

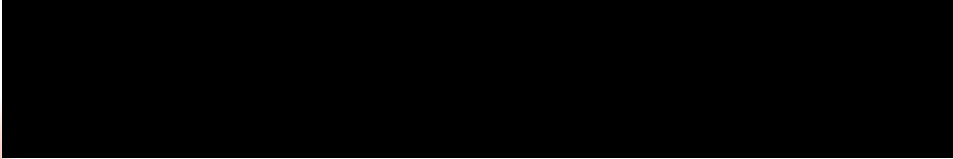
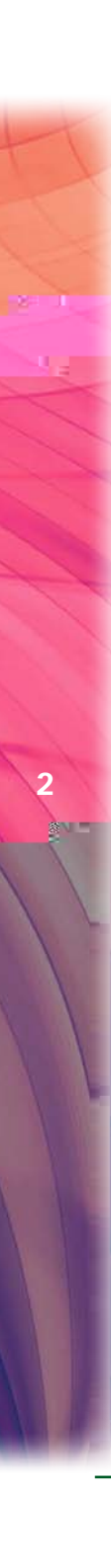
# Children and Holy Communion

a theological reflection

by *William*

The  
United  
Reformed  
Church





theological reflection in all aspects of our ministry with children: as part of our worshipping communities, as part of our families, as part of our

Collective worship is an essential element of the community of faith. In

prayer, and teaching and to share bread and wine (see for example Acts 2:46) and although there is no explicit mention of children in these early accounts, nor is there any specific reference to their exclusion. In Jewish tradition, children are seen as part of the whole community of faith and special instruction is given for their inclusion when the whole people gather to remember Passover, or to hear the recital of the law of Moses.

“Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners living in your towns—so they can listen and learn

words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 31:12)

In the gospels, we see Jesus welcoming children and affirming their contribution to worship and community life. As children were present at the worship of the Jewish community and in the ministry and teaching of Jesus, we can assume as Stephen Lake does, that their place in the early Christian community is implicit.<sup>1</sup>

If our worship is essential to our understanding of ourselves and our belief, children need to experience meaningful worship as part of the expression of the community of Christ. It is through our worship that we tell the story of our faith and reaffirm our belief, therefore worship becomes not just the expression of our faith but also essential in the formation and growth of faith. “Ritual, rite and liturgy are capable of both the nurturing and evangelising means of assisting people on the

## **It is good to worship and makes it**

<sup>1</sup> *Let the children come to Communion* p30

<sup>2</sup>

There are many different practices within the United Reformed Church



## A Good Church is...

**// People coming to worship together and everyone taking part. (Girl 15) //**

**// A group/community of people worshipping God. (Boy 9) //**

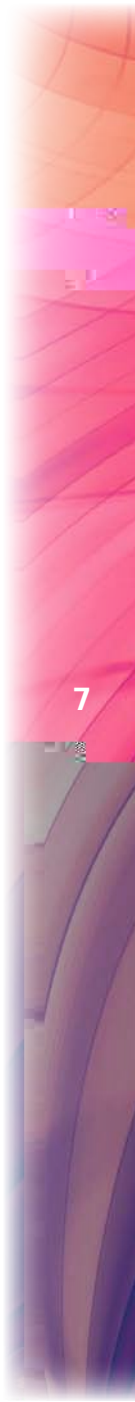
In her book *Worship and the Church*, Joyce Mercer comments on the connectedness and disconnectedness between the church's worship practices and the everyday lives of people in the world, particularly in the home. If faith is to have meaning it must make connections and be grounded in experience. This belief has led many to conclude that "that children of all ages should be present alongside adults for part if not all of the service."<sup>6</sup>

### **Children are equal partners with adults in the life of the church.**

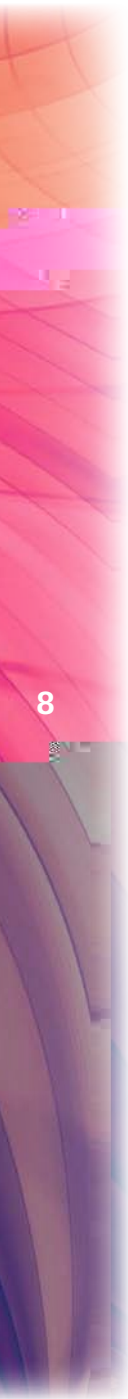
And that

### **Service is for children to give as well as adults.**

"Churches that encourage children to be present throughout the worship service ... believe that children must intentionally be included as responsible participants and contributors in worship." As they participate, children not only learn about worship but also come to see themselves as valued and responsible participants. This process is learned, and children emulate the behaviour of adults around them, so it is also important that adults are seen to be actively and meaningfully contributing to the worship of the whole as well. Children also learn from what we do not do and say, as much as what we do. Joyce Mercer, speaking of an experience when children were actively excluded from receiving bread and wine questions, "How did this experience shape the participants?"<sup>5</sup>



7





**For children/youth workers:**

1. Children learn from the lessons that we don't intentionally teach as well as the ones we plan. What does your church's practice of worship



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The United Reformed Church, London 1998

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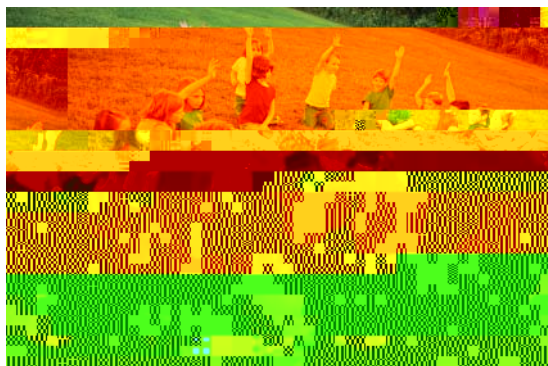
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The quotations from children included here come from the “My Children’s Work Committee in 2009. For more information on how people in your church, please contact the Children’s and Youth Office, URC Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, LONDON WC1H 9RT

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Jo Williams

Church

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