particularly in the US, but only those titles which have had most impact in the UK have been included here.

It is important to acknowledge all publications which have contributed to this conversation. This table seeks to recognise all books of note, with those of most significance further explored below.

Date of Publication	Title	Author	Themes
1941	The Family Church in Principle and Practice	Herbert Hamilton	Introducing Family Church model
1943	Children of the Future	Marjorie Reeves	New approach to children's ministry
1945	Towards the Conversion of England	Church Assembly	Evangelism
1946	Growing Up in a Modern Society	Marjorie Reeves	Education
1984	The Child in the Church	Rt. Rev. John Gibbs (Chair)	Report (ecumenical)
1986	The Rise and Development of the Sunday School	Philip B. Cliff	Description of phases of

	Movement in England 1780-1980		Sunday School ministry
1988	Children in the Way	Margaret Turk (Chair)	Report (The National Society)
1989	Angels with Dirty Faces	Ian Smale	Call to change
1991	All God's Children?	Penny Frank (Chair)	Report (The National Society)
1992	Whose Child is This?	Bill Wilson	Testimony / call to change.
1998	Too Little, Too Late	Penny Frank and Geoff Pearson	Call to change: Evangelism
2001	Tuesday's Child	John Sutcliffe (Editor)	Anthology of significant works (1900-1990s)
2001	Reclaiming a Generation	Ian Smale	Call to change
2002	Every Child the Chance to Choose	Penny Frank	Call to change: Evangelism
2003	God's Plan for Children	Dave Roberts	Call to change
2006	Mission-Shaped Children	Margaret Withers	Call to change
2006	Messy Church	Lucy Moore	First of series developing the Messy Church movement.
2009	Children's Spirituality	Rebecca Nye	Developing theological understanding.
2009	One Generation from Extinction	Mark Griffiths	Developing focus on evangelism / research

2010	Parenting Children for a Life of Faith	Rachel Turner	First of series developing the Parenting for Faith movement.
2013	Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus	David M. Csinos and Ivy Beckwith	Developing theological understanding
2019	Rethinking Children's Work in Churches	Carolyn Edwards et al (Ed)	Call for change, developing understanding.
2021	Do we Need a New Plan for Children's Ministry?	Sarah Holmes et al.	Research report

It is possible to organise these titles into five groups, largely written in chronological order, which tell a story of development through time. The first group includes Reeves and her contemporaries. The second were written as reports, largely for the Church of England about the status of children in the church. Thirdly, there are a number of books written predominantly in response to these reports, urging action and providing practical advice. The fourth group is the most recent and these document the significant movements in children's ministry in most recent times. The fifth and final group are separate from this process, but rather help us to understand the evolving narrative.

Reeves and her Contemporaries

Whilst Reeves was actively engaged in the education of children and young people throughout her working life, her published interest in children's ministry is limited to 1940s. COTF and 'Growing Up in a Modern Society' will be explored in Chapter Three and so are not included here, but two other key texts from this time are worthy of consideration; 'Towards the Conversion of England' and 'The Family Church in

Principle and Practice.' Reeve's direct connection with each of these publications is described in Chapter Three, but it is worth noting their particular contribution here.

'Towards the Conversion of England' was initiated by then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, and published posthumously in his memory. It is important, not just because of its wider influence at the time – "It had run through five further printings by November 1950," (Pearson, 2005, p.3) – but because it spoke specifically about the need to evangelise children and young people. It is underpinned by an understanding that children "shall become alive to Christ," (Rotten et al. 1945, p.88) although it could be argued that a theology of childhood and an understanding as to the standing of children in God was less well-developed than in more recent thinking, with an emphasis on opportunities to make decisions for Christ. The report identifies the many spheres of life where Christian nurture should take place: school, home, youth group etc, which resonates with Reeves model, but there is an emphasis on the child as a unit separate from the wider family, and a teaching that in some instances, "it is better still… to get them … away from the deadening influence of their home or neighbourhood," (Rotten et al. 1945, p.92). Whether or not the core beliefs and understanding underpinning the plan were right, 'Towards the Conversion of England' succeeded in putting evangelism to children on the agenda. That said, its wider impact was limited "by the post-war rebuilding of churches," (Pearson, 2005, p.3).

The second significant work of this time was Herbert Hamilton's 'The Family Church in Principle and Practice'. This was greatly significant in transforming the way the church in the UK worked with children. The rationale was a good one, to understand the church as the 'family of families,' but the impact was greatly misjudged, with 'church friends,' 'church parents' and 'sponsors' taking the place of parents for children whose families were not engaged in church life, a policy which would cast a long shadow with the impact being that churches disengaged from the lives of families outside of the church for many years.

Reports

In 'One Generation from Extinction', Mark Griffiths says:

"It is important to note again that in the Sunday School world there is a lag of approximately thirty years between the worlds of the change-agent and its acceptance at grass roots level. The negative or positive impact of decisions taken may not be felt on a national level until some thirty years after the decision." (Griffiths, 2009, p.57)

This may explain why little is written in this field in the period between the 1940s and the 1980s, by which time the impact of the introduction of the family church movement and the decision to move Sunday School to be included within the morning service, was evident with three significant reports published in the 1980s and 1990s, each one becoming more desperate in tone about the failures of children's ministry.

'The Child in the Church' is an attempt from an ecumenical perspective to understand Christian nurture and those factors which are most influential. The book makes a series of recommendations for church, school and family but has its eye only on those children already growing up in the church.

'Children in the Way,' was written as a report for the General Synod of the Church of England:

"To look at the place of children in the Church. This means challenging those who make decisions and those who work with children's groups. We want them to acknowledge once more the responsibility which all adults have to share their faith with the children of the Church and go out to children and families outside the Church." (Turk et al, 1989, p.1)

It is one of the works in the list which is most comparable with Reeve's COTF. Both begin by seeking to understand childhood in their day and both make it clear that the work of the church should be for all children, not just those inside the church. That said, 'Children in the Way' makes a clearer distinction between those inside the church who need to be nurtured in faith and those outside the church who need to be 'evangelised to.' The starkest difference comes in recommending the model the church should adopt, whilst Reeves advocates for the family model, Turk et al warn; "We are learning, as we have seen, a great deal from the family model of Christian

nurture. But families can become inward-looking, can concentrate solely on their own internal lives, can be too restrictive for the growing life of children and adults," (Turk et al. 1989, p.34) and advocates instead for the adoption of the pilgrim model, in which all participants, children and adults, embark on a journey of faith together. In summary, the aims of this report were good and the recommendations thorough, addressing a wide scope of issues from understanding childhood and contemporary culture, the need for evangelism to children outside the church, different models to pursue, understanding faith development, leadership and theology, but the report failed to achieve its goals because the recommendations were not fully implemented.

The final and most hard-hitting report of this era was 'All God's Children?' subtitled 'Children's Evangelism in Crisis.' This has a specific focus on evangelism to those children outside of the church, but as with 'Children in the Way' its impact was limited because recommendations were not implemented.

Call to Action

Out of the findings of these reports, and even as a response to the frustration felt by their lack of impact, the next group of books published between the 1980s and the turn of the millennium were largely a call to action. It is worth noting that a number of these books were from the same publishers and were one part of an entire movement which included training courses, annual conferences and partnerships between national parachurch ministries, under the 'Children's Ministry' banner, headed by Kingsway Publications. Alongside the titles mentioned and discussed here, were a plethora of additional books with specific foci such as prayer ideas, craft ideas, Bible stories and children's talks. These are not included here because they do not add to our understanding of the development at a strategic level.

The books published from this stable include 'Reclaiming a Generation' by Ishmael, (a reworked and further developed version of 'Angels with Dirty Faces'), which was a call for change, "to stop living in the past, blindly accepting certain things that we have inherited without even bothering to check out if they are biblical." (Ishmael, 1989, p.13). It is an attempt to question and explore some of our understanding about why we do things in a particular way. In some ways, this book stands out as being different from others in the list, having a different focus, but it deserves to be

considered here because it is typical of its time: calling for change, and contributing something different from other titles, asking why instead of simply jumping to the how.

Two further titles were published by Kingsway Communications, which are worthy of consideration. Firstly 'Every Child a Chance to Choose,' by Penny Frank, which was designed to call the church to action, reminding the church of their responsibility to all children. In this work, Frank highlights the key areas needing action, from training and resources to areas of structure in church life needing consideration. It is written as a practical guide, with good news stories written alongside which speak of changes already implemented and the impact these are having.

Finally, 'God's Plan for Children' written by Dave Roberts, follows a similar format to COTF, divided into two parts: 'Why do we need to change,' and 'How shall we do this?' Roberts articulates this as "a declaration of intent," and "from foundations to strategies" but dedicates far more of the book to the why than the how. There are similarities too in the themes Roberts includes: equipping parents to pass on faith and reaching out to those outside the church, connections with schools and the need to be engaged in curriculum.

In summary, each of these books, together with Margaret Withers' 'Mission-Shaped Children' offer input which is still considered valuable today, but their impact was limited, and over the last 20 years, the children's ministry picture in the UK has continued to worsen.

We have already explored two of Frank's works, the report, 'All God's Children?' and 'Every Child the Chance to Choose.' Between these two was a third title, 'Too Little, too Late! Children's Evangelism Beyond Crisis', which articulated a desperate dissatisfaction at the outcome of the 1991 report. "When will we realise how far many of our children are from God? We are grieved to report failure but we are dealing with a whole generation without eternal hope, a generation that has not heard the Christian story about having a heavenly father who loves them." (Frank, 1998, p.3). This book is important because it actively criticises the lack of action as a result of the original report and helps us to understand the culture which existed at the time and the challenges facing those calling for change.

It is perhaps more uplifting to read these three titles in chronological order, demonstrating: 1) Things are broken, 2) Things are even more broken, 3) There are things we can do and these things are starting to make a difference. It is also, perhaps, too easy to look back on all titles from this period and write them off since the overall children's ministry picture has continued to worsen. It should, however, be noted that these titles made a significant impact on the understanding of those who were engaged and ready to listen, perhaps impacting our fourth and final group of books. It is also perhaps a timely reminder that no book can solve the problems faced by the church, it can only help our understanding if we are ready to listen and act.

More Recent Developments

Our fourth category of books brings us up to date and can be divided into two categories: those which challenge our understanding and those which help to develop particular movements; all of these have become more specialised in their focus than the titles identified in group three, moving away from a holistic strategic approach.

Those titles which challenge our understanding have largely focussed on the theology of childhood and the spirituality of the child. Most significant amongst these are 'Children's Spirituality' which has been hugely influential in shaping children's leaders' understanding of the spirituality of the child and 'Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus' which together with the more recent 'Rethinking Children's Work in Churches' has sought to ask why we choose to do things in a particular way, or why we may need to change these methods through the exploration of different models or priorities adopted in churches.

Then there are those titles which have focussed on specific areas of children's ministry. In chronological order, the first of these are the 'Messy Church' books, which have underpinned and fed the Messy Church movement as a new way of being church with all families. Some of these titles are more practical in nature with others being more concerned with theological understanding. The second movement is concerned with child evangelism with the most significant work in this field being Mark Griffiths' 'One Generation from Extinction'. As an academic work, this book

combines theory and research to offer practical methods for the way forward. The third significant movement has been 'Parenting for Faith' with writing in the field pioneered by Rachel Turner, who together with other ministries has equipped parents to pass on faith.

It could be argued that whilst the criticism of our third phase of books was that 'they were great, but nobody did anything about it', this fourth group of books have offered specialised input, but create the potential for readers to gravitate towards one area or stream and lose sight of the overall picture of children's ministry. Perhaps this is the reason why we have fallen into the trap of seeking a magic bullet to solve the problems, rather than holding together a holistic understanding of why and how.

Finally, within this group, we should note the research report published in October 2021, 'Do We Need a New Plan for Children's Ministry?'. As discussed in the introduction, this research focused largely on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the issues it raised for children's ministry. It is helpful for us because it is so recent and summarises the issues of greatest concern to those working in children's ministry, as well as calling for change: "It is our recommendation that a significant paradigm shift is needed across the global Christian church, with regard to the prevailing ethos and framework of children's faith formation." (Holmes et al, 2021, p.17). However, there are limitations as to how much this report can contribute to our project. Firstly, as an international research project the scope is vast and whilst there are trends which correspond in each of the countries, it may also be the case that some of the issues raised may not be relevant to this piece. Secondly, the findings of the report are dependent upon the research conducted, as with this and any other research project. In the study undertaken, participants were asked about the impact of the pandemic upon their children's ministry, and findings drawn from their feedback. It is noticeable that because of this methodology, the issues relating to children outside the church, and the fact that we are failing to reach the vast majority, wasn't even mentioned, which, by contrast, is a central theme here.

Understanding the Narrative

The fifth and final group of books considered are different from the other titles here, in that their role has been to help to tell the story of how we have got to this point.

'Tuesday's Child' is an anthology of works concerned with Christian education across the 20th Century, whilst Cliff's 'The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement' gives one perspective on children's ministry, particularly through the Sunday School movement. These two titles help us to tell the narrative and give some context to how we have reached the position we are in today.

Chapter Three: Marjorie Reeves and 'Children of the Future'

Who Was Marjorie Reeves?

It is quite possible to research the life and works of Marjorie Reeves and completely miss the publication 'Children of the Future', the subject of this research project. Indeed, it is not included in the list of works acknowledged in her biography which describes how "As a teacher and educational thinker, Marjorie Reeves' range of activity was extraordinary," (Reeves and Sheppard, 2011, p.2).

Marjorie Reeves (1905 - 2003) is best remembered as an educationalist and historian. Between 1938 and 1974, Reeves served as Fellow and History Tutor at St Annes College, Oxford. Her PhD and most significant research, which she continued to develop for many years, was about Abbot Joachim of Fiore (circa 1135 - 1202). She was also involved in writing resources for secondary history education and advocating for the importance of higher education opportunities for women. Reeves continued to have an active Christian faith and was involved in the life of the church until her death: "A co-opted member of British Council of Churches, she was an outspoken opponent of totalitarianism in the 1930s and promoted the responsibility of teachers to defend Christian liberal values." (Deech, 2003). However, her interest appears to have moved away from the consideration of the place of children in the church, and COTF appears to be quite separate from the main body of her work.

Historical Context to Marjorie Reeves and 'Children of the Future'

War

As noted in the introduction, it is fascinating that Reeves does not mention war, or its impact on children once in this piece. To read COTF in isolation would ask many questions about how aware she was of the circumstances of the time. There is, however, much other evidence that Reeves was living and working in a world greatly disrupted by war. In her memoirs, she recalls, "When war was declared in September, I was at home and entertaining a left-wing German refugee." (Reeves and Sheppard, 2011, pp.131-132). Further, she recalls how her work was impacted by the war and how she saw the impact on children, when called up for war work:

"When the blitz began on London, evacuated mothers and children arrived in Oxford by the train-load… One night, I got a phone call from the organisers of war work summoning me to go to the Regent cinema in Botley Road and help prepare breakfast for a crowd of evacuees sleeping on the cinema floor… Miss Greer and I sat opposite each other and, all night long, as we buttered and jammed, we discussed the educational reconstruction after the war for which we were all so eagerly planning." (Reeves and Sheppard, 2011, pp.132-133)

Furthermore, in 'Growing up in a Modern Society,' written three years later, in which she expands on many of ideas raised in COTF, Reeves explicitly talks about the impact of the war on children's education and development, "Again, the war was a powerful educating force, as witness the possess of small boys who ran around rat-tat tatting like machine guns." (Reeves, 1946, p.15).

It remains, therefore, a mystery as to why in 1943 she did not mention the war and its impact in COTF. From her other writing, it is highly unlikely that she did not believe it had an impact. Perhaps it is a more likely explanation that she considered the war less relevant to the issues she was raising in COTF, that children's ministry was fundamentally flawed and these issues needed to be addressed in and of themselves. Perhaps this reflects our own context where the pandemic has provided an opportunity to stop and reflect on the wider situation, rather it being the cause of problems found in children's ministry today.

Children's Ministry in Decline?

The two world wars have often been flagged up as the single most influential factor in the secularisation of the United Kingdom, but Callum Brown describes a more complex picture in which the late 1940s and 1950s, "constituted one of the high points of British Christian Culture, surpassed only by that of the Edwardian period at the beginning of the century," (Brown, 2001, p.177), and argues that the secularisation of Britain actually has its roots in the 1800s, actively taking effect in the 1960s:

"It took several centuries… to convert Britain to Christianity, but it has taken less than forty years for the country to forsake it… the cycle of inter-generational renewal

of Christian affiliation, a cycle which had for so many centuries tied the people however closely or loosely to the churches, and to Christian moral benchmarks, was permanently disrupted in the 'swinging sixties.'" (Brown, 2001, p.1)

With regards to children's ministry and particularly the Sunday School movement, Cliff describes how, "The Second World War produced stresses and strains and experiences so traumatic that it could be said to have brought to an end the best gains of the past thirty years." (Cliff, 1986, p.252). He continues, describing some of the different ways in which war impacted the work of the Sunday Schools, with the evacuation of children from inner-city areas:

"Village Sunday Schools with an average attendance of forty suddenly found themselves with a hundred to cope with. Schools that had a young staff now found themselves without teachers. Older people pressed into service reverted to the methods and (often) the materials of former days. Church and school buildings were not easily blacked out, and even where school premises had been so treated they were often taken over by adults for the afternoon worship." (Cliff, 1986, p.252)

Griffiths summarises the trend thus:

"The twentieth century saw Sunday School attendance drop from 6 million in 1903 to less than 500,000 by 1998 – this was despite an overall increase in the population. The period contained two world wars, and the demands of war necessitated women working in factories for long hours, including Sundays. Worship was no longer possible for many, and when it was possible, many found that they no longer felt the need. Those who survived the wars found their theological position shaken. Questions of innocent suffering undermined the beliefs of many." (Griffiths, 2009, p.57)

Aside from the impact of war, there were two other developments in children's ministry that greatly changed the landscape at this time. The first was the introduction of the 'Family Church' movement, introduced by Herbert Hamilton which Cliff describes as "a pattern of doing Christian education within the context of the adult church gathered for worship." (Cliff, 1986, p. 238). Whilst this was well-intentioned, there were flaws in the thinking that would ultimately lead to its failure.

The emphasis of this 'family church' model was in the church as family, raising the importance of the relationship between church and home. Initially, it would appear that the movement also took account of those outside of the church, developing a system of 'church friends,' 'church parents' and 'sponsors' to come alongside those children who came without parents, but this simply did not work. "When Hamilton began his work in 1933, he noted that 80% of the children in Sunday School came from non-churchgoing homes. When he died in 1977, about 80% of the children came from church going homes." Cliff claims that this failure was caused by the fact that "The church had not risen to the notion of Church friends, Church parents or sponsors." (Cliff, 1986, p.238). Whereas more recent thinking may lead us to better understand the importance of engaging the whole family.

Interestingly, Cliff boldly claims that in COTF, "the (Family Church) concept was commended to the Baptists by Dr Marjorie Reeves." (Cliff, 1986, p.243). In reality, whilst the publisher of the booklet was known to publish books for a Baptist audience, there is no evidence that this work was written to commend anything specifically, and whilst Reeves does describe how "the local church should be the family of families," and speaks of "the significance of going to church in families," (Reeves, 1953, p.11-12) she does not reference Hamilton, or formally recommend the work of the Family Church movement. Sutcliffe is more measured in his explanation of the relationship between Reeves' and Hamilton's work, "In passing she implicitly underscored most of Hamilton's social emphasis and also emphasised the importance of children attending church with their families." (Sutcliffe, 2001, p.38).

The other significant movement at this time was the early beginning of youth work, which Cliff pinpoints to November 1939, with "the government's decision to accept direct responsibility for youth welfare, (hailed by Archbishop Temple as) the beginning of an epoch," (Cliff, 1986, p.253). Cliff is critical of this change in which an "emphasis on youth (which) absorbed the time, talents and funds of many churches where before these gifts had been at the disposal of the Sunday School… Thereby it contributed to the decline of the Sunday School work." (Cliff, 1986, p.253). In contrast, in COTF Reeves actively encourages engagement in youth work, as the fourth of her identified strands, as described previously.

Social Change

Together with the genesis of youth services, it should also be noted that this was a time of further social reform, with the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948, and the Education Reform Act of 1944 which was greatly influenced by the involvement of Archbishop Temple. Whilst Reeves had no formal role in implementing this change, it is unclear how much influence she may have had, through her discussions with Archbishop Temple. In her memoirs, Reeves recalled, "Some time in 1940 I was invited to meet Archbishop Temple in the precincts of Westminster Abbey, by then vacated by Westminster School. Together with Kathleen Bliss, the three of us sat over a sparce lunch in the deserted cloister eagerly planning what we hoped might be the shape of schools to come. Temple was our great leader at that moment in the effort to keep the conversations going." (Reeves and Sheppard, 2011, p.138).

With this in mind, one can only wonder at what else Temple and Reeves may have discussed, and whether her involvement helped to shape any aspect of 'Towards the Conversion of England' (written at the same time and published after Temple's death in 1945), with its chapters, 'Evangelism Among Children' and 'Evangelism and Youth'. What is clear is that Reeves was someone who sought to understand the times as they were as well as how things could be, and argued and advocated for changes which would positively affect the lives of children and young people. It is against this backdrop that we should read COTF.

Children of the Future

COTF is a small booklet of only 16 pages, published in 1943. A limited number of copies appear to remain in circulation, including one stored at The British Library. An excerpt from the book is included in 'Tuesday's Child,' an anthology of texts for Christian educators, and is also referenced by Cliff in 'The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England 1780-1980' as explored below. Neither Reeves nor COTF are widely remembered amongst those engaged in children's ministry today. Indeed, she was not known by any of the interviewees, bar one, Participant E, who remarked, "I have heard of her, and I tell you what, Becky, I'm surprised a young person like you had come across her."

The original purpose and intended audience of the booklet is unknown, although the publisher is known to produce books for the Baptist denomination, and it is clearly written for a Christian audience. The booklet reads much like a manifesto for change and could perhaps form the text used in a conference speech. Reeves later included and developed several of her ideas in a longer book first published in 1946; 'Growing Up in a Modern Society', which was written for an educational audience, although still from a Christian perspective.
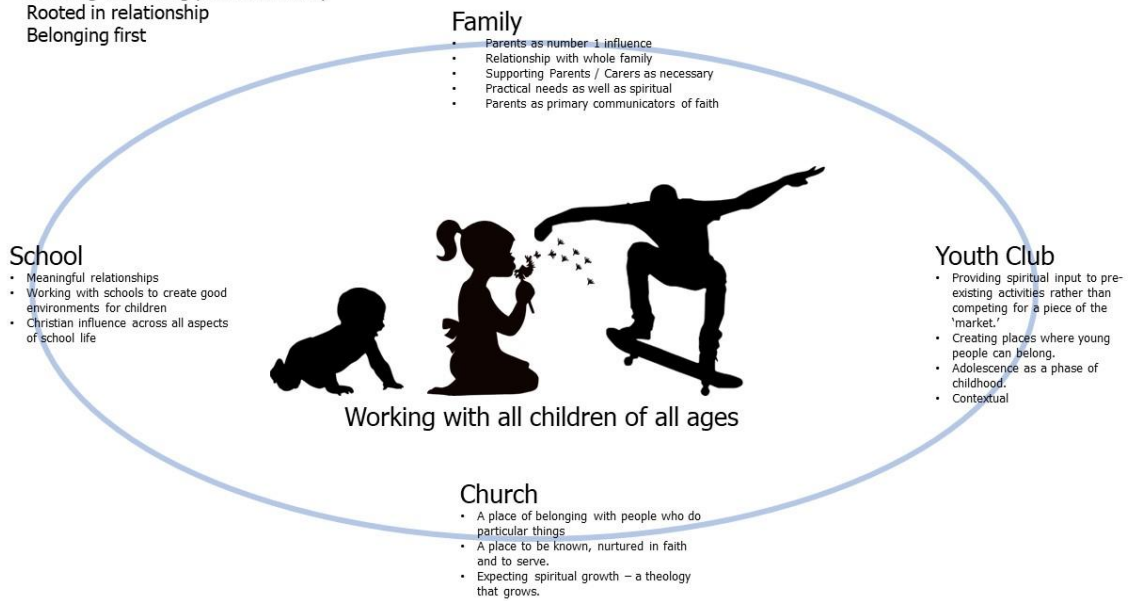
The booklet is written in continuous prose, not divided by chapters but there are two distinct parts to her writing, initially setting out the rationale for her work before going into detail about how to go about the changes she proposes. Reeves begins by identifying the aim:

"The great danger of all planning about the future is that we are prone to make a leap of the imagination from where we are to where we would be. Such planning is nothing but an escape into Utopianism. Today, we are setting our minds to *real* planning for the future, and therefore we must start from where we are and build a solid road towards where we would be." (Reeves, 1943, p.3).

She continues, identifying the core issues as she perceives them. Firstly, that the church should be concerned with all children, and know and understand life as they experience it, and secondly, that the church should be concerned with creating community for and with all children, in which they can grow and be nurtured holistically, including in faith.

In the second part of the booklet, Reeves lays out her approach or strategy for creating communities; beginning with family first, then school and youth club, before finally exploring the distinctives of the church. The diagram below shows my summary of the key elements of Reeves strategy, which is further explored in Chapter Six.

- Knowing and loving your community
- Rooted in relationship
- Belonging first

Family
- Parents as number 1 influence
- Relationship with whole family
- Supporting Parents / Carers as necessary
- Practical needs as well as spiritual
- Parents as primary communicators of faith

School
- Meaningful relationships
- Working with schools to create good environments for children
- Christian influence across all aspects of school life

Youth Club
- Providing spiritual input to pre-existing activities rather than competing for a piece of the 'market.'
- Creating places where young people can belong.
- Adolescence as a phase of childhood.
- Contextual

Working with all children of all ages

Church
- A place of belonging with people who do particular things
- A place to be known, nurtured in faith and to serve.
- Expecting spiritual growth – a theology that grows.

Some of the language used by Reeves is particularly of its time and jars somewhat with today's understanding. For instance, "The fundamental need of the young today is to brought up in true societies," (Reeves, 1943, p.9). Such terms and phrases have been translated to a more contemporary understanding for the benefit of this research project, so in this instance, societies has been replaced with community or other such terms concerned with belonging to a group, which would correspond with Reeves intention, "By a true society I mean here any social group in which the personal relationships are real and the individuals are knit together in love." (Reeves, 1943, p.9). A second term which must be translated is 'Christian education', which is still used today but has been interpreted in Reeve's writing to be more akin to Christian nurture today.

Methodological Approach

This is a piece of qualitative research, as defined by Cresswell: "Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting." (Cresswell, 1998, p.15). He continues, identifying how, "Qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain paradigm or worldview," (Cresswell, 1998, p.74).

Swinton and Mowat identify that practical theology, as underpins this study, brings its own worldview, describing it as "critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God's redemptive practices in, to and for the world." (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, p.7). They further describe how qualitative research "assumes that human beings are by definition 'interpretive creatures;' that the ways in which we make sense of the world and our experiences within it involve a constant process of interpretation and meaning-seeking." (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, p.8)

Thus for Swinton and Mowatt, there is a natural relationship between practical theology and qualitative research: seeking to acknowledge and interpret what is happening in the world, asking the question 'how is God at work here?'' As such, qualitative research conducted for the purposes of practical theology necessitates a specific process of theological reflection. "We would suggest that practical theology can utilise qualitative research methods to aid in this process of ensuring that Christian practice is in correspondence to the event of God's self-communication." (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, p.86). It is this perspective which underpins our research project: seeking to understand and interpret what is happening in the church's work with children, exploring how relevant the work of COTF may be to that conversation, and asking questions about how this relates to what God is doing in the world, in order to further develop a strategy for children's ministry today.

Limitations

In order to fully answer the question at the centre of this research project, it would be necessary to put Reeve's strategy to the test. That is to say, it would be appropriate to work with a church, to implement Reeves strategy over a period of time in order to measure the impact it had. Furthermore, to test Reeves strategy in only one church would still remain a limited study; it would need to be tested in a number of churches, in a number of different contexts. To that end, the research question would be more fully answered through a piece of action research: "A method of enquiry and a form of practice that encourages controlled and focussed change using the knowledge and expertise of those involved in the research setting." (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, p.235). They continue, "Action research embeds the actioning of change within the research process." (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, p.236).

Within the constraints of this research project, however, it is more appropriate to apply some key principles of grounded theory in order to reach a point at which it can be proposed that COTF could be the strategy we have been looking for, as per Cresswell's definition: "The intent of a grounded theory study (as) to generate or discover a theory." (Cresswell, 1998, pp.55-56). It is the intention of this research to generate the theory that COTF may be strategy we have been looking for. To that end, a more accurate and measured question for this level of research may be: "Is Marjorie Reeve's 'Children of the Future' a worthy proposal for consideration as the strategy we've all been looking for?"

Research Phases

This research project therefore has taken elements of grounded theory research, held in tension with the four stages of qualitative research through the eyes of practical theology, described by Swinton and Mowat:

Stage 1: Current Praxis.

Stage 2: Cultural / Contextual Analysis.

Stage 3: Theological Reflection.

Stage 4: Formulating Revised Forms of Practice.

(Swinton and Mowat, 2016, pp.89-92)

There is a recognition that our research is not so linear as Swinton and Mowat propose, but rather that there is a toing and froing as found in grounded theory research, which involves returning to the question, and to the source of data, drawing in additional sources of information as issues and ideas arise, in order to put them to the test. In this research, the four stages interweave and cross over, returning back to stages one, two and three cyclically, as the theory evolves until we reach stage four, where a new form of practice can be formulated and proposed as worthy of further consideration. The stages of this research project are described below:

Stage 1: This research project began with an acknowledgement that the Covid-19 global pandemic had impacted on children's ministry and had also provided a moment to pause and reflect on the general situation with children's ministry in the UK. A far larger piece of research 'Do we Need a New Plan for Children's Ministry?' had also been carried out, as described in Chapters One and Two.

Stage 2: There was an acknowledgement that the most similar situation we had faced as the church and as a nation was that of WWII, and that it may be relevant to see how the church responded to children at that stage. This was done, mindful of the fact that church attendance and engagement with children from this point in history onwards had been in decline, and that perhaps there may be some warnings to us now, or lessons to learn, rather than a model for us to replicate. This led to a stumbling upon COTF and a recognition that what Reeves had written was worthy of consideration.

Stage 2 and 3: The next phase of research was to take COTF and carry out some analysis of her work making use of methods of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke and discussed further below. This was carried out mindful of the cultural context into which Reeves was writing, and how this may have changed now as well as with a consideration of theological reflection; how does Reeves write into

what we know about God and children? How may this confirm or challenge her writing?

Stage 1, 2 and 3: The third phase of research is that which can be most easily recognised as grounded theory research; the interview process. Cresswell describes how grounded theory would typically use "interviews with 20-30 individuals to 'saturate' categories and detail a theory." (Cresswell, 1998, p.65). For this piece of research, interviews have been limited to only 5 participants, but this has been done in accordance with Cresswell's explanation that "the participants are theoretically chosen… to help the researcher best form the theory," (Cresswell, 1998, p.57) and that "the investigator examines individuals who can contribute to the evolving theory." (Cresswell, 1998, p.118).

Stage 4: The data has been analysed, conclusions reached and recommendations made for further research, development and implementation of the findings. In reaching this point, COTF was interrogated further and a more detailed thematic analysis carried out.

The Interviews

For this research project, the interviewees have been selected in consultation with my dissertation supervisor. Each of them have been chosen as fulfilling predetermined criteria:

1. The contribution they have made to children's ministry in the UK over a considerable time period and their roles in calling for change.
2. Secondly for the work they have done in their field, be it their own research roles, or interaction with a number of churches, and therefore their own insight or wisdom and knowledge about the matter of children's ministry.

Swinton and Mowat refer to this with reference to St Augustine, as "sapientia and scientia; it is a form of wisdom and contemplative knowledge," (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, p.xiii). As such, each of the interviews draw together the interviewee's reflections on current praxis and cultural / contextual analysis and theological reflections. That is to say, the research is made richer by the interviewee's own prior

'sapientia and scientia' which is tapped into, probed and prodded, before being analysed further, for this particular piece of research.

Five interviews were undertaken, each lasting 30-45 minutes, between January and March 2022. The timing of the interviews is significant as the landscape changed between these three months, from the impact of the Omicron variant over winter 2021-22, through to increasing easing of restrictions by the springtime. It is also important to recognise the circumstances of individual interviewees, and the impact these had on the interviews; in one instance, the interview took place within a few days of the interviewee starting a new role, whilst another took place the day before their redundancy was publicly announced. These factors certainly influenced the perspectives the interviewees brought to the discussions, but the impact is limited and does not appear to have influenced the themes drawn out. The interview questions were prepared in advance and each of the interviews followed the questions as written. This enabled the interviews to remain focussed, whilst still open-ended for the interviewees to respond as they wished. As Participant B commented, "I probably wandered off the question there, Becky, so it's a good job you're keeping straight questions."

Thematic Analysis

These interviews have then been transcribed and subjected to a thorough thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke, "Thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meaning" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.15). Braun and Clarke warn that "Grounded theory seems increasingly to be used in a way that is essentially grounded theory 'lite'" and argue that thematic analysis should be understood as a methodology in its own right. Whilst thematic analysis has been used across both the interviews and COTF, and it is not claimed that this research is a complete grounded theory research project. It is still believed that the process of working through the data; the interviews, the text of COTF and the literature review and the cyclical process of revisiting each of these elements in turn means that this project has utilised a methodology which is constructed of thematic analysis, grounded theory and practical theology qualitative research methods.

Braun and Clarke describe two approaches to thematic analysis: "In an inductive or 'bottom up' way … or in theoretical or deductive or 'top down' way." (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.12). It is recognised that by searching only for comments which supported the appropriateness of COTF as a helpful strategy, this would do the interviewees a disservice and would not, in fact, answer the question robustly enough. To this end, an 'inductive' approach was adopted, working through all the data to identify and collate all themes raised. That said, I am mindful of issues raised around reflexivity (see below) and how no researcher can truly search for themes without having in mind the issues they already bring to the research. Braun and Clarke further develop the understanding of the role of the researcher in drawing out themes further, "An account of themes 'emerging' or being 'discovered' is a passive account of the process of analysis, and it denies the active role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns / themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers." (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.7). Thus, my own role as researcher is recognised in selecting which lines were worthy of pursuit, i.e. those which were raised often) and where a comment was made only once by one interviewee, or where a comment seemed out of line with the majority of the data, it was disregarded.

Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity.

Each of the interviews were conducted online via video conferencing in accordance with the arrangements submitted to, and approved by, the St Padarn's Institute Ethics Committee. Each interviewee was made aware of the arrangements in advance, and consented to the interview, through the form of an Interview Participation Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendix A). Each of the interviews were anonymised prior to thematic analysis and no identifying information has been given.

There are further matters of ethical practice which should be considered with regard to the interviews, concerning the way information is represented. It is important that the contribution of each interviewee is honoured and that their perspective is represented fairly. There is a risk in the coding process that comments are oversimplified, and as such that something important may be lost. It is also true that through the process of collating themes, the emphasis of individuals may be lost,

and so it is acknowledged that different individuals may have had different priorities to one another, and that the nuanced details may have been lost in the process. Furthermore, it is noted that different interviewees made different language choices. In some instances, these may be understood to mean the same thing, whereas in reality some interviewees, and indeed some readers, may give each of these words different meanings. One example of this is the use of the phrase, 'making disciples,' by some interviewees, as opposed to 'nurturing faith,' or 'growing seedlings' by others. In a broad sense, each of these phrases is concerned with the same thing, but there is a difference to the language choice and for some participants this may be significant.

Swinton and Mowat describe reflexivity as "a mode of knowing that accepts the impossibility of the researcher standing outside of the research field and seeks to incorporate that knowledge creatively and effectively." They continue, "The reflexive qualitative researcher… assumes that researchers both influence and are influenced by the process of engaging in research," (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, p.57-58). There are two particular ways in which this should be considered with regards to this research project. Firstly, I already had a professional relationship with several of the interviewees which affected, to different degrees, the openness of interviewees and in some cases, the short-hand language of responses, perhaps. Secondly, this research has been influencing my work as a charity leader since the discovery of COTF, and the work I have been involved in over the last 20 years has impacted my own understanding of the need for change in children's ministry. It is inevitable that I am both influenced by, and influencing, this research project.

Chapter Five: Findings

As described in Chapter Four, five individuals were interviewed. These were each selected because of their role in the UK over a significant period in leading and furthering children's and family ministry. The questions were designed to explore what each of the interviewees felt had happened or gone wrong with children's ministry in the UK church, and what they felt should be done about it.

Identifying Themes

Through a thematic analysis of the interviews, as described in Chapter Four, three 'phases' were identified, in the form of questions: What is the current situation? What is wrong? What should our response be? These are quite separate from the questions asked in the interview process. Under each of these questions, key themes were drawn out from the interview data.

What is the Current Situation?

Each of the interviewees reported that the current situation was not good, with differing opinions on the scale of the problem, from 'could do better', to 'crisis'. Two of the interviewees both used the well-known research quoted by Scripture Union that 95% of children are not in regular contact with the church to describe how bad the situation is, taking differing perspectives on the scale of the problem. Participant C commented:

"So Scripture Union stat is ninety-five percent of boys and girls have no connection with church or church groups, that's only relatively true because that statistic is only based on Sunday morning attendance, so we're doing a little bit better than that. And we are doing some wonderfully creative things to reach boys and girls through the course of the week."

On the other hand, Participant D said, "How do we reach out to ninety-five, which technically is probably nearing ninety-six, or even getting closer to ninety-seven percent?"

It was broadly agreed that the situation had been worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, with specific issues identified, including loss of volunteers and isolation. Several interviewees referred to the idea that the pandemic had provided the opportunity to reassess what we were doing, but Participant B warned:

"We talked very much about all this is a great opportunity to stop and think and it strikes me that nobody stopped, and nobody thought, on the whole, there have been a few people who have done that. But on the whole, we have not seriously stopped and thought, and we have been desperate to get back to what we were doing before. So maybe emerging from the pandemic, we've lost that golden moment to say is what we were doing before, right?"

What is Wrong and What Should Our Response Be?

After reflecting on the current situation, the remaining data helps to answer two key questions about the situation with children's ministry in the church in the UK: what is wrong, and what should our response be? To this end, some comments were given in the negative: "not listening," "generational model broken" etc, whilst other comments were given in the positive, "need a new vision," "need to repair the model". These two lists are detailed in the table below, collated under three strong themes which were drawn out from across the data. These are summarised as 'understanding,' 'priorities' and 'strategy.'

What is Wrong?	What Should Our Response Be?
Wrong understanding - Not listening - Not listening to the Holy Spirit - Not heeding warnings - No vision - Lack of awareness - Wrong measure of success / failure - Not knowing the place of children with God.	New understanding - New vision, that energises - Asking why (theological reflection) - This is for all children - About the whole of life - God's relationship with all children - Spirituality of children - Theology of childhood

- Lack of understanding about the theology of childhood. - Lack of understanding of the spirituality of children	- Importance and significance of childhood as an age and stage. - Leadership potential of children - Church needs children
Wrong priorities - Adult-centric - Power imbalance - About saving what we have - Acting from anxiety not love	New Priorities - For all children - About the spiritual nurture and flourishing of children - Concerned about the children who are missing - About the ministry of children, engaged in the life of the church - Concerned with children's preparation for life - Serving the most vulnerable
Wrong strategy: - Generational model broken - Split age groups - Respond with programmes - Issues around who is involved - Wrong response	New strategy: - Distinctive role of the church - Intergenerational church - Restoration of generational model - Priority of relationships – welcome, hospitality - Church as family - Engagement with families, schools and clubs - Concerned with the whole of life - Holistic communities - Role of senior leaders, leaders and whole church - Training, investment, resources

| | - Partnership |
| | - Living differently |

Understanding

Two key themes were identified in terms of 'understanding.' Firstly, that the church had not understood the scale of the problem, and secondly that a change in theological understanding is needed. Every respondent mentioned a lack of awareness or understanding. Participant C and Participant E went further, both speaking about the church not listening to the Holy Spirit whilst Participant D and Participant E also spoke about the lack of vision.

In terms of understanding the scale of the problem, a number of references were made to the low numbers of children engaged in the life of the church, and the low numbers of churches engaged in the life of children, there was a dichotomy presented here around the value of these statistics. At several points, Participant B referred to the numbers not being a helpful measure "because the church at the moment is so fixated on numbers…We're so obsessed with numbers, we rarely stop to think why we are doing this." However, at another point, Participant B also used 'the numbers' as a helpful measure of the situation, "When you look at the stats, they are so terrifying in terms of numbers going down, we have suddenly reached a crisis point." It is important to hold these two contradictory concerns in tension; the numbers reveal the scale and depth of the problem and tell us that something needs to be done, but they are not the entire picture. They are not a simple measure of success or failure but indicate that greater understanding is needed.

Under the theme of theological understanding, the issue of relationship was the most-mentioned theme, with comments about the church not knowing, and needing to understand God's relationship with all children. Participant B made an explicit link between the way the church interacts with children, and the relationship between God and children explaining that the relationship of the church with children is "mirroring the relationship that God calls us into with God's self through the person of

Jesus Christ." Furthermore, Participant B also identified that "We need to help our children and young people know that they make a difference to the rest of us, just as we should make a difference to them," and that this shouldn't be a mission to children, but a mission with children.

A second key theme was raised under theological understanding which relates to an understanding a theology of childhood. This theme came through several times, from Participant D talking about "something quite profound about the place of children in the kingdom," Participant E calling for "people who are convinced that salvation is all age, that they're not keeping a greenhouse of young plants till they can get them out in the garden," and Participant C's explanation that children are "born with eternity in their hearts and therefore they already have relationship with God." From these comments, it seems likely that there would have been a range of understandings about the spiritual significance of childhood as an age and stage, but there was a shared consensus across the interviewees that in the church there is little understanding about this matter, and that this needs to change.

Priorities

It was broadly agreed that children's ministry had not been made a priority and that it needed to become the priority in the church if the situation was to change, Participant C described how "Other things became more important that the transmission of faith to the next generation." Participant B argued that "We're called now to particularly privilege children and young people because for so long, they have not been brought to the forefront." Participant E described this as an issue of short-sightedness: "We'll be alright in my lifetime." Participant A more bluntly commented "We're so selfish as adults … and things are very nicely set up for adults."

Furthermore, some interviews identified that within the work we are doing with children, we have the wrong priorities. Participant B commented that "We are a church that is operating out of anxiety at the moment," describing how children's ministry priorities were formed in response to declining numbers and concerned with revering numerical trends only. Participant C warns why this is the wrong motivation, "It's not for our benefit, it's for their benefit," describing how the goal should not be to

win children back to maintain the church as we have it, but rather for those children to grow and flourish. Participant D identified the need to particularly prioritise "the needs of those who are most vulnerable," whilst all other interviewees described the need to shift the priorities to enable the growth of children, whether talking about supporting them to grow in faith, grow as disciples or to thrive or flourish in life.

Strategy

It was universally agreed that the church had adopted the wrong model or wrong response in children's ministry and that a change of strategy was needed. Several key themes were drawn out in terms of a better strategic approach. No interviewee offered, nor indeed was asked to provide, a new strategy, but there were key themes drawn out from the interviews about what a new strategy may look like, or would need to include. Each of the themes explored below were mentioned numerous times across the interviews, and this was the part of the research where there was greatest consensus.

The most commonly discussed theme was about the generational model being broken, that is to say, we have stopped passing faith from one generation to the next. Participant C describes the scale of the problem, "We're at least four generations removed from the Jesus story in most homes in this country now." Participant D and Participant E both spoke about the need to repair the generational model, whilst all participants spoke about the value of the church as intergenerational and multigenerational, engaging all ages and stages as community together.

Another widely discussed theme was that of leadership; senior leadership, children's leaders and team members working with children, and the role of the wider community. There was a consensus across all interviews that this needed to begin with the senior leaders, both at a local and national level across all denominations Participant A was most vocal about this issue: "We have allowed people to be ordained and lead our churches who can get away still to this day with saying, 'I don't do children.' … why isn't that just as unacceptable as saying, 'Oh I don't do black people?'" One particular issue raised with regards to senior leadership was the matter of training and understanding as Participant B comments, "Few ordinands…

have opportunities to think theologically and practically and sociologically and developmentally about children and young people." Participant C commented on the relationship between senior leaders and children's leaders: "It's got to flow out of the heart of the senior leader (through to children's leaders who) church boards recognise we have to pay properly." Participant E also agreed with the need to build up children's ministry leaders, "The church nationally shouldn't be leaving its children's work in the hand of, purely in the hand of, grannies… I believe strongly that children respond to the young and physically active." Participant B, however, put the emphasis in a different place:

"We don't need youth workers and children's workers. They're great. And they're important, but they are not the solution. The solution is when we, as followers of Jesus Christ, truly recognise that we are called to be with all of God's people… We've all got a responsibility with them for children, young people, and we need to help them know that they have responsibility for us."

This leads to a third key theme, that of relationships more widely, which draws on what has already been said about repairing the generational model and intergenerational church, and an understanding of the roles of leaders and the wider church community. Both Participant B and Participant C spoke about the importance of rebuilding relationships as we emerge from the pandemic, "You need community." (Participant C). Whilst Participant A, Participant D and Participant E all spoke about the importance, and difficulties in, building relationships with those outside of the church community. "What families need is relationship and friendship… the biggest challenge in mission for the church at the moment is how do you make friends with families?" (Participant A). There was agreement across the interviews that relationship was one of the most significant factors in the church's future strategy with children.

The final theme drawn out under the strategy relates to where the church should be engaged. All participants spoke about the church as a place for all, welcoming of all, as a place where faith could be nurtured in an intergenerational context, where all ages could learn from one another. Apart from Participant B, each of the other interviewees also spoke about the church's role outside of the walls of the church structure. Both Participant D and Participant E spoke about the idea of being

involved in the whole of life, or about having a holistic understanding of community. Participant E spoke about the church as a place where we could "restore our energy to go out," whilst Participant D spoke about the need to understand the church as both gathered and dispersed and the need to be "salt and light in our schools, in our homes, in our streets."

All participants apart from Participant B spoke specifically about the need to engage families outside of the structure of church life. Here they spoke about supporting the most vulnerable (Participant D), supporting parents to nurture their own children in faith (all), expecting Christian families to be engaged in mission to others (Participant E and Participant D) and reaching households so that they could encounter faith for themselves (all). Participant A, Participant C and Participant D also spoke about the importance of working with schools, although this was secondary to the value in working with families. Furthermore, Participant C also spoke about a different way to work with children, through evangelistic outreach clubs, but this was secondary to outreach to families ("If it's the only way we can reach children.") and not proposed as the best strategy.

Having identified the key themes raised in the interviews as detailed in the previous chapter, it is now appropriate to return to our original question, 'Is Marjorie Reeves' 'Children of the Future' (1943) *the* Children's Ministry strategy we've all been looking for?'

The first finding of note is that whilst the interviews contribute to our understanding of what is needed in terms of a children's ministry strategy, this was only one of three themes identified from the interviews. This necessitated a further rereading and a more thorough analysis of COTF to identify what she had to say about understanding and priorities as well as strategy. It is still deemed that the research question is the right one, as there is much to explore about the strategy itself, but it is recognised that the first finding of this research project is that what is needed is more than just a strategy alone.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Reeves did not construct her work under the headings 'understanding', 'priorities' and 'strategy', nor did she use these words in her work but COTF could be read in two parts, the first providing context and rationale and the second, method.

The table below summarises what COTF has to say about 'understanding', 'priorities' and 'strategy' in comparison to the themes identified in the interviews.

What is wrong?	What Should Our Response Be?	'Children of the Future' themes
Wrong understanding - Not listening - Not listening to the Holy Spirit - Not heeding warnings - No vision - Lack of awareness	New understanding - New vision, that energises - Asking why (theological reflection) - This is for all children	Understanding - Get a picture of the present situation - Conflict between societal and Christian values - Value of belonging

- Wrong measure of success / failure - Not knowing the place of children with God - Lack of understanding about the theology of childhood - Lack of understanding of the spirituality of children	- About the whole of life - God's relationship with all children - Spirituality of children - Theology of childhood - Importance and significance of childhood as an age and stage. - Leadership potential of children - Church needs children	- Family as model of family of God - Church as the family of families - Faith development over time and appropriate opportunities for personal commitment - Responsibility of the whole church - Children learn through participation. - Demonstrating relevance of theology
Wrong priorities - Adult-centric - Power imbalance - About saving what we have - Acting from anxiety not love	**New Priorities** - For all children - About the spiritual nurture and flourishing of children - Concerned about the children who are missing - About the ministry of children, engaged in the life of the church	**Priorities** - For all children - 'Belonging' as paramount - About nurturing children in faith - Social aspect of fellowship - Ministry and gifts of children honoured - Preparing children for whole of life - Opportunities for children to flourish

	- Concerned with children's preparation for life - Serving the most vulnerable	- Restoration / creation of community
Wrong strategy: - Generational model broken - Split age groups - Respond with programmes - Issues around who is involved - Wrong response	New strategy: - Distinctive role of the church - Intergenerational church - Restoration of generational model - Children not separated - Priority of relationships – welcome, hospitality - Church as family - Engagement with families, schools and clubs - Concerned with the whole of life - Holistic communities - Role of senior leaders, leaders and whole church - Training, investment, resources	Strategy - Need for children to be nurtured within communities - Distinctive role of the church as primary nurturing community - Need to support families - Return to the Early church model = family model - Role of leaders and community as a whole - Concerned with the whole of life - Engagement with families, schools and youth culture - Engagement with school to form good communities - Training for leadership

	- Partnership - Living differently	- Engaged in general society and distinctive role as church

There is a danger that we try to force comparisons or connections between the two. In the table above, I have attempted to reflect the emphasis they were given by Reeves, in order to maintain the integrity of her work. It is evident that there are some clear parallels between the interview data and the text data, but there are places where there are differences. Also, there are points where there is a synergy between the themes, although perhaps not clearly defined agreement. One example of this is that the interview data identified the need for the new strategy for children's ministry to involve the whole church, whereas Reeves spoke about the role of the whole church in children's ministry in a broader sense (here categorised under understanding). These two themes complement one another, and are perhaps even one and the same but there is an understanding that, perhaps due to changing contexts, this is no longer something which we should have an understanding of, but now something which we should intentionally do something about.

For this reason, a comparison has been made between the themes identified in the interviews, and what COTF has to say in response, looking across the entire work of COTF.

Understanding the Current Situation

The interviews identified that the Covid-19 pandemic had adversely affected the church's work with children but that this had only exacerbated a problem which already existed: there was unanimous agreement that the church's work with children was already broken and the scale of the problems far overshadowed the impact of Covid. There is an interesting comparison here with Reeves who did not mention the impact of World War II despite writing in the midst of wartime and dealing with the way it affected children on a daily basis. She did not speak about the children's ministry being broken, but underpinning the whole work was a call to change what the church was doing. It would be fair to make the judgement that she

too deemed the scale of the problems the church was facing as being more significant than the impact of war.

Understanding

The first issue raised under the heading of understanding was that the church had not understood the scale of the problem. This is not something Reeves wrote about, which is indicative of her writing at a different point in history and illustrates well the shift in landscape from 1943 to today and the scale of decline across that period. She did, however, write about a lack of understanding that existed in the church, "Do any of us really know what the life of children in this modern society is like? Our own favoured few in Christian homes – yes, we know something about them. But what about the vast mass of children?" (Reeves, 1943, p.3).

The second issue raised, was that of theological understanding. There were two parts to this, firstly the need to understand the relationship between children and God and the theme of belonging, and secondly, an understanding of a theology of childhood and faith development. The theme of belonging was paramount in COTF and underpinned her entire strategy, as the primary aim. She wrote "the fundamental need of each child is to 'belong', to belong in a society which is trustworthy, loving and consistent, which has its own laws and pattern of relationships, and its own accepted values," (Reeves, 1943, p.6), underpinned by a clear understanding that "for the Christian, of course, a true society is one in which all relationships and all activities are offered to God." (Reeves, 1943, p.8). This is something she expands upon further when she explains what belonging to God looks like in different contexts and mirrors something Participant B said about our relationships "mirroring the relationship that God calls us into with God's self through the person of Jesus Christ."

Across the interviews, there was agreement that the church needed a better understanding of a theology of childhood and faith development, although there were differences of opinion about what this might mean and how it may be understood. Reeves wrote that the "stage of fuller personal understanding, awareness and acceptance of the faith for oneself, is absolutely essential. But do not let us under-estimate the importance of growing towards that commitment through sharing fully in

the family worship of the Church." (Reeves, 1943, p.12). Therefore for Reeves too, there was an exploration of a theology of childhood and faith development underpinning her strategy, although it was not identified as something requiring greater understanding, as with the interviews.

Priorities

The interviews identified that children had not been a priority within the church and the emphasis was on maintaining the church for the benefit of those adults already within it. There are echoes of this in COTF which began, in its introduction by identifying the need for change and to prioritise children with an emphasis on belonging and creating communities to which children could belong. Both the interviews and COTF agreed that the church's work had to be with all children, not just those already within the church and that it should be concerned with the growth and flourishing of all children in order that they become all that God created them to be.

Strategy

The interviews all identified that the generational model had been broken and needed to be repaired or restored. This is not something Reeves spoke about, again, indicative of the time she was writing, since when it can be calculated that a further three generations have passed. She does, however, speak about family as the place of passing down faith, as discussed below and an awareness that the church's work with children needed to be for all children, something which she raised as not happening at the time.

The second matter raised under strategy was the role of senior leaders, children's ministry leaders and the wider church. Reeves did not speak about the responsibility of senior leaders to carry this forward, indeed there is a lack of clarity about who she was writing this piece for. She does speak about the role of the whole church "which is the educating community, and every church member should feel it is his show." (Reeves, 1943, p.13) and the need for collaboration and partnership:

"I should like to see in different localities Christian groups springing up to study in wholeness the child-life of that district, and to frame policies in the light of that total picture. Such groups might bring together to share their knowledge parents, teachers, ministers, youth-leaders, employers and many others responsible for the young." (Reeves, 1943, p.3).

The third theme categorised under strategy was that of wider relationships and community which was identified in the interviews as one of the most significant factors in the church's future strategy with children. As discussed previously, the concept of belonging was paramount in COTF, and underpinned the whole of her strategy in terms of relationships with children, within and across families and within the church and these ideas will be further explored below.

The final theme identified was as to where the church should be involved. There is a very clear resonance between the thoughts raised in the interviews and the model proposed by Reeves as illustrated in the diagram in Chapter Three, engaging all families as the primary place of nurture and relationship and engaging and supporting schools. The starkest difference in strategy comes next where Reeves highlights the youth club as the third important place of engagement. The only time clubs were mentioned in the interviews were children's outreach clubs, raised by Participant C as a last resort. I believe more consideration is needed here as to the relevance of Reeve's proposed model for which there is not adequate time within the limitations of this study. There are some cultural differences over time, firstly with Reeves including teenagers as children in her model, which was less a consideration of the interviewees within a contemporary context where childhood and adolescence are considered separate and distinctive phases and secondly, an evolving youth culture, greatly influenced by technological advances and broader than the youth club alone. Therefore, there may be a wider application of Reeve's proposal here, which is better understood as being about the need to engage in the whole life of the child, rather than choosing some specific elements on which to focus.

The interviewees also spoke about the distinctive role of the church, and what should happen within the life of the church which Reeves identified as the fourth element of her strategy. Reeves dedicated five pages of her short booklet to unpacking the

responsibilities and distinctive nature of the church. Reeves spoke about five key elements of the church's work with children:

- "The significance of going to church in families."
- "The importance of the social aspect of fellowship."
- "The importance of bringing together in a unity intellectual instruction in the faith with emotional activity in expressing it."
- "The importance of bringing the young into real service and responsibility in Church life."
- "The importance of showing the adolescent the relevance of theology to his life."

(Reeves, 1943, pp.12-14).

This resonates with comments made in the interviews about the distinct activity of the church.

In summary, many of the issues raised by the interviewees were addressed by COTF. In particular, the emphasis on the importance of relationship and belonging first, and there is a clear synergy between the strategy proposed: first engaging families, then schools as well as considering what happens in the life of the church.

There are a few examples of issues raised by the interviewees that are not addressed by COTF: the need to repair the generational model of faith transmission; the church not understanding the scale of the problem; children not being made a priority; and the specific role of leaders in taking this forward. Each of these disparities can not only be understood as indicating a change in circumstance over time, but also illustrate the way in which the situation has worsened over time and is now in greater need of remedying. The most significant detail from COTC omitted from the interviews was that of the youth club, which has been addressed above.

Chapter Seven: Recommendations

The question at the heart of this essay is whether the strategy introduced in COTF is worth considering as a response to the situation we find ourselves in now. This research project has identified four recommendations to be taken forward.

Further Research

The evidence provided from the interviews demonstrates that there is sufficient evidence to warrant further consideration of Reeves' 'Children of the Future'. As explored in Chapter Four, the limitations of this research are such that it is not possible to conclusively determine whether Reeve's strategy is the answer we have been looking for, but within the constraints of this research, it is reasonable to propose that the strategy does meet the needs of the issues raised by the interviewees about children's ministry, as detailed in Chapter Six, and so is worthy of further research.

As explored in Chapter Four, the way to do this would be through action research, testing out Reeve's strategy as described in Chapter Three. However, this is caveated by the following recommendations.

Not Just a Strategy

There is a very real danger, based on the findings of this research, that we could see COTF as the answer to our problems and seek to employ various aspects of the strategy without understanding the wider context or rationale. In this event, the strategy could be perceived as the next 'magic bullet' we are looking for, similarly to the way some have perceived other key movements over recent years, as explored in Chapter Two, and on that basis the strategy would inevitably fail or at most have only limited impact.

Analysis of the data concluded that strategy should be formed in response to the identified priorities, which are formed out of the collective understanding. Real change begins at the beginning point of listening or understanding, not at the end stage with the strategy employed, as illustrated in the diagram below.

It is important that from this we see the relationship between the three phases; these are not separate themes but rather phases which are dependent upon one another. The understanding shapes the priorities which in turn determine the strategy adopted. If we seek to employ Reeve's strategy without first dealing with matters concerning our own understanding, and in turn identifying the right priorities, we will only deal with matters at a very superficial level and not address issues at the core. This is reminiscent of issues raised in Chapter Two, that we view the strategy as a magic bullet.

This project has concluded that we must first understand the scale of the problem we face, and gain a better theological understanding of the place and importance of children and their relationship with God. Then we can reset our priorities which can be summarised as the spiritual flourishing of all children, as further defined and described in Chapters Five and Six. Only then will the adoption of any strategy be successful, by which we mean it is fully understood, fully owned and fully applied. Only at this point can we adopt Reeve's strategy, understanding the community, engaging with all children in the whole of life, concerned with their belonging and nurture, first within the family, then in schools, then in wider society, and made complete in an understanding of their belonging to and within the church, as an intergenerational community, where faith and relationships, mission and ministry, gifts and service grow.

Mindful of Context

'Children of the Future' was published in 1943, almost 80 years ago. On reading this booklet, it is at first surprising how relevant it remains today and how in many ways, it could have been written today. However, there have been some changes over
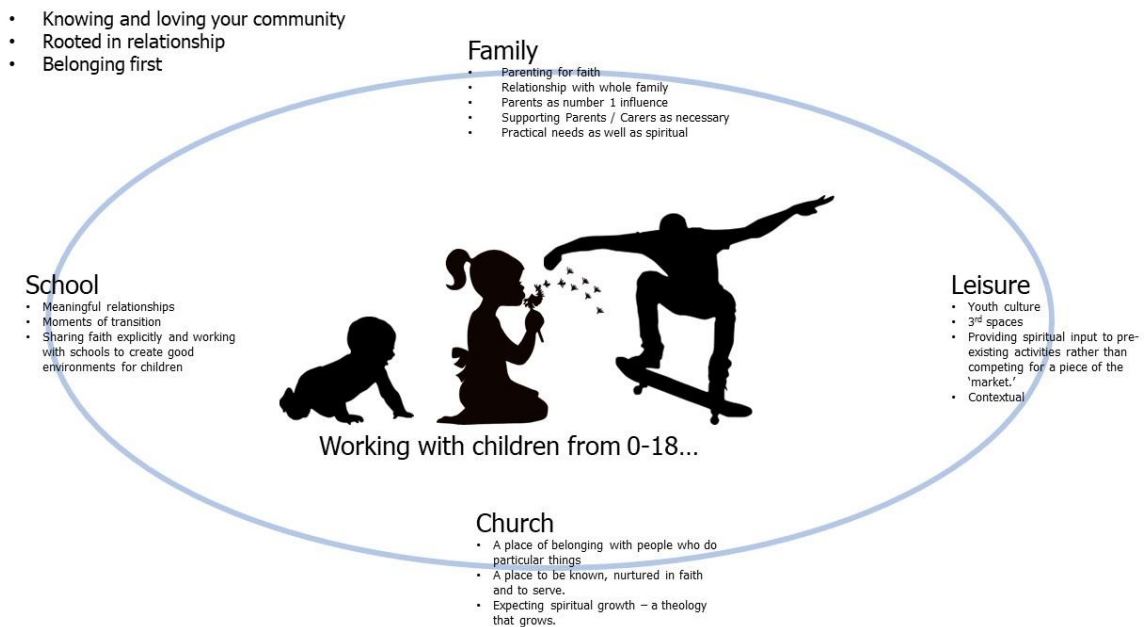
time, beyond simply a translation of unfamiliar terms such as 'societies,' which mean we cannot simply lift Reeve's work as it is and directly apply it to our context today. There has to be an awareness of the way in which the context has changed over time, and adaption of the strategy in light of this.

Firstly, and most significantly, the church's engagement with children has declined dramatically in the intervening years and the church, now more than ever, needs to reengage all children. That is to say, the principle presented by Reeves has not changed, but the need to do so has increased. The way we work with schools will also have changed. There is no less a need or opportunity to do so, rather there is a difference of expectation; whereas in the past the church would be expected to be actively engaged in the life of the school, now it is a relationship which must be developed and nurtured. The same can also be said for families, where in the past families would have understood the church as being available to support, the church must now be more proactive in nurturing friendships and serving the local community.

Another significant change over time has been the development of youth culture and understanding of adolescence as a distinctive phase quite apart from childhood. I believe that to fully understand and apply Reeve's strategy, we should not only engage children up to age 10-12, preadolescence, but that we should apply it, to the end of adolescence, perhaps choosing to talk about children and young people together mindful of our understanding. It is clear that what she has to say about growth, flourishing and belonging can only be fully understood within the widest context of childhood and adolescence combined, not ending before the teenage years begin.

To this end, it is proposed that what Reeves had to say about the youth club should be applied through a wider understanding of being engaged in the whole of life, mindful that the youth club no longer holds the place it once did. This should include an awareness of technological advances, as well as developing opportunities for leisure activities for children and young people. That said, it is also proposed that this is an area least developed in understanding in this research project, and further consideration should be given to research in this area specifically.

It is therefore recommended that the strategy, based on COTF but updated and adapted to our present situation, and taking on board the input of the interviewees should look more like the diagram below, than that first shared in Chapter Three.

- Knowing and loving your community
- Rooted in relationship
- Belonging first

Family
- Parenting for faith
- Relationship with whole family
- Parents as number 1 influence
- Supporting Parents / Carers as necessary
- Practical needs as well as spiritual

School
- Meaningful relationships
- Moments of transition
- Sharing faith explicitly and working with schools to create good environments for children

Leisure
- Youth culture
- 3rd spaces
- Providing spiritual input to pre-existing activities rather than competing for a piece of the 'market.'
- Contextual

Working with children from 0-18...

Church
- A place of belonging with people who do particular things
- A place to be known, nurtured in faith and to serve.
- Expecting spiritual growth – a theology that grows.

Changing the Culture

There is a deep sense of sadness in reading COTF, that this work was not widely understood and applied at the time. This was echoed by Participant E, feeling disappointment at the legacy of her own work, "The sad thing is, Becky, she (Reeves) was saying back then, what we're saying now, and nothing's changed!" It was also noted in the literature review that vast swathes of texts have been written both calling for change, and detailing how we should go about it, and yet the interviews concluded that the situation has worsened, not improved. This demonstrates again the need for a change in our understanding and priorities, and wider cultural change. To that end, what is needed here is not just another book on the subject, nor indeed the publication of this research project, but wider systemic change. As identified in the interviews, this should begin at a senior leadership level and filter down to the whole church. There is a need for training across the board and a wide acceptance of our responsibilities as the church to change the culture. Only then can the adoption of any strategy be successful.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This research project has investigated, through thorough thematic analysis, whether the strategy proposed by Reeves in COTF may be worth consideration for further research as a valid response to the issues raised about a new strategy needed for children's ministry. It has been established that this is the case, and proposed that further research be carried out, in the form of action research, putting into action the strategy not exactly as was written in 1943 but in a revised format, rewritten to reflect the changing context and the wisdom gathered and analysed from the interviews.

Furthermore, it has been concluded that what is needed is not just a change in strategy, but rather a transformation of understanding and a shift in priorities, upon which a new strategy can be employed. Without this wider transformation, a new strategy will not be able to achieve the necessary impact.

It is again noted that the constraints of a research project of this size mean that several issues are left unresolved or not fully investigated, such as issues of wider youth culture and adolescent development. This also means that the question has not been able to be fully investigated, as detailed in Chapter One, but rather that a first phase of research has been conducted, to identify that this strategy is worth further investigation. It can, however, be tentatively concluded that an implementation of COTF, within a wider transformation of understanding and priorities, and adapted for a changing context may indeed offer the strategy we have been looking for.

Bibliography

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2) pp.77-101

Brierly, P. (2021) *UK Church Statistics No. 4: 2021 Edition.* 1st edn. Kent: ADBC Publishers

Brown, C.G. (2001) *The Death of Christian Britain.* 1st edn. London: Routledge

Brown, C.G. (2006) *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain.* 1st edn. Harlow: Pearson Education

Cliff, P.B. (1986) *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement.* 1st edn. Surrey: National Christian Education Council

Cresswell, J.W. (1998) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design.* 1st edn. London: Sage Publications

Csinos, D.M. and Beckwith, I. (2013) *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus.* 1st edn. Illinois: InterVarsity Press

Curin, J. (2004) *How to Develop a Mission Strategy*. 1st edn. Cambridge: Grove Books Limited

Deech, R. (2003) *Marjorie Reeves.* [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/dec/13/guardianobituaries.highereducation (Accessed: 19th May 2022)

Edwards, C. Hancock, S. Nash, S. (eds.) (2019) *Re-thinking Children's Work in Churches.* 1st edn. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Frank, P. et al (1991) *All God's Children.* 1st edn. London: Church House Publishing

Frank, P. and Pearson, G. (1998) *Too Little, Too Late! Children's Evangelism Beyond Crisis.* 1st edn. Cambridge: Grove Books Limited

Frank, P. (2002) *Every Child a Chance to Choose.* 1st edn. Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications

Gibbs, J. et al. (1984) *The Child in the Church.* 1st edn. British Council of Churches

Griffiths, M. (2009) *One Generation from Extinction.* 1st edn. Oxford: Monarch Books

Hamilton, A. (1941) *The Family Church in Principle and Practice.* 1st edn. Religious Education Press

Hart, C. (2006) *Doing Your Masters Dissertation.* 2nd edn. London: Sage Publishing

Holmes et al, (2021) *Do we Need a New Plan for Children's Ministry?* Liverpool: Liverpool Hope University

Ishmael. (1989) *Angels with Dirty Faces.* 1st edn. Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications

Ishmael. (2001) *Reclaiming a Generation.* 1st edn. Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications

Moore, L. (2006) *Messy Church.* 1st edn. Abingdon: BRF

Pearson, G. (2005) *Towards the Conversion of England.* 1st edn. Cambridge: Grove Books Limited

Reeves, M. (1943) *Children of the Future.* 1st edn. The Kingsbury Press

Reeves, M. (1946) *Growing Up in a Modern Society.* 1st edn. London: University of London Press

Reeves, M. and Sheppard, A. (2011) *The Life and Thought of Marjorie Reeves (1905-2003) Advocate for Humanist scholarship and Opponent of Utilitarian University Education.* 1st edn. Lewiston: Mellen

Roberts, D. (2003) *God's Plan for Children.* 1st edn. Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications

Rotten C. et al (1945) *Towards the Conversion of England. 5th edn. Westminster: The Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly*

Sutcliffe, J. (2001) *Tuesday's Child.* 1st edn. Birmingham: Christian Education Publishing

Swinton, J. and Mowat, H. (2016) *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research.* 2nd edn. London: SCM Press

Turk, M. et al (1989) *Children in the Way.* 4th edn. London: Church House Publishing

Turner, R. (2010) *Parenting Children for a Life of Faith.* 1st edn. Abingdon: BRF

Turner, R. (2018) *Parenting Children for a Life of Faith, Omnibus Edition.* 1st edn. Abingdon: BRF

Withers, M. (2010) *Mission-shaped Children.* 3rd edn. London: Church House Publishing

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information letter and Consent Form: Page 58

Appenndix 2: Compiled responses from interviews: Page 63

INFORMATION LETTER

You are being invited to take part in a research study that will form part of my dissertation for a Masters in Theology Ministry and Mission (Children, Youth and Families) with St Padarn's Institute and Durham University.

Before you decide whether or not to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

I have had a long term interest in the need for the church to engage more effectively in mission and evangelism to children. As we look to emerge from the pandemic, I aim through this research to be able to offer suggestions as to the way forward, particularly in the light of writings of Marjorie Reeves in 1942. I am seeking to recruit 4 people to participate in the project who can bring insight from their own personal study or engagement with mission to children. This will take place in the form of one 30 minute recorded interview with each participant.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason up until the point of final drafting of my dissertation which will be 1st March 2021. If you participate, this would be carried out as an interview, either face to face or via video communication technology. You need only answer the questions you feel comfortable answering.

Information that you contribute to the project will be kept securely on a password protected computer and in a secure location in my study. The data generated will be used in my dissertation. Participants will be named in the dissertation, as you have been approached because of your expertise in this area. Where specific stories are relayed, individuals named will be given pseudonyms and there will be no material used that could identify those individuals or locations.

University regulations require that data generated in the course of the study is to be kept securely until after the work has been through an exam board and passed. The

dissertation will be available through St Padarn's Institute. If you participate and would like an electronic copy of the dissertation, I am happy to send you one once it has been examined.

If you would like to take part in the project then please complete and return the attached consent form. If you require further information to help you decide whether or not to participate then please contact me. If you have concerns about the way in which the study is conducted then contact my supervisor mark.griffiths@stpadarns.ac.uk.

Blessings

Becky May

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet.

Title of Study: How might the church reframe its work with children to be more missional as we emerge from the Covid-19 Pandemic: Learning from Marjorie Reeves.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project explained on the Information Sheet. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet please clarify them with me before you decide whether to join in. You will have a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

[   ] I understand that my contribution will identify myself, but that any stories I share will be anonymised in the final dissertation and any related publications

[   ] I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify Becky and be withdrawn from it immediately.

[   ] I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

[   ] I understand that the interview will be recorded in order for a full transcript to be gathered and that this recording will be kept together with all research data on a password protected computer and in a secure location.

Participant's Statement:

I

_____

__ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project and understand what the research study involves.

Signed: Date:

Questions for interview

(These are the basic questions, others may arise from the discussion as appropriate)

- What is your vision for children and the church?

- How do you define the church's mission to children?

- How do you describe the current situation with regards to children and the church?

- What do you think are the most pressing issues the church is facing in its work with children, as we emerge from the pandemic?

- What motivates you to engage with mission or evangelism to children?

- What is your perspective on how and why we have reached the current situation with children and the church, i.e. such low attendance / engagement statistics?

- What would be your recommendations for the church to reframe its mission to children at this time?

Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E
Understanding (negative): lack of awareness / understanding wrong measures of success or failure Not knowing the relationship of children and God not a mission *to* children	**Understanding (negative):** not heeded warnings wrong measures of success or failure Not knowing the relationship of children and God	**Understanding (negative):** lack of awareness / understanding don't listen to the Holy Spirit	**Understanding (negative):** lack of awareness / understanding no vision	**Understanding (negative):** lack of awareness / understanding don't listen to the Holy Spirit Don't listen Feeling disappointed no vision
Understanding (positive): Asking why (theological reflection) Church's role for all children	**Understanding (positive):** Asking why (theological reflection) God's relationship with all children	**Understanding (positive):** Asking why (theological reflection) God's relationship with all children Importance and	**Understanding (positive):** God's relationship with all children Biblical basis Our responsibility to children	**Understanding (positive):** Biblical knowledge Asking why (theological reflection) God's relationship with all children

	Children belonging in the church spiritual potential leadership potential Relationships mirror our relationship with God.	significance of childhood as an age and stage.	church needs children journey of discipleship Importance and significance of childhood as an age and stage.	
Priorities (negative): Adult-centric	**Priorities (negative):** operating out of anxiety not love not wanting to pass on Jesus / help people grow power imbalance	**Priorities (negative):** wrong priorities not wanting to pass on Jesus / help people grow Adult-centric	**Priorities (negative):**	**Priorities (negative):** wrong priorities operating out of anxiety not love Don't care
Priorities (positive): thriving / flourishing / life in all it's fullness	**Priorities (positive):** gifts, skills and ministries of children	**Priorities (positive):** growing in faith make disciples	**Priorities (positive):** Importance and significance of childhood as	**Priorities (positive):** growing in faith

		thriving / flourishing / life in all it's fullness Children as the primary focus better connect with children	an age and stage. serving the most vulnerable	
Strategy (negative): wrong response generational model broken lost touch with families	**Strategy (negative):** wrong response generational model broken	**Strategy (negative):** wrong response generational model broken wrong model intentional change	**Strategy (negative):** generational model broken wrong model	**Strategy (negative):** wrong model
Strategy (positive): Training Role of senior leaders,	**Strategy (positive):** change training Role of senior leaders,	**Strategy (positive):** Intentional change Investment	**Strategy (positive):** Investment Role of senior leaders,	**Strategy (positive):** training Role of senior leaders,

leaders and whole church	leaders and whole church	change	leaders and whole church	leaders and whole church
Importance of relationships	Importance of relationships	training	children engaged in mission	living differently
Intergenerational church	Intergenerational church	right ingredients	empower children	Holistic communities
Partnership	engaging all ages and stages	Role of senior leaders, leaders and whole church	whole of life	Importance of relationships
Resources	welcome	Community	Church gathered and dispersed	Intergenerational church
Engagement with schools		Intergenerational church	multigenerational relationships	engaging all ages and stages
Engagement with families		all ages worshipping together	Repairing the generational model	Repairing the generational model
		Partnership	hospitality	Engagement with families
		Resources	partnership	
		Engagement with families	Engagement with families	
		Engagement with schools	Engagement with schools	