

WORK THEMES (2010)

Please Note – the following is work in progress and is intended as a reference tool for members of CGMC. Nothing contained here is any way endorsed at this time by CGMC or is intended to indicate future areas of work.

Introduction

The Issues highlighted have been identified through a process conducted within the membership of CGMC.

Part of this process took place during a meeting of the group at Woodbrooke House, Birmingham. During that meeting the following short text was read to the group. It is taken from Advices and Queries authorised by the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends in 1994.

Rejoice in the presence of children and young people in your meeting and recognise the gifts they bring. Remember that the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care. Seek for them as for yourself a full development of God's gifts and the abundant life Jesus tells us can be ours. How do you share your deepest beliefs with them, while leaving them free to develop as the spirit of God may lead them? Do you invite them to share their insights with you? Are you ready both to learn from them and to accept your responsibilities towards them?

Advices and Queries No.19

Children are a key part of the church membership today and also its hope for the future. As those charged with supporting and resourcing the churches' ministry among children in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland we wish to draw the churches' attention to the issues in this work which are either beyond our immediate control or are impossible for us to deliver within the context of the priority given to this ministry within the way in which resources are distributed within the churches.

Theme 1 Those committed to ministry among children

Becoming engaged with ministry among children is a demanding commitment to ministry and a direct response to the call of Christ to 'let the Children come'.

This implies that those working in this area as volunteers or in paid capacity should be carefully selected, well resourced, appropriately trained, supported and encouraged. Much of this could be delivered across the traditional boundaries of denominations and voluntary societies. The extent to which any church is able to claim that this is true of their people working in ministry amongst children is the true measure of their attitude to this ministry.

Theme 2 Theology

Ministry among children should reflect a well developed and widely understood Theology of Childhood and Children which with the other academic disciplines which

inform education provides the rigorous theoretical background to and for this ministry.

This implies that all engaged in ministry and leadership within the churches should be aware of and informed about the theology of childhood and children, faith development, nurturing spiritual development in a faith setting and the importance of valuing individual differences.

Theme 3 Accepting ministry

Children have a ministry to each other and to the church as a whole. Only when this is truly accepted and enabled does a church begin to take the presence of children seriously.

This implies that children are equal partners in the church now, and not just its future. Their inclusion and participation either directly or through the work of their advocates within the church should permeate all areas of the church's ministry and witness. This is not only to argue for children's rights/rites but also for the right of adults to benefit from the ministry of children to them.

Theme 4 Engaging with the world

The ministry of children is often experienced through engagement with the world, through exercise of the social agenda and provides the church with the opportunity to be church in the community.

This implies that the church should seek to address the needs of children in every area of their life, which includes their families, schools and the other places where the children meet. In doing the church will be working together as people of God, seeing God in the world and serving God in the world.

Theme 5 The family

In the interests of children's spiritual and emotional growth the church should be working to support their families (however family is manifested within the lives of individual children).

This implies that the church is able to provide support to families in ways which particularly support them in their role in the children's spiritual journey and growth in faith.

Theme 6 Training the ministers and clergy

The failure of the churches to make significant progress in many of the areas highlighted in this paper is caused in no small part by the lack of serious progress in the preparation of the churches' priests and ministers for this key ministry in the church.

This implies that unless ministry among children including worship, education pastoral care and evangelism becomes imbedded in the ministerial preparation provided by all the churches, the current attitudes to ministry among children within the churches will continue to be dysfunctional.

The following are the notes from each group –

Blue Group

Over arching – Resourcing

1. Training – ministers/volunteers/workers working together across denominations and agencies using mentoring as a model
2. Theology that underpins practice
3. Participation, inclusion, children's rights (not just legal but rights to rites)
4. Family – supporting and enabling spiritual care-giving and enabling faith
5. social agenda – schools, world of children, government, social comment, space for children also working together as people of God seeing God in the world

Red Group

1. Church's attitude to children's work
2. Advocacy
3. Training Education and support
4. Nurturing spirituality – faith development
5. Being church in the community

Green Group

1. Acknowledging, valuing and nurturing children's spirituality
2. Sourcing, equipping and resourcing appropriate leaders
3. Addressing the needs of children in every area of their life
4. Reaching out, evangelism to children
5. Encouraging children's ministry as equal partners