INCLUDING ALL CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF SPIRITUAL PERSONALITIES AND CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES WITH GOD AND CHURCH

by

David M. Csinos, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of McMaster Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Theological Studies

McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
2008

Master of Theological Studies MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE:	Including All Children: A Qualitative Exploration of Spiritual Personalities and Children's Experiences with God and Church
AUTHOR:	David M. Csinos
SUPERVISOR:	Joyce E. Bellous
NUMBER OF PAGES:	xi + 118

McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

Upon the recommendation of an oral examination committee, this thesis-project by

David Csinos

is hereby accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Theological Studies

First Reader and Advisor

Second Reader

Dean

Date: March 25, 2008

ABSTRACT

"Including All Children: A Qualitative Exploration of Spiritual Personalities and Children's Experiences with God and Church"

David M. Csinos
McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
Master of Theological Studies, 2008

In this study, David Csinos explores the realms of children's spirituality and object relations theory in order to discover the effects of church environments on children's experiences with God. However, after conducting over thirty qualitative interviews with thirteen children, the author discovered that what had the greatest effect on the participants' experiences with God and their church environments was their dominant spiritual personality. He then outlines the four spiritual types—head, heart, mystic, and kingdom—and, based on the data collected from the thirteen children, discusses important characteristics of each personality. Finally, he offers churches and ministry leaders suggestions as to how to be inclusive of children of all spiritual personalities.

To Abigail, Caleb, Ben,
Houston, Ian, Jennifer, Freddy, Gordon,
Laurie, Keira, Owen, Nicholas, and Megan

Your spiritual journeys have been both
fascinating and inspiring.

May you always enjoy your pilgrimage
on the spiritual path.

Don't let anyone put you down because you're young.
Teach believers with your life: by word,
by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.

1 Timothy 4:12

Contents

Diagrams

Appendices

Acknowledgements

I would like begin by acknowledging the individuals and organizations who have contributed to the success of this study. While countless friends and colleagues have had a hand in shaping my thinking and work, I want to recognize those who have directly influenced the research presented in the following pages.

Pioneer Clubs has graciously supported me in this research endeavour through the Virginia C. Patterson Continuing Education Scholarship. I am thankful for Judy Bryson, who saw my potential at the Children's Spirituality Conference and offered me financial assistance in my research, and for Louise Ferrebee, who helped me get through the red tape and paperwork.

Next, I must offer words of gratitude to the friends and colleagues who offered me instruction and advice in this study. Don Ratcliff, Scottie May, and Chris Boyatzis guided me through the process of developing the methodology for this research. Through a course they led at Wheaton College Graduate School, I was introduced to various methods of qualitative research, many of which I utilized during this research. Their friendship and willingness to comment on my methodology are greatly appreciated. I am grateful for the assistance I received from Karen Szala-Meneok, who helped my research receive approval from the McMaster Research Ethics Board, and for Caitlin Scherer, who assisted me with a number of the focus groups. Holly Allen graciously provided me with an advanced copy of her chapter in *Nurturing Children's Spirituality,* from which I drew key information that I used to discuss definitions of children's spirituality. I am thankful for Jim Peterson for helping me to further develop my research methodology and for

looking over and critiquing early drafts of Chapter Two. I have also greatly appreciated the help of Joyce Mercer, who encouraged me during the low points of the research process and for the invaluable help she has offered to me over the past year.

I cannot overlook the support of those who were directly involved in my fieldwork. I am very grateful for all the help that I received from the pastors and Christian education directors at Townsend, Northview, and Sacred Heart. My thanks also extends to the children involved in this study, who took the time to talk with me about their spiritual experiences, and to their families, for their willingness to drive their children to and from meetings, put up with my incessant emails and phone calls, and meet with me to talk about their children. Without these people, this project would not have gotten off the ground.

Thanks especially to Joyce Bellous for taking me under her wing and guiding me not only through this research, but through my graduate education. Her willingness to meet with me and offer advice, encouragement, and criticism—even while on sabbatical—did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. It has been a pleasure to have her as a professor, mentor, colleague, and friend.

Without the support and assistance of my family and friends, this study would have failed before it began. Thanks, Dan, Carmel, and Jonathan, for putting up with my endless visits and continual discussions about my research. Thanks, Mom, Dad, and Ann, for encouraging me to continue my studies and providing me with a rich spiritual background from which I continually draw inspiration. Thanks, Jenny, for all that you have done (and continue to do) to motivate and assist me in pursuing my passions and attaining my goals. I have good news for you: I don't have to work on my thesis tonight.

INTRODUCTION

The Story of a Thesis

The impetus for this study began in the late spring of 2006. While participating in a course at Wheaton College Graduate School, I was asked to share memories from my childhood church experiences that stood out as distinctly positive and negative. After some reflection, I shared with the class a negative experience I had during the sole time I participated in the children's liturgy program at my church.

Growing up in the Roman Catholic Church, I attended weekly Mass with my family. Although children's liturgy was offered to the children at our parish, I had no desire to partake of this ministry. Instead, I preferred to remain with my family for the entirety of the Mass. Looking back, I came to realize that I had two major reasons for wanting to stay upstairs in the Mass. First, I wanted to experience church with my parents, who were my spiritual guides. Since they were the primary influences on my spiritual life, it made no sense for me to leave them while I was at church. Second, I had come to appreciate and value the ritualistic and symbolic elements of the Catholic Church and Mass. In order to attend children's liturgy, I would have had to remove myself from the rich environment of the sanctuary, with its liturgical colours, symbols, and rituals, and go to the drab, dull, and boring basement. There may have been cookies and crafts down there, but these things could not compare to the transcendental elements of the Mass that I had come to appreciate.

After sharing this story with the Wheaton class, I began to wonder if other children had similar experiences. Perhaps there are many children, I thought, who attend Sunday school or other children's ministries, but would rather stay with their families or remain in the sanctuary for "adult" services. I wondered if the people, places, and objects in churches affected other children as powerfully as they had affected me. Thus, I began to form a qualitative research project that would allow me to explore how places, objects, and people in churches affect children's experiences with God and church.

While the style of research that I employed in this study was largely qualitative, I would also classify it as narrative research. By this, I refer to two characteristics of the project. First, in talking and listening to the children who participated in this study, I heard their narratives. They told me stories of their experiences at church—both positive and negative—as well as significant life events and spiritual experiences. The narratives they offered to me formed the backbone of the data that I collected.

In classifying this research as narrative, I am also referring to the manner in which I formed presuppositions, collected and examined data, and reached conclusions and implications. In a sense, the pages that follow tell the story of my search to discover insight into the spiritual life of children. Let me briefly outline this narrative.

This story begins in Chapter One. As I have already mentioned, my experiences as a child (and my reflections on these experiences) caused me to wonder about how the people and places at churches affect the spiritual experiences of children. Thus, I entered the worlds of children's spirituality and object relations, presupposing that some children would be profoundly affected by their church leaders and environments. In the first chapter, I outline the assumptions and theories I held upon beginning this study—those

regarding children's spirituality and agency, Christian spirituality, and object relations theory. While I still hold to these beliefs, they led me to a place that I did not intend to visit.

After collecting a significant amount of data according to the methodology outlined in Chapter Two, I was disappointed that most of the children involved in this research did not seem to be as profoundly affected by their church environments as I had expected. It was not their environments, but their spiritual personalities, which seemed to have the greatest effect on the ways in which they perceived their church ministries, surroundings, and leaders. Thus, I steered toward the work of Urban T. Holmes, Corinne Ware, and Joyce Bellous, which I present in Chapter Three. Through the data collected, I surmised the dominant spiritual personality of each child.

Upon presenting my reasons for classifying the children as I did, I examined the words, actions, and artwork that the children offered to me in order to discover common needs for each spiritual type. Rather than relying on the work of Bellous and Ware (who do not go into detail about the needs of spiritual types), I wanted to focus on the information that I elicited from the children. In Chapter Four, I outline the spiritual needs of each personality and offer advice as to how churches can effectively meet these needs and include all children in their programs and ministries.

I began this study assuming that some children involved would be unhappy being removed from their parents at church and inhabiting surroundings void of symbolism and ritual. I discovered, however, that most children were not dissatisfied with their leaders and physical surroundings—such objects did not impact the children's experiences with

God and church in the ways I had presupposed. Rather, it was their spiritual personalities that had the greatest impact on these experiences.

This is the narrative of my research. Although I was led to a place that I did not expect to visit—to the realm of spiritual personalities and types—it was the children themselves who took me there. Who am I to lead them to a place that did not matter to them? Since they were my guides on this research journey, I had to go where they directed me.

CHAPTER ONE

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK: CHILDREN AND OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY

Every weekend, millions of children attend Sunday morning church programs. They meet in church basements, gymnasiums, and cinemas. They interact with many leaders, including parents, Christian educators, and teenagers. Across the continent, children's programs are emerging as legitimate ministries aimed at meeting the spiritual needs of congregations' youngest members.

Yet important questions about the spiritual life of children and ministry models often remain unanswered or, worse yet, unasked. As a result, the spiritual needs of children are neglected or inappropriately addressed and ministries often miss the mark as they aim to nurture the spiritual nature of children. This study helps to fill this void by examining the effectiveness of Sunday children's ministries and programs, looking for answers in theology and scholarship, and walking with children on the spiritual journey.

Children are active, faith-filled, spiritual agents who, according to their spiritual personalities, make meaning of the objects, places, and people that surround them. Therefore, the spaces that children occupy and the leaders with whom they interact matter to their spiritual formation and well-being. What is more, children of different spiritual personalities are affected by these variables in different ways. Churches must work to provide environments in which children of all spiritual types feel a sense of fit and

inclusion. This study demonstrates this by examining data collected through qualitative research with thirteen children from three congregations. While I am aware that these research participants are not representative of all young people, this sample provided a solid basis of knowledge from which I could pursue exploratory qualitative research.

What is childhood? How are we to understand this phenomenon? How is childhood related to spirituality and faith? Before discussing my research, I must lay some groundwork regarding childhood, spirituality, and faith. Additionally, I will also offer an overview of object relations, for this theory grounds my belief that people, places, and objects at churches affect children's spiritual experiences. In each section that follows, I will present the theoretical presuppositions that form the foundation of this study.

Childhood, Humanity, and Agency

Historian Philippe Ariès has concluded that childhood did not exist in the medieval world.[1] Rather, until the rise of modernity in the seventeenth century, children were seen as miniature adults. While I believe that concepts of childhood existed before this time,[2] Ariès is right in concluding that this period marked a significant shift in the way the West regarded children. Since this time there have been a variety of paradigms to describe the phenomenon of childhood.

The first view of children that emerged since the medieval years was that of raw material. Instruction, education, and curriculum were seen as the lines of production and

---

[1] Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 128.

[2] In the ancient Hebrew and Greco-Roman worlds, for example, children were perceived positively and negatively respectively, yet they were seen as a distinct group of humans, rather than miniature adults. See Csinos, "The Biblical Theme" 97-8, 104-5.

adults were responsible for moulding the raw children into predetermined designs. [3] This is the philosophy of John Locke, who supposed that the child is a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate.[4] Parallel contemporary conceptions view children as wet cement, which is to be molded or written on by adults, or sponges, which passively soak up information presented by adults.

With that advent of psychology and psychoanalysis, views of childhood changed near the dawn of the twentieth century. Theories of human development held that children needed to progress through the "maturation process from lower to higher stages of development."[5] The greenhouse became the new paradigm and children were seen as divine seeds that needed to be nurtured in order for them to properly develop. Adults, as the gardeners, were to ensure that the child's "physical, spiritual, and educational settings were well suited to growth."[6] While both the production line and greenhouse models reflected notions of the day, they robbed children of agency; children needed adults to do things *to* or *for* them.

What was required was a paradigm that valued children as whole persons possessing agency and the ability to help themselves—a model in which adults do things *with* children. Spearheaded by Robert Coles, such a paradigm emerged at the end of the twentieth century: children as pilgrims (particularly spiritual pilgrims). While conducting research with children, Coles discovered that "As the children traveled the ordinary days of life, from time to time they sensed a spiritual purpose."[7] With this idea came a model in which children were seen as active agents who walk with adults on the journey of life,

---

[3] Westerhoff, *Will Our Children*, 100. Westerhoff, "The Church's Contemporary Challenge."
[4] Anthony and Benson, *Exploring the History*, 237.
[5] Westerhoff, *Will Our Children*, 100.
[6] Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian*, 18.

rather than passively soaking up information. This study finds its home in the paradigm of children as spiritual pilgrims, which values them as active agents who make meaning of themselves and the world around them.

Within these paradigms, several metaphors for childhood and education have emerged, most of which fall into the categories of passive and active, as outlined in Figure 1.1.[8] Passive metaphors compare children to inanimate objects such as clay or wet cement; they are unable to act upon themselves and require an outside entity to allow for their manipulation. Educationally, they demonstrate that children passively "soak up" material being taught.[9] Active metaphors, such as pilgrims or disciples, celebrate children's ability to make meaning. Rather than passively taking in information, children are active agents who make meaning of information and experiences according to their own learning styles, idiosyncrasies, knowledge, and experiences.

Figure 1.1: Metaphors for Children
Adapted from May, et. al., *Children Matter*, 9.

	Passive Metaphors	***Active Metaphors***
Learner	Sponge Blank slate Empty cup Clay Wet cement	Sheep Seed or plant Pilgrims Disciples Children/people
Teacher	Expert Authority Boss Evaluator Funnel holder	Shepherd Farmer or gardener Fellow pilgrim Guide Friend

[7] Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 195.
[8] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 9.
[9] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 6.

This study presupposes that children are active spiritual and moral agents.[10] Rather than depriving them of agency by seeing them as blank slates, I accept that children are fellow pilgrims who take in, process, and make meaning of information in unique and personal ways.

Children and Spirituality

Last year, I subscribed to the online community known as Facebook and in just a few weeks, many friends had contacted me. As I read through the details on their profiles, I noticed that some of them had written "spiritual, with no affiliation," or "more spiritual than religious" under the religion category. It seems as though some believe that, as one chooses one's religion, it is possible to choose whether or not one will be spiritual.[11] This, however, is not true. Although spirituality is understood differently in various traditions, faiths, and disciplines,[12] all people are spiritual, for "Spirit is a biological condition of being human."[13] Religion (and religious experiences), on the other hand, comes out of personal and communal expressions of one's innate spirituality.[14] Regardless of one's religious affiliation (or lack thereof), this inherent quality of humankind allows us all to affirm that we are more spiritual than religious.

---

[10] Bonnie Miller-McLemore presents a wonderful argument for children as active moral agents. See Miller-McLemore, *Let the Children Come*, 139, 148.

[11] These individuals are not alone in thinking this way. In his most recent book, in fact, Jim Wallis has posited that the amount of Westerners who identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious" constitutes an entire denomination. Wallis, *The Great Awakening*, 16.

[12] Roehlkepartain, "Exploring Scientific," 121.

[13] Myers, *Young Children* , 101. Recent neurotheological and neuropscychological research has affirmed that the human brain is hardwired to receive and process spiritual experiences, thus confirming the biological innateness of spirituality. See May and Ratcliff, "Children's Spiritual Experiences," 153.

[14] Hay and Nye, *The Spirit of the Child*, 25. Ratcliff, "Rituals," 10. Although spirituality and religion are distinct from one another, they are interdependent and possess a number of overlapping characteristics. See Ratcliff and Nye, "Childhood Spirituality," 477. Furthermore, spirituality can be nurtured and shaped "both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices." Benson et. al., "Spiritual Development," 206.

While conducting research into children's political and moral lives, Robert Coles discovered that children conversed about spiritual matters a great deal. He thus set out to research and write *The Spiritual Life of Children*, published in 1990. After talking with hundreds of children from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and atheistic backgrounds, Coles concluded that children are inherently spiritual beings; they possess an innate spiritual life that "grows, changes, [and] responds constantly to the other lives that, in their sum, make up the individual we call by a name and know by a story that is all his, all hers."[15] He asserts that children are spiritual pilgrims who "march through life" on a journey to seek God, find answers, and wonder about the road ahead.[16] Coles seemed puzzled and amazed to discover the innate spirituality of children, as reflected in his final statement: "how young we are when we start wondering about it all, the nature of the journey and the final destination."[17] Indeed, children, like adults, are pilgrims on the spiritual journey, for "Spiritual aliveness knows no age barriers; the young child and aged philosopher stand on level ground."[18]

In her quest to gain ground in defining children's spirituality, Holly Allen identified two scholars who have laid a strong foundation in exploring and defining the spirituality of children: David Hay (and his past research assistant, Rebecca Nye), and Barbara Kimes Myers.[19] In her groundbreaking doctoral research, Nye undertook a qualitative study to explore the spiritual realm of childhood. Her collaboration with David Hay resulted in *The Spirit of the Child*, in which the inherent, biological nature of spirituality (which they refer to as "relational consciousness") is unpacked. Nye

---

[15] Coles, *The Spiritual Life*, 308.
[16] Coles, *The Spiritual Life*, 326.
[17] Coles, *The Spiritual Life*, 335.
[18] Ratcliff and May, "Identifying Children's Spirituality," 8.

discovered that, "children's spirituality was recognized by a distinctive property of mental activity, profound and intricate enough to be termed 'consciousness', and remarkable for its confinement to a broadly relational, inter- and intra-personal domain."[20] This aspect of the human condition is seen more clearly in children because it is a fundamental quality of human life. It has been sustained throughout the evolutionary process of natural selection, for it is has survival value for the species at an individual level.[21] Spirituality is necessary to humanity's survival; without it, we would face extinction.

While Hay and Nye refer to spirituality as relational consciousness, Myers prefers to discuss the spiritual life as the process of transcendence. Transcendence, in this case, refers to the innate ability and desire to go beyond one's present self and reality—it is "the essence of who we are as humankind."[22] Whether they fight to improve their living conditions or desire to hear God's voice, all children—and all people—strive to transcend beyond the present. In fact, children are perhaps more apt to "grasp the reality of the transcendent"[23] than are many adults. Hay and Nye would agree that this desire is a fundamental quality of spirituality, for relational consciousness is always bound up with self-transcendence.[24] All human beings, therefore, are concerned with the transcendental—moving beyond the here and now—for this is an inherent characteristic of spirituality.

---

[19] Allen, "Exploring Children's Spirituality," 9.
[20] Hay and Nye, *The Spirit of the Child*, 109.
[21] Hay and Nye, *The Spirit of the Child*, 135. Alister Hardy has written extensively on the evolutionary value of spirituality, which gives strength to humankind, especially during existential crises. See Hardy, *The Living Stream*.
[22] Myers, *Young Children*, 101.
[23] Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 181.
[24] Hay and Nye, *The Spirit of the Child*, 157.

As one can see, spirituality is a complex concept of which there is no absolute definition. It is like the wind: "though it might be experienced, observed and described, it cannot be 'captured.'"[25] Yet in order for it to having meaning, it must possess conceptual limitations.[26] What I wish to present, therefore, is an operational definition of spirituality suitable to the purposes of my research: spirituality, as an inherent and biological human condition, is a relational connection, whether realized or ignored, to a being or power that transcends beyond the limits of ordinary, material existence. Each religious tradition would name or describe this transcendent power differently and add certain nuances to this definition. Christian spirituality, for example, names the Triune God as that higher power and designates the Christian community as the context through which this connection is fostered.[27]

Spirituality that is Christian

Although spirituality is not synonymous with religion, it is often expressed, fostered, and developed through religious traditions. While one cannot choose to be spiritual, it is possible to choose through which religious tradition (if any) one will live out this aspect of human life. I chose Christianity, and it is through the lens of this tradition that I will be studying the experiences of thirteen children.

At its heart, Christian spirituality identifies the Triune God—Parent, Son, and Spirit—as the transcendent power with whom people can connect. While other religious

---

[25] Nye, "Relational Consciousness," 58.
[26] Sheldrake, "What Is Spirituality?" 21.
[27] Allen and Ratcliff, "A Working Definition." Allen, "Exploring Children's Spirituality," 8. Sheldrake, "What Is Spirituality?" 40.

traditions view Jesus as an important figure,[28] only Christianity claims him as the fully human and fully divine member of the Triune God. Furthermore, Christianity designates the Holy Spirit as that member of the Trinity who actively engages with humanity and the world in order to help individuals connect with God, deepen their spirituality, and experience transformation.

Before discussing different avenues through which Christian spirituality is lived out, let me briefly explain a term that is often used within this tradition. Throughout the years, Christianity has often used the word *faith* as "a biblical word that refers both to the intellectual belief and to relational trust or commitment."[29] From this perspective, faith is not inherent, but is acquired through cognitive understanding and personal commitment. While such uses of this term may be satisfactory in discussions of adult theology, they leave children—especially toddlers and infants—at a deficit. Since young children, by virtue of their development, cannot possess cognitive understandings of and intentional commitment to God, such definitions put them at a loss. A new definition is needed.

It makes no sense that Jesus affirmed the faith of young children if they are unable to possess it. Children must have faith—why else would Jesus have said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"?[30] Karen-Marie Yust has taken such passages and theologies into account and defined faith as "*a gift from God. It is not a set of beliefs; nor is it a well-developed cognitive understanding of all things spiritual. It is an act of grace, in which God chooses to be in relationship with humanity*" (emphasis hers).[31] According to this definition, faith

---

[28] McLaren, *The Secret Message*, 7.
[29] Grenz et. al., *Pocket Dictionary*, 50.
[30] Matt 18:3.
[31] Yust, *Real Kids*, 6.

is a gift bestowed by God onto all human beings. It is as natural and innate as our spirituality. There is nothing one can do to give a child or any other person faith, for only God has the ability to bestow this precious gift.

The response to faith is faithfulness.[32] This is the aspect of faith that can be shared, developed, and taught. Faithfulness is the desire to express and live out one's faith in gratefulness and gratitude to the One who has given faith. It is "a disposition that welcomes God's presence and seeks God's teaching."[33] Through intentional acts of faithfulness and human experience, one's faith can grow, mature, and develop. This is not to say, however, that the inexperienced and unintentional faith of a child is less real than the intentional, experienced faith of an adult. Rather, a child's faith is as whole as that of an elder. John Westerhoff uses the metaphor of a tree to explain this concept. A sapling, while smaller than a full-grown tree, is as much a tree as an old redwood.[34] So the faith of a child—even an infant—is as whole and real as that of an adult. All children, therefore, have real and living faith.

In contemporary Christianity, spirituality and faithfulness are usually expressed through three traditions: sacramental, covenantal, and conversional. Sacramental traditions include Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, and Orthodox Churches. In these groups, sacraments form the core of the Christian life and outwardly express an inner grace, which is often bestowed through the sacraments themselves.[35] Grace is first bestowed upon individuals at baptism, which is often performed on infants. Covenantal groups, such as Presbyterian and Reformed traditions, focus on themselves as

---

[32] Yust, *Real Kids*, 18.
[33] Yust, *Real Kids*, 6.
[34] Westerhoff, *Will Our Children*, 88.
[35] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 55.

members of God's covenant. Sacraments express this covenantal relationship between God and God's people; through baptism, infants and newcomers are welcomed into this covenantal community.[36] For both sacramental and covenantal traditions, children confirm their faithfulness to God through a form of confirmation or public profession, which often occurs when they are adolescents. The third tradition is that of conversional groups, such as Baptist, Pentecostal, Mennonite, and Brethren communities. Rather than receiving grace or the covenantal promise during baptism, these groups believe that "A person enters into a relationship with Jesus Christ through individual repentance of sin and then acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior [*sic*]."[37] Sometime after this conversion experience, a person should publicly display this commitment through believer's baptism.

While there are distinctive qualities to each of these traditions, they all hold to the importance of spiritual development or transformation in the lives of their members, including children. Although definitions and strategies for such transformation differ according to tradition, let me present an overview and working definition of spiritual transformation which I believe to be all-encompassing. Christian spirituality affirms that "Humanity does not stand unequivocally ready to cooperate with the Spirit."[38] However, through involvement in the Christian community, coupled with the work of the Holy Spirit, people can engage in a continual process of conforming themselves to Christ's image and aligning themselves with the purposes and narratives of God. This involves changing and adapting personal beliefs, world views, God concepts, and practices in

---

[36] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 55–6.
[37] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 56.
[38] White, "Christian Spirituality," 79.

ways that better reflect God's character.[39] Traditionally, this is accomplished through contemplative practices, such as prayer and meditation, and way-of-life practices, such as justice seeking and worship.[40]

I have offered an overview of the presuppositions regarding children and spirituality that form the background and foundation of the research presented in the following chapters. While it would be helpful to further delve into these concepts and ideas, the nature and scope of this paper does not allow for it. This overview of my convictions regarding children demonstrates the following: children are whole human beings and active agents who make meaning and act according to their abilities and experiences and not necessarily those imposed by outside forces; children are inherently spiritual beings and, by virtue of this characteristic, are able to experience transcendence; children are recipients of the gift of faith and are capable of living faithfully and experiencing spiritual transformation. Let us now continue to examine the driving presuppositions of this study by examining the theory of object relations.

An Overview of Object Relations Theory

Although often overlooked, people and places at churches affect the spiritual experiences of children. Through my qualitative research, I set out to discover how these two aspects of church environments affect children's spiritual experiences by asking how the physical locations (including objects) and human participants of Sunday morning services and programs have an effect on children's experiences with God and church.

---

[39] Johnson-Miller, "Transformation, Religious," 455.
[40] White, "Christian Spirituality," 78–9.

Such questions fall under the realm of object relations theory, which derives from the work of Sigmund Freud, Donald W. Winnicott, and Ana-Maria Rizzuto, among others.

Defining object relations is a daunting task, for there is no single definition of this theory. Rather, "It is the general term for a collection of psychoanalytic theories…that focus on the impact of early relationships with significant others (especially parents) on personal and interpersonal development."[41] Without attempting to define object relations theory, let me paint a picture of this concept using broad brush strokes.

As new human beings, infants are unable to differentiate themselves from the world around them—they are completely embedded. Their agency and ability to make meaning is expressed through this embeddedness, in which they perceive all things they sense as extensions of themselves. As a child grows, however, she gains the ability to differentiate between herself and the other. Mommy and the stuffed doll are no longer seen as parts of herself, but as objects unto themselves. Through this process, which continues through different stages throughout one's lifetime, human beings come to have relationships with various objects in the world and know about these relationships.[42] "Object relations theory is the study of these internal and external relationships in healthy children and adults."[43]

The etymology of the word *object* sheds some light on this process and on the theory of object relations. The root of this word, *ject*, conveys a sense of movement, more specifically, a throwing motion.[44] The verb *eject* shares the same root, and speaks of

---

[41] Rubin, "Psychoanalytic Treatment," 94.
[42] Hamilton, *Self and Others*, 3.
[43] Hamilton, *Self and Others*, 4.
[44] Kegan, *The Evolving Self*, 76.

movement, such as ejecting a disc from a DVD player.[45] When the prefix *ob* is added to this base, the word conveys a sense of "thrown from" or "thrown away from."[46] Therefore, object refers to that which is separate from oneself—the other to which the self relates.[47] When an infant recognizes a red ball as an entity distinct from herself, the ball is seen as an object, since it is separate from the child. Object, therefore, speaks of that which is not internal to oneself, but "a person or thing in an individual's external environment which becomes internally or psychologically significant."[48]

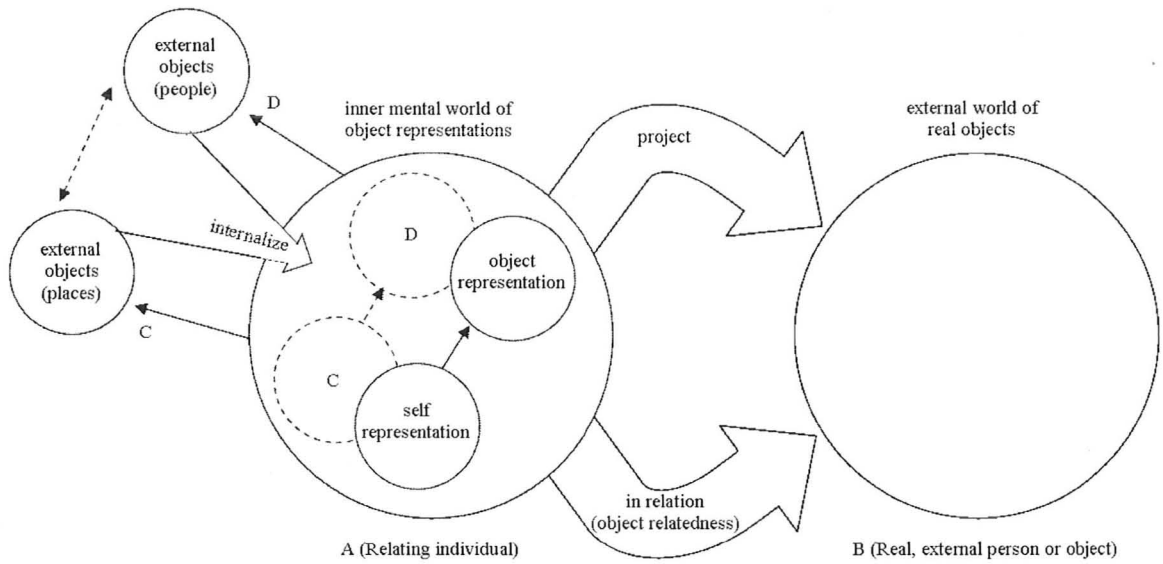
With this etymology in mind, object relating "might be expected to have to do with our relations to that which some motion has made separate or distinct from us, our relations to that which has been thrown from us, or the experience of this throwing itself."[49] The relationships that people experience with objects in their environments are accumulated over time and work together to structure one's mind and form the ways in which one relates to the world.[50] Speaking broadly, the theory of object relations examines the ways in which human beings use relations with external people, places, and objects to create internalized, intrapsychic structures and shape their present behaviours.[51] Josephine Klein states that "Object-relations theories are about our relations to the 'objects'—the people and things—to which we are attached and which give meaning to our lives."[52] This process, which is outlined in Figure 1.2, affects all of us from early in life.

---

[45] The premise for this analogy is taken from Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 72.
[46] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 72.
[47] St. Clair, *Object Relations*, 5.
[48] St. Clair, *Human Relationships*, 7.
[49] Kegan, *The Evolving Self*, 76.
[50] St. Clair, *Human Relationships*, 7.
[51] Klein, *Object Relations*, 17. St. Clair, *Human Relationships*, 8.
[52] Klein, *Our Need for Others*, xv.

The children involved in this research have all come to see that they are physically separate from those people and objects they perceive around them, including those at church. These objects have been "thrown from" the children and they are able to

Figure 1.2: The Internal and External Process of Object Relating
Adapted from St. Clair, *Object Relations*, 7.



Object relations refers to the inner, intrapsychic world of the self where representations of objects in relation to representations of the self are formed, adapted, and sustained. While these representations may not be "real" in the sense that they accurately represent external objects, they are real to the person who internalizes them. This diagram depicts the process by which external objects (in this case, people and places) are internalized and externalized. Person A, who is doing the object relating, relates to person or object B based on his or her inner world, which is shaped by previous dealings with places (C) and people (D). Person A has expectations based on his or her representations of C and D and has identified to specific people and places in his or her previous experiences and may project idealized representations onto B, thus relating with B based on these internal, idealized images and representations. Of course, should B be a human object, he or she relates to A through internal representations that he or she has acquired through relating to objects in the past. For the sake of simplicity and comprehension, the process of B relating to A is not represented in this diagram.

have relationships with these things—they can be touched and affected by their existence. These relations shape the structures of the children's minds and their relationships with

other objects. To study how places and people at churches affect children is to study the relations that exist between these objects and the children that perceive them. Object relations theory is at the core of the spiritual life and, as such, spirituality is profoundly affected by environments.[53]

Places

Place, as a collection of objects, is relevant to the study of children's spirituality and object relations. As I use it in this study, place refers to the physical surroundings that children occupy and interact with at their churches, including the various items that make up these environments. Since one's physical surroundings have been "thrown away" from the self, places are objects and have an effect on those who interact with and occupy them. Through this study, I examined the roles or effects church places (and other places) have on children's experiences with God and church.

Within church buildings, children often occupy spaces removed from the wider faith community. Whether or not they are present for parts of Sunday services, it is common for children to be separated from the congregation and instructed in places set aside for children's ministries. Such spaces—those occupied by the church's children—are quite varied. While some rooms resemble schoolrooms, others are reminiscent of jungle-gyms. Some spaces are similar to small liturgical churches, while others look like storage rooms. Whatever their design or décor, object relations theory implies that children engage themselves with and make meaning of these places and spaces in profound ways.

---

[53] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 27, 32.

Every aspect of a room—from the colours of the walls to the odours received by the nose—come together to speak to those within the room.[54] From observing a space, one can learn about the espoused theology, practices, and values of those that own or created the space. This is the unspoken lesson or message that is offered by a space or place, which is an important aspect of a church's implicit curriculum.[55]

Children are particularly sensitive to spaces that do not speak of safety, inclusivity, hospitality, and the supernatural. They need environments that speak of the spiritual. With this in mind, it is unfortunate that many churches use space in inappropriate or less-than-desirable manners. Rather than creating sacred spaces and places in which children are included and given opportunities to experience God, they resemble schools, playgrounds, or storage areas. The task of churches is to provide children with environments that are conducive to the having of spiritual experiences—places in which God and the supernatural can be readily perceived by all children.

A church building should be a special place created to allow people to authentically worship God and declare spoken and unspoken messages about those that occupy the space. This must be taken into account when designing and decorating churches. More so than adults, children use all their senses—taste, touch, sight, smell, and sound—to make sense of the world around them. They "begin borrowing ideas from their environments to make sense of their world at a very young age."[56] Aspects of a space that are easily ignored by adults can be readily perceived by children. This also applies at a supernatural level—the character of a room or space can have a great effect

---

[54] Berryman, *Godly Play*, 80.

[55] Elliot Eisner refers to the implicit curriculum as "what [a school] teaches because of the kind of place it is… And because [features of the implicit curriculum] are salient and pervasive features of schooling, what they teach may be among themost important lessons a child learns." Eisner, *The Educational*, 97.

on whether or not a child is able to transcend or sense God's presence. "Children sense and respond to the environment of the church."[57] When voiced theologies or world views presented to children conflict with the unspoken messages that young people receive from their environment, children can become confused, frustrated, and feel excluded, cutting off the openness necessary for transcendence.[58] May et. al. state this clearly in *Children Matter*: "*the preparation of the space or environment profoundly affects the learning that takes place*" (emphasis theirs).[59] What is more, from early in life, children borrow ideas from their environments in order to make meaning and sense of the world around them.[60] Children's church environments, therefore, should be prepared in ways that compliment all learning styles and spiritual personalities and should always provide a safe and inclusive place where they can experience God, contemplate on and make sense of the natural and supernatural worlds, and transcend present realities.

"The space we create has tremendous influence on us."[61] What does this mean, however, for those who create and adapt the church spaces that children occupy? It demonstrates the importance of always investigating the unspoken messages spaces portray and how children will react to such places. By talking with the children involved in this study, I hope to gain insight into possible answers for such questions. While the study of place and environment permeates this thesis, it is important to remember the great effects that environments can have on a child's spiritual life. Exploring how places affect children and their experiences with God is a vital task.

---

[56] Yust, *Real Kids*, 26.
[57] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 210.
[58] Such frustration was clearly demonstrated through Caleb, a boy who participated in this study. See Chapter Three.
[59] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 252.
[60] Yust, "Creating a Spiritual World," 28.
[61] Westerhoff, *Will Our Children*, 140.

People

While object relations theory deals with the relationships between human beings and nonhuman objects, it also examines those relations between people and other people. Some theorists so strongly emphasize these latter relations that they argue that, "the 'objects' in object relations are human beings."[62] As one girl involved in this study succinctly stated, "People are things." While I believe that object relations must also study and deal with relations between human and nonhuman objects, I concur that relationships between people and other people are important to this field of study. As such, I would be at a loss to focus solely on children's relations to places while neglecting those between young people and the human beings that inhabit those places.

This is the second major question that drives this study. As objects, people with whom children come into contact affect their spiritual experiences. Whether parents, babysitters, or Sunday school teachers, those with whom children interact at their churches can profoundly influence their spirituality and experiences with God. Any study that examines the role of object relations and the spiritual experiences of children must take into account the roles that other people (especially parents and church leaders) play in children's church experiences.

In many churches, including those involved in this research, separate children's programs function simultaneously to Sunday services. While congregations may believe that they are doing their children a service by having separate programs for them, it is important for children to be a part of the wider faith community by attending communal services of praise and worship. Furthermore, it is widely recognized that parents have a unique and prominent influence on the spiritual lives of their children, especially

regarding their concepts of God.[63] As such, it could be beneficial for children to worship alongside their parents, witnessing their behaviour as they celebrate with the wider faith community. Some who would affirm this argue that the church is less than God has intended it to be when children are excluded from the practices of its life.[64] With these ideas in mind, it could be counterproductive for churches to exclude children from their worship services.

Since many children participate in church programs held simultaneously to worship services, many do not typically encounter large numbers of adults at their houses of worship. Rather, they interact with a small group of leaders, children's ministers, and volunteers who are responsible for teaching and leading them during these programs. These adults, as living objects, have relationships with the children that encounter them and, as such, can greatly affect their experiences with God and church. How do these few adults affect children's experiences with God and church? How do children feel about their leaders? With whom would children want to spend their Sunday morning church time? These are some of the questions which I will explore through my research.

Studying the relations between children and the places and people that they encounter at churches is of profound importance, for these relationships can greatly influence their spirituality and experiences with God. Rather than seeing children as blank slates, I believe that young people, as spiritual, faith-filled agents and learners, constantly make meaning of the world around them, including the people and places that they encounter at churches. As such, children possess knowledge and perspectives that are valuable and worthy of investigation; "listening to children is central to recognizing

---

[62] Cashdan, *Object Relations Therapy*, 3.
[63] See Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God.*

and respecting their worth as human beings."[65] Since "Relationships and events that take place during development can dramatically shape the individual's religious experience and relationship to God and the sacred,"[66] it is important to examine church environments in order to understand how to create positive, inclusive spaces that nurture the spirituality of all children and provide them with an adequate sense of fit.

---

[64] May et. al., *Children Matter*, 143.
[65] Roberts, "Listening to Children," 229.
[66] St. Clair, *Human Relationships*, 12.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

To see the many facets of a diamond, one must observe it from many angles. So it is with researching children's spirituality. The nature of spirituality and the phenomenon of childhood combine to make research into the spiritual life of children a challenging task. Anyone partaking of such a feat must have multiple strategies, tactics, and perspectives in place to guide them in the research process, for having "multiple views helps in the understanding of the whole."[1] In this chapter, I will identify the children and churches that made up my research sample and outline the various strategies that I used in this project.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The key participants in this study were thirteen children between the ages of seven and eleven. As active, spiritual meaning-makers, children have much to offer those willing to listen. Since they engage in processes of object relating and make meaning of their churches, it is important to listen to their stories in order to discover how church ministries and environments affect them.

My sample for this study began with fourteen children from three churches. In order to maintain confidentiality, each person and church involved in this study has been

given a pseudonym. However, one girl, Evelyn, decided to stop participating after the second interview. Since I was unable to collect a great deal of data from her, I have not included her in this study. The final sample, therefore, consisted of thirteen children from three churches, all of whom had been attending their respective congregation for more than three years. Although some spoke of their Christian commitment, I did not ask the children about their affiliation with Christianity or their relationship to Jesus. Since each child had been attending church for a number of years, however, I assumed that they each possessed a basic knowledge and experience of the Triune God.

Each church involved was intentionally chosen to vary the pool of subjects while possessing significant commonalities. All congregations are located in the same southern-Ontario region and fall within the Protestant theological tradition. In each church, most or all of the children meet together at the beginning of services for a large-group teaching or song time and are subsequently separated into segregated age-groups. Such rotational, pragmatic-participatory models focus on practical lessons that engage children through various related activities.[2] While all three churches hold these things in common, each has distinct characteristics that set it apart from the others.

Northview Community Church

Northview Community Church is a two-decade-old congregation with a weekly attendance of over 1100 people, 300 of which are children under twelve. This independent Baptist church values "exalting God, embracing others, evangelizing

---

[1] Ratcliff, "The Beginnings," 2.
[2] For more information on this model of children's ministry, see Graves, "Pragmatic-Participatory."

seekers, and equipping followers,"[3] and lives out these values through seeker-sensitive teaching in a casual environment. Recently, this community built a new structure on the northwest perimeter of its city. The building, which sits on a 33-acre property, has a massive foyer featuring enormous windows overlooking an in-ground water fountain. This foyer leads to the sanctuary, which resembles a gymnasium. Each week, the congregation—mainly consisting of young families—gathers under basketball nets and in front of a stage for contemporary worship music and a sermon. The children meet wherever room is available, from the boardroom, to a bigger, generic room featuring a stage for a kids worship band. Virtually no Christian symbolism is found within this building, which is rather characterized by neutral colours and tones.

Three children from Northview were part of my sample. Caleb, a quiet nine-year-old boy, had, until a few years ago, lived in India with his sister and parents, who served as Wycliffe Bible translators. Abigail, a homeschooled girl in her tenth year, was another participant. In addition to Sunday school, Abigail attends a midweek program at Townsend Church, another congregation involved in my research. Ben, the final child with whom I met from this church, is a humourous and energetic seven-year-old, who loved attending the research focus groups.

Townsend Baptist Church

Townsend Baptist Church sits on the southeast corner of its municipality. Founded in the late 1960s, this church (affiliated with the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches) has blossomed into one of the regions largest congregations. "Thirty

[3] This quotation is taken from the website of Northview Community Church.

five years after that first service…over 1500 people call [Townsend] home."[4] Over 350 children younger than twelve attend this church's weekly programs that build a "kid-munity"[5] focused on Townsend's six foundations: "belonging, worshipping, caring, learning, serving, and reaching.[6]

The congregation meets in a sizeable facility built in three phases, the most recent of which was completed in 2003. On the main floor is a foyer with glass walls, a roomy library, offices, and several nursery and toddler rooms. The heart of the church is its worship centre, a sloped auditorium that seats 600 people. The pews are arranged in a semi-circular manner, facing a multi-leveled platform and two looming projection screens. The lower level of the building is dedicated to children and contains a gymnasium, where the children meet for group sessions, and several classrooms of varying sizes. With entrances to the building on both levels (one for children and one for adults), it is possible that some adults and children never interact with one another. While Townsend's worship centre is more traditional than that of Northview, the entire building is fairly contemporary and contains little Christian symbolism.

Five children from Townsend were included in my research sample, the youngest of which was Laurie, an eight-year-old girl who appeared timid at first. Before long, however, she become comfortable with the group and eagerly shared her ideas. Laurie's older sister, Keira, is an energetic and imaginative ten-year-old who enjoyed making people laugh. Megan a nine-year-old only-child, has been attending Townsend for about four years. Two brothers met with me on Wednesday mornings, except for the first interview. Nicholas is a nine-year-old boy who proved willing to participate in the focus

---

[4] This quotation was taken from the website of Townsend Baptist Church.
[5] On Townsend's website, they describe their Sunday children's programs as "an interactive 'kid-munity."

groups, despite a nervousness regarding talking with people.[7] His eight-year-old brother, Owen, seemed shy and timid, but became comfortable with the research process as time progressed. He was only able to attend three of the focus groups.[8]

Sacred Heart Presbyterian Church

Contrasting Northview and Townsend is Sacred Heart Presbyterian Church, a 150-year-old parish that stands in the city's downtown area. This parish, which was once the most populous Presbyterian congregation in Canada,[9] has resided in its enormous labyrinth-like building since its construction in 1907.[10] While it is no longer the nation's biggest Presbyterian parish, its weekly attendance of 600 is still impressive. The congregation is dominated by those in mid-adulthood and their senior years, many of whom have been members for the majority of their lives. Children make up less than fourteen percent of the congregation.[11] Sacred Heart's sanctuary is a large structure with concentric curved pews on the main and gallery levels. The pulpit features a massive pipe organ embedded in dark wood and elevated levels for the minister, pulpit, and choir. The communion rail at the front of the pulpit demonstrates the separation of the congregation and sacred space. The sanctuary is decorated with flags, banners, colours reflecting the church year and an array of stained glass windows depicting saints and the church's mission. The liturgy closely follows the Book of Common Worship and concludes with a children's time, when all of the church's children gather in the front pews. In general,

---

[6] This quotation is also from Townsend's website.
[7] It was not until after the final interview that Nicholas admitted this to me.
[8] Owen was unable to attend the first interview and chose to do schoolwork, rather than participating in the final focus group.
[9] This quotation was taken from the website of Sacred Heart Presbyterian Church.
[10] Also from Sacred Heart's website.
[11] Also from Sacred Heart's website.

Sacred Heart espouses an intergenerational approach to church, including children in special programs, intergenerational events, and portions of the worship service.[12]

During their rotational Sunday school, children can be found throughout the building. They all meet in the chapel, the church's original sanctuary featuring dark wood and stained glass windows, and disperse throughout the building after their gathering time. Some file to The Potter's House, a room depicting the land on which Jesus walked. Others go to The Odeon, a small theatre featuring movie-style seating and dark walls decorated with stars. Children also are found in The Temple, a hall created to look like Solomon's Temple, complete with gold pillars. Other rooms include small halls with couches, tables, and fireplaces. This overview demonstrates that the children of Sacred Heart occupy spaces that were intentionally created to speak of God and the spiritual, rather than the generic classrooms of Townsend and Northview.

Five children from this parish were involved in my sample. The oldest, Freddy, is a grade six student. His brother, Gordon, is a quiet eight-year-old who looked up to Freddy. Another set of brothers was also involved in the Sacred Heart sample. The youngest was Ian, a fidgety seven-year-old who didn't seem to follow his elder brother's example as willingly as Gordon. Ian's brother is Houston, a ten-year-old perfectionist who loves drama, music, and the arts. The final individual involved was Jennifer, a ten-year-old girl who comes from a blended family and lives with her mother, step-father, and two older step-siblings.

These thirteen children were the heart and soul of my research. Without their generous comments and participation, there would be no study. Throughout the

---

[12] Holly Allen cites six key forms of intergenerational church activities, three of which are practised by Sacred Heart. See Allen, "Nurturing Children's Spirituality in Intergenerational," 267–8.

remainder of this thesis, I will outline my research and findings, ever grateful and respectful of the individuals and congregations that aided me in this process.

Methodology

As mentioned, researching children's spirituality requires multiple methods of data acquisition, for "*The more sources of information an adult has about a child, the more likely that the adult is to receive the child's messages properly* (emphasis theirs)."[13] Taking a multi-method, "mosaic" approach allows children with various interests and skills to become involved.[14] For this study, I made use of the following research methods, most of which were qualitative: semi-structured focus groups with children, social mapping exercises, drawing, oral surveys with parents, and photographic documentation. Such methods of doing research *with* children[15] allow participants to have a legitimate voice in the research process and leads to more accurate and valid results.[16]

Although qualitative research can be affected by personal views and biases, it proves to be more successful than quantitative research with children. While the latter "provides precision…its results, while technically accurate, may miss the point of a child's behavior [*sic*]."[17] Since children lack vocabulary and can have difficulty expressing themselves, researchers do well to make use of methods that are subjective, holistic, and anthropological, with the goal of understating the subject's views.[18] Furthermore, the relative lack of control in qualitative research allows the children to

---

[13] Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 15.
[14] See Clark, "The Mosaic Approach."
[15] See Fraser, "Situating Empirical Research."
[16] Lloyd-Smith and Tarr, "Researching Children's Perspectives," 60–62. Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 15.
[17] Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 149–50.

better assume the role of teacher, rather than seeing the researcher as an instructor or authority figure (which can hinder their willingness to honestly express themselves). Speaking from experience, Nye states:

> The quantitative approach too easily lends itself to becoming numbers about numbers, which for discussing matters of faith and the numinous is a fate even worse than when theology becomes merely words about words. As a relatively new field…children's spirituality is not adequately delineated to tolerate number crunching. People need the stories, the personal, the descriptions, the creative analyses.[19]

Another seasoned researcher, David Elkind, upholds qualitative research because he understands that children's anecdotes and narratives provide researchers with valuable information about their religious experiences that is not elicited well through structured, quantitative methods.[20] From these narratives and other exercises, theories are produced from the ground up through collected data.[21] For all these reasons, examining the spirituality of children is an undertaking best accomplished through qualitative research.

Figure 2.1: Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods
Adapted from Ratcliff, "Qualitative Research."

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
• Phenomenological: focus on experiences • Inductive • Holistic: examines the whole person • Subjective/insider centred • Process oriented • Anthropological worldview • Relative lack of control • Goal: understand actor's view • Discovery oriented • Explanatory • Dynamic reality assumed; "slice of life"	• Positivistic • Hypothetical/deductive • Particularistic: tightly specialized • Objective/outsider centred • Outcome oriented • Natural science worldview • Attempt to control variables • Goal: find facts and causes • Verification oriented • Confirmatory • Static reality assumed: relative consistency in life

[18] Ratcliff, "Qualitative Research."
[19] Nye, "Christian Perspectives," 105.
[20] Elkind, *A Sympathetic Understanding*, 151–4.

Figure 2.1 summarizes some of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research and this dichotomy informs my preference to utilize the former method when researching the spiritual experiences of children.

Semi-Structured Focus Groups

Over a four-month period, the thirteen children in my sample met with me five times.[22] All meetings took the form of focus group discussions, with as many as one to five children present, depending on their availability. The three children from Northview met at their church during regular Sunday programming. Abigail and Ben constituted one group, while Caleb met with me and my assistant alone. The five children from Sacred Heart met collectively after their church's Sunday service, also in their church building. For two interviews, however, Houston and Ian met with me at their home, rather than with the rest of the group. While the children from Townsend met with me at their church, the interviews occurred somewhat irregularly. The first was held during the church's midweek program and included four of the five participants.[23] After realizing that this time would not be possible for subsequent interviews, the participants were

---

[21] Greig and Taylor, *Doing Research*, 43.

[22] As mentioned previously, Owen did not participate in all five interviews. During these interviews, and the research project in general, the children were protected a number of ways. As approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board, parents provided consent and children assented to participate in this research and were free to end their involvement at any time. Evelyn was the only child to leave the project after giving assent. All computer data was password protected and all forms, drawings, pictures, and paper transcripts were stored in a locked filing cabinet. Confidentiality was stressed during every focus group, and the children were further protected through a presence of a female research assistant at almost every meeting. During one meeting with Nicholas and Owen, my assistants were unable to join us, so I conducted the interview in a room with an open door and other people nearby. My assistants were also unable to attend a meeting with Houston and Ian, which took place at their home. However, they (and I) were protected by the presence of both of their parents, who sat in a nearby room. In this way, confidentiality was maintained and safety was upheld. Through all these practices, as approved by the MREB, the children were protected during the research process.

[23] Owen was unable to join us for the first focus group. He introduced himself and performed the social mapping exercise during the second interview.

divided into two smaller groups. One, made up of the girls, met at their church on Wednesday evenings, while the other, consisting of Owen and Nicholas, met at Townsend on Wednesday mornings. All subsequent interviews with these children were conducted in this manner. Meeting at the children's churches was an important part of the process, for "culturally familiar… places…are apt to elicit the most meaningful communications with children."[24] Since each child was familiar with their church, they did not need to acclimate themselves to a new environment and the relationship between the ethnographer and the participant was eased.[25]

During each of these focus group meetings, I facilitated group discussions by asking open-ended questions and allowing the children time to respond and discuss their thoughts.[26] When performing qualitative research with children, open-ended questions are preferable, for children "respond better to open, indirect questions, which leave a substantial (but not infinite) range for response."[27] In conducting the interviews in this manner, I was able to "provide a forum for the children to express themselves"[28] and empower them to become active members of the research process, both of which are fundamental strategies of eliciting information about children's inner experiences.[29]

During the focus groups, I attenuated any socially-perceived grown-up roles by taking the "least-adult role"[30] and offering the children a measure of freedom to guide the conversations and activities. They could decide on what was discussed and when to

---

[24] Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 106.
[25] Nesbitt, "Researching," 143.
[26] For a list of guiding questions utilized, see Appendix B.
[27] Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 188.
[28] Heller, *The Children's God*, 4.
[29] Hill, "Ethical Considerations," 63.
[30] Mandell, "The Least-Adult Role,"

engage in various activities. Many qualitative researchers of children know the value of giving children a degree of freedom, for,

> When children become too conscious of their dependency on adults, they become less spontaneous and more wary of factors in the situation that may threaten their security. Feeling some sense of control in the situation allows them to attend to the purpose of the interview.[31]

At the outset of the interviews, control was offered to the children by having them choose their seats. I consistently reminded them that I was not assuming the role of pastor or teacher. I was the student, the learner, while the children became my teachers and helped to direct the learning process. While some preferred to simply answer my open-ended questions, others enjoyed the liberty I offered to them and dialogued with each other about their experiences. In this way, "children become the instructors and we, as researchers, become the pupils."[32] Robert Coles also emphasized this style of research: "I let the children know as clearly as possible, and as often as necessary, what it is I am trying to learn, how they can help me."[33] I did likewise.

As the pupil, I did not relinquish all control during the focus groups. Although I was able to build a rapport with most of the children and offer them some control of the process, I often had to guide their conversations in order to hear them speak about topics of interest. Sometimes, the participants were unwilling to exercise the freedom that I offered to them. In such cases, I engaged them by asking open-ended questions, being cautious not to transform the interview into an oral survey. Throughout the entire process, my intention was to gently guide the participants, prompting them for answers as little as possible.

---

[31] Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 175.
[32] Emond, "Ethnographic Research Methods," 124.
[33] Coles, *The Spiritual Life*, 27.

As with all qualitative research with children, rapport with each participant is essential to eliciting their opinions and ideas. To build a relationship, I spent time talking with the children about their personal lives. Having a female research assistant at the interviews[34] helped me to build rapport, for females are usually more effective at connecting with children on a personal level and are often perceived as less threatening.[35] It was also essential for me to show a measure of transparency, so I made sure to spend time telling the children about myself. I disclosed that I am a graduate student who studies children and their experiences at church. I also told them that, at the time of the research, I was also a children's pastor, which helped me to become an insider to their Christian church culture. Ethnographers are aware that, "All human communities have a perspective on life, a philosophy for living that underlies behavior [*sic*]."[36] By being able to see me as an insider, the children could become more open and honest about experiences within this culture.

Meeting at the children's churches, having a female assistant, offering the children control, and becoming open with the children were all essential elements of the focus group research process. Through these practices, I was able to provide a "context of protected time and a sense of 'safe enough' space, and of course relationships [which] is an essential piece of equipment for studying Christian spirituality, particularly among young children."[37]

---

[34] There was one interview with Owen and Nicholas and one with Ian and Houston in which a female research assistant was unable to attend.
[35] Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 115. Holmes, *Fieldwork*, 61.
[36] Garbarino and Stott, *What Children*, 103.

Social Mapping

During my first interview with each group of children, I asked them to complete a social mapping exercise. Social mapping, as a form of qualitative research, is relatively new and unexplored. In studying children in post-genocide Rwanda, Angela Veale discovered that social maps act as descriptive and analytical tools. They are descriptive in that they show the child's perspective of the geographical area being depicted. They are analytical in that, "This method generated visual data, a 'map' of the community that could be analyzed through determining the features and people that were included and also those that were excluded."[38] In having the children perform this exercise, my intent was to discover some insight into their views of the social demographics of their church's Sunday services.

Each child received a map of their church and two sets of small plastic pieces—one set of each of two colours. I asked them to designate one colour to represent children and the other to represent adults and place them on the map in a manner that depicted where children and adults spend time at their church on Sunday mornings.[39] For example, if a child thought that many adults spend time in the library, then she would place pieces of the colour representing adults on the library area of the map. When these social maps were completed, I briefly discussed each one with the respective child, having them explain why they placed their pieces where they did. After photographing these maps, I asked the children to change them in any way that would reflect where they would prefer adults and children to reside on Sunday mornings. I subsequently photographed and

---

[37] Nye, "Christian Perspectives," 100.
[38] Veale, "Creative Methodologies," 259.
[39] I intentionally avoided telling them what constituted a "child" and "adult," but left them to make such designations.

discussed these second maps. Upon completion of the exercise, each child had created two social maps—one descriptive, depicting their views of where people spend time on Sunday mornings, and one prescriptive, showing where they would prefer people to spend this time

.

Drawings

Since children often lack adequate vocabulary for speaking of their spiritual experiences, many researchers have found it helpful to have them draw pictures related to the research.[40] As a universal pictorial language, drawing "makes a portion of the inner self visible."[41] Coles often asked children to draw pictures of God, heaven, church, or biblical characters, for this helps them to holistically express themselves and disclose their experiences and perceptions. Others, like Klepsch and Logie, also know the value of children's drawings, for drawings "seem to be able to plumb the inner depths of a person and uncover some of the otherwise inaccessible inside information."[42] While the drawings themselves provide information, much data can be elicited through the child's verbalization about the drawing both during and after the image's creation.[43] The concrete experience of drawing sprouts new insights in the imagination of the child that may not otherwise be verbalized or portrayed. Drawings not only provide researchers with data about the picture; they also yield information about the children's perceptions and interpretations about the drawing and the ideas conveyed in the picture.

---

[40] Such people who have used drawings to research children's spirituality include Robert Coles, Sofia Cavalletti, David Heller, V. Peter Pitts, Karen Crozier and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, and Dana Hood.
[41] Klepsch and Logie, *Children Draw*, 6.
[42] Klepsch and Logie, *Children Draw*, 11.
[43] Boyatzis and Newman, "How Shall We," 172–3.

Dana Hood believes that the process of drawing pictures helps children to articulate their concepts and ideas by giving them a context through which they can express themselves. Children's verbalizations during the act of drawing prove to be a valuable means of eliciting information about their perceptions and experiences, since drawings are never exact representations of their perceptions. Rather, they are partial representations, for children can only use symbols and techniques available to them through knowledge, experience, and talent. "Their drawings are often metaphors to represent ideas."[44] Having children discuss their pictures as they draw helps one gain a more holistic sense of what the child is attempting to portray and explain. When drawing, the child is in a relationship with the image; drawing and speaking work together to better describe the child's spiritual experiences.

During the third set of focus groups, I asked each child to draw a picture of someone who helps them to know God or feel close to God and a picture of a place where they experience God or feel close to God.[45] Each child was given blank paper and chose the medium with which they created their pictures—crayons, pencils, markers, paints, or coloured pencils. They were given as much time as they needed to create their pictures.

Since up to five children were drawing at one time, I was not able to talk with each child during the entire drawing process. I was conscious, however, to spend a few moments with each one as they created their images. After they completed their drawings, we gathered as a group so they could share their pictures with one another. The

---

[44] Hood, "Six Children Seeking God," 245.

[45] Due to time constraints, the children from Sacred Heart and the girls from Townsend were not able to draw a picture of a place where they feel close to God or experience God. Some, however, incorporated images of places into the first drawing. I did not see the need to have these children draw an image specifically depicting a special place, for they adequately discussed places where they feel close to God through their photographs and conversations.

process of presenting and conversing about the drawings proved to be a fruitful method of data acquisition, for group discussions about the people and places in the drawings often ensued.

Photographic Documentation

Angela Veale, whom I referenced in describing social mapping, briefly touches on another creative method for eliciting data on children's experiences. While she does not go into detail as to how photography can effectively collect data, she says that photography is a type of

> participatory research [that] promotes a 'logos-mythos technique' which is about the combination of scientific rigor [*sic*] and critical analysis with imagination and creativity as a means of coming to an interpretation of people's worlds within their cultural frames.[46]

In my research, I made use of photography to give the children freedom, ownership, creativity, and a "powerful new language."[47]

At the end of the second interviews, I gave a 35 mm disposable camera to each participant and asked them to photograph the places and objects that help them feel close to and experience God or where and with which they feel safe, comfortable, or at peace. Over the next few weeks, the children captured images and brought back their cameras during the third round of interviews. I had the photographs developed before the fourth set of interviews, the bulk of which were devoted to discussing and looking at them. Each photographer described what their photos depicted, why they took them, and, if applicable, how and why the place or object in the picture helps them to feel close to God, experience God, or feel safe. Like the process of drawing, having the children

---

[46] Veale, "Creative Methodologies," 254.

revisit their photos and explain their reasons for capturing each image worked together with the pictures to create a more complete representation of the children's experiences and spirituality.

Although few before me have elicited information through the use of photography,[48] this exercise proved to be a valuable means of data collection. By offering each child their own camera, I demonstrated that their experiences, ideas, and thoughts were important. The simple act of handing each child a camera with their name on it continued to build my rapport with the children and allowed each participant to know that they are valued.

Parental Interviews

The final method of data acquisition involved the children's parents. Although parents cannot completely enter into their children's spiritual experiences, they can provide information that, when studied alongside other field data, is useful in gaining a more complete blueprint of their children's spiritual experiences. In a sense, parents act as expert witnesses who see, hear, or know about their children's experiences and lives, thus qualifying them to testify their perceptions about such experiences.

After conducting the third focus groups with each set of children, I met with their parents in small groups for one interview. Although not all parents could attend these meetings, at least one parent of each child was present. The groups were arranged according to the various churches involved in this study. Those parents of children

---

[47] Clark, "The Mosaic Approach," 145.

[48] M. Brinton Lykes has used photography to research the experiences of women in postwar Guatemala (see Lykes, "Creative Arts") and Alison Clark made use of this method to study children in Britain (see

attending Northview Church met in one group, while those who called Sacred Heart home met with me at another time. Unfortunately, the parents from Townsend were not able to coordinate their schedules, so I met at least one parent of each child separately.

Rather than focusing solely on quantitative or qualitative research styles, the parental interviews were carried out as hybrid oral surveys. In these interviews, I asked a number of open-ended questions to which I expected each parent to respond in turn. I began these interviews by explaining their purpose in data collection and asking each parent to introduce themselves to others in the group. As with the focus groups with children, I told the parents what I was hoping to learn from them and how they could provide me with appropriate information. During these interviews, I asked them questions about their views of spirituality, their participation in their children's spiritual lives, and their children's spiritual experiences.[49] In order to uphold confidentiality and protect the responses of parents from being skewed by predetermined information, I was careful not to disclose any information that their children had provided during my discussions with them.

In this chapter, I have described my research sample and methodology. Through these many forms of data acquisition—semi-structured focus groups with children, drawings, social mapping, photography, and oral surveys with parents—I was able to gain a window into the spiritual lives and experiences of the children involved in this research process. These thirteen children, while not representative of all young people, provided me with important information regarding object relations, spirituality, and experiences with God and church. Their perceptions and thoughts allowed me to gain a

---

Clark, "The Mosaic Approach"). I am not aware, however, of anyone who has used photography to research the spiritual experiences of children.

sense of the common journey that young people face as they walk along the spiritual path. I am eternally grateful to them for allowing me to enter into their spiritual experiences—their successes and disappointments, struggles and victories.

[49] For a list of questions used in the parental interviews, see Appendix C.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

In Chapter One, I demonstrated that humans are inherently spiritual creatures. However, every person is unique, so all do not necessarily express their spirituality uniformly. "Everyone, including you, has a capacity for the spiritual—but that spiritual capacity expresses itself in a variety of ways."[1] Each child involved in this study had different experiences and ways of expressing their spirituality, even though many of them attended the same programs at the same churches.

THE SEARCH FOR A TYPOLOGY

After conducting a number of interviews, I began to examine the collected data in search of a typology by which I could organize the information and participants. It was clear to me from the data I had collected that "the Sacred can be engraved onto the hearts and minds of the worshippers in more ways than one."[2] Even though the children exhibited different styles of spirituality, I wanted to categorize them into groups based on commonalities that I perceived. Rather than reinventing the wheel, I examined the typologies of other scholars to see if their work could capture the experiences of the children I studied. I looked at the work of Nye and Hay, among others, who present a map of children's spirituality with three categories: awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing,

and value-sensing.[3] While this "geography of the spirit" proved to be insufficient for my purposes, it led me in the right direction.

It was not until I examined the work of Joyce Bellous and Corinne Ware that I discovered a typology that best reflected the collected data. Building on the work of Urban T. Holmes, these women each present four personalities or types[4] of human spirituality: head, heart, mystic, and kingdom. Each personality speaks of religious experience generally, providing distinct yet fluid boundaries in which one lives out one's innate spirituality. While most people possess one dominant spiritual type, characteristics of others often overlap. Furthermore, human beings, as transforming creatures, are able to change their dominant personalities throughout their lives.

In *A History of Christian Spirituality*, Holmes presents a phenomenology of prayer called "The Circle of Sensibility" (see Figure 3.1). Sensibility refers to how humans become sensitive, or sensible, to different types of prayer and expressions of spirituality.[5] He formed two converging axes to outline his map of spiritual experiences. The horizontal, apophatic/kataphatic axis "raises the question of the degree to which the ascetical method advocates an emptying (apophatic) technique of mediation or an imaginal (kataphatic) technique of mediation."[6] The vertical, speculative/affective axis "raises the question of whether the spiritual method emphasizes the illumination of the

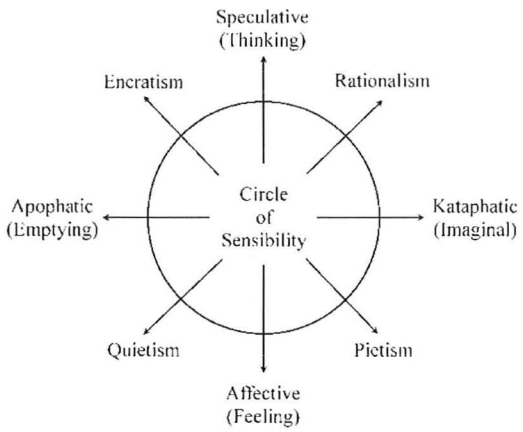
---

[1] Ware, *Discover*, 84
[2] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, xvii.
[3] Nye and Hay, "Identifying Children's Spirituality," 144–51.
[4] The terms "personality" and "type" will be used synonymously and interchangeably throughout the remainder of this thesis. Both refer to one of the following four expressions of spirituality: head, heart, mystic, and kingdom.
[5] Ware, *Discover*, 31.
[6] Holmes, *A History*, 4.

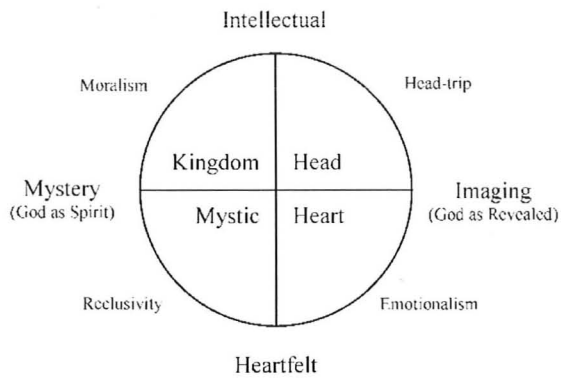
mind (speculative) or emotions (affective)."[7] This axis denotes speculative knowing and connatural knowing.[8]

Figure 3.1: Understanding Spiritual Personalities
Adapted from Holmes, *A History*, 4 and Ware, *Discover*, 8.

Urban T. Holmes' Circle of Sensibility



Corinne Ware's Spiritual Types



Thus, the Circle of Sensibility is broken into four quadrants, each describing a spiritual type: apophatic/speculative (head spirituality), speculative/kataphatic (kingdom spirituality), kataphatic/affective (heart spirituality), and affective/apophatic (mystic spirituality). While most people have a dominant personality, a healthy spirituality has overlap into other types and maintains "a certain tension with those other dimensions that are not emphasized."[9] When such a balance does not exist, there is a dangerous tendency to fall into an aberration of one personality. Drawing from the works of Bellous and Ware, let me outline each spiritual personality and examine my research participants in light of this typology. It is important to remember that I am describing broad categories and even though each child possessed a dominant type, "children express themselves in

[7] Holmes, *A History*, 4.
[8] For a brief summary of speculative versus connatural knowing, see May and Ratcliff, "Children's Spiritual Experiences," 155.

very individualized ways—a kind of personal 'signature' tied to one's personality."[10] With this in mind, let me paint a picture of each spiritual personality using broad strokes.

Figure 3.2: The Spiritual Personalities of Research Participants

	Head	Heart	Mystic	Kingdom
Northview Community Church	Ben (7)	Abigail (9)	Caleb (9)	
Townsend Baptist Church	Nicholas (9) Keira (10) Megan (9)	Owen (8)	Laurie (8)	
Sacred Heart Presbyterian Church		Houston (10) Gordon (8)	Freddy (10) Ian (7)	Jennifer (10)

Head Spirituality (Rationalism)

Head spirituality is the spiritual personality that dominated North American church culture for most of the twentieth century. Indeed, even in the mid-1980s, many publishers and teachers centred children's ministry on this spiritual type,[11] which is "a thoughtful, cognitive approach to spiritual experience based on the significance of words."[12] People of this type focus on their intellectual thinking of God through what they can touch, see, and imagine[13] and "primarily use their rational powers in their quest for God."[14] Scripture is valued and God is often represented through anthropomorphic terminology. Reading is seen as the means through which God speaks[15] and the spoken word is important, often taking the form of Scripture readings, sermons, devotions, and

---

[9] Holmes, *A History*, 5.
[10] Hart, "Spiritual Experiences," 165.
[11] Richards, *A Theology*, 59.
[12] Bellous and Sheffield, *Conversations*, 104.
[13] Ware, *Discover*, 37.
[14] O'Brien, "4 Ways," 18.
[15] Ware, *Discover*, 86.

lessons. Overall, the goals of head spirituality are to have one's understanding transformed and to make sense of, experience, and name that which is holy.[16]

Although this type of spirituality offers much to theology, education, scholarship, and critical examinations of texts,[17] its extreme form breeds rationalism, "an overintellectualization of one's spiritual life with a consequent loss of feeling, often perceived as dogmatic and *dry* (emphasis hers)."[18] By ignoring the experiential and emotional aspects of spirituality, people risk believing that having the correct words, ideas, or interpretations is all that matters. Such extremists are often seen as dry head-trippers[19] who ostracize others by "relentlessly pointing out that everyone who does not agree with their view is incorrect."[20]

Of the children involved in this research, four possess head spirituality. These children—most of whom attend Townsend Church—are Nicholas, Keira, Megan and, from Northview, Ben. While they all hold different beliefs and ways of making meaning, the personality that these four children most exhibited is head spirituality.

Throughout the focus groups, Nicholas made it clear that learning and knowledge about God are at the core of his spiritual experiences. During the second interview, he told me that he feels close to God at Sunday school and at his church because, "[I] learn more about him [God]… because it's all about God." Upon inquiring about what he thought was important about the church building, he replied, "you learn about God here." In another interview, he expressed his belief that what makes the building of Townsend a church (as opposed to a community centre, school, etc.) is that "we talk about him—

---

[16] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 66. Ware, *Discover*, 38.
[17] Ware, *Discover*, 37–8.
[18] Ware, *Discover*, 38.
[19] Ware, *Discover*, 68.

that's all." When it comes to the people who Nicholas identified as those who help him feel safe or close to God, he drew a picture of his father (Drawing 1), because he reads the Bible to Nicholas. He also spoke of his Sunday school teachers and pastor, because they "tell you about God and stuff that you want to learn about it." As such comments demonstrate, Nicholas' dominant personality is head spirituality.

Keira did not exhibit a dominant spiritual personality until mid-way through the research process. A clear hint she gave was when she drew a picture of me upon my asking her to draw someone who helps her to know or feel close to God (Drawing 2), "because we're here talking about God." This data demonstrates that verbalizing spiritual matters is important to her. As Keira shared her photos, her head spirituality was also clearly expressed through a photo of her house. In her words, "I've learned about God in that house. I've read the Bible." Reading the Bible is an important practice because, "When I'm reading the Bible I learn about God and learning about God is good… When you learn more about him it makes you smarter in the eyes of God." In discussing those who help her know or experience God, she made the following comment about a favourite Sunday school teacher: "She explained everything very well so she never had to go over it any time… and she helped us learn about God." Keira also identified her mother as an important spiritual influence because she "refers to Bible verses." All of this data demonstrates that her personality is head spirituality.

Although Megan expressed a degree of heart spirituality, her dominant type is head spirituality. During one focus group, she told me about a church cell group her parents host each week. Megan enjoys listening to their Bible studies, a ritual that helps her feel close to God because, "they're talking about God and it's fun to listen to what

---

[20] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 66.

they talk about." She also spoke of Mr. Lane, a teacher from her Christian school, who is a strong spiritual influence because "he helps me know God more because he teaches me about God in Bible [class]." Megan's parents also made comments that demonstrated her spiritual type. They spoke of the few times that she joined them in worship services, saying, "She's paying attention to some of what's going on… She'll sit there quietly. She won't doodle. She'll listen." They also told me about the difference that her new Christian school has made in her spiritual life, because intellectual and verbal reasoning about God has been "ratcheted up a few notches… Now she's willing to discuss what her opinion is in terms of God and Bible verses and what not." As Megan and her parents demonstrate, her personality is speculative and kataphatic—head spirituality.

Due to Ben's humour, extroversion, and easy-going attitude, I had trouble picking out key qualities of any spiritual type. After rereading interview transcripts, however, I began to notice that more than any other personality, head spirituality emerged throughout the interview process.[21] For example, he identified learning as one of the key characteristics of the adult worship service and children's programs. Through discussions and artwork, Ben spoke of two people with whom he feels close to God—his mother and me (Drawing 3), for we both verbalize spirituality through questions and discussions, a common characteristic of head spirituality. He also identified the room where we met for focus groups as a place where he experiences God (Drawing 4). Ben's mother confirmed that he expresses this spiritual type: "[Ben's] more likely intellectually to say something he learned maybe more so than he'd talk about feeling stuff." Although it was difficult to discover his dominant type, Ben most clearly exhibited qualities of head spirituality.

---

[21] At other, less frequent times, I caught glimpses of a heart personality within Ben's spirituality. He made comments about how he enjoyed the music in the adult service and the "feelings" it gave him.

Heart Spirituality (Pietism)

While head spirituality is centred on the importance of words, heart spirituality places emotions and feelings at the core of one's spirituality.[22] "It is all heart—combined with the concrete, real-life stuff."[23] While concrete representations of God are encouraged, music, art, drama, and personal testimonies pointing to God are highly valued. Music is paramount to heart spirituality, confirming that "There an integral link between music and spirituality that dates back to the beginning of history… Music is a natural human expression of emotion."[24] The freedom of creativity, expression, and emotion is prized and God is seen as here and now, a present reality. According to heart spirituality, having a personal relationship with this here-and-now God is a spiritual essential.[25] While intellectualism is suspect, people of the heart stress evangelism through sharing personal experiences of God and direct communication with God.[26] "Its transformation goal is personal renewal and this personality offers the Christian community a clear witness of Christianity's message and power."[27]

The aberration of heart spirituality is pietism, the result of which is an "us versus the world" mentality and an increasing isolation from the world.[28] Extremists tend to place all people in a spiritual box in which all must have similar, highly emotional experiences.[29] Bellous suggests that other aberrations include enthusiasm and

---

[22] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 66.
[23] Ware, *Discover*, 39.
[24] Wlodarczyk, "The Effect of Music Therapy," 154. In recent years, music therapists have addressed issues of music and spirituality. Some, such as Magill, believe that spirituality is at the core of music therapy, demonstrating the important, transcendental role of music, especially for those of heart spirituality. See Magill, "Music Therapy," para. 1.
[25] O'Brien, "4 Ways," 21.
[26] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 67.
[27] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 67.
[28] Ware, *Discover*, 40.
[29] Ware, *Discover*, 88.

emotionalism, which fail to scrutinize emotional responses to spirituality or acknowledge and deal with unresolved suffering, loss, or pain.[30] Although extremely contagious, such aberrations can lead to unchecked and chaotic leadership that disenchants followers through emotional and worthless causes.[31]

Heart spirituality currently dominates North American Christianity, a trend that Ware noticed in the mid-1990s: "Americans are shifting their allegiances from speculative religion, which is often seen to be dry, mainline intellectualism, to the affective, or the 'religious with heart.'"[32] Perhaps in response to the dominance of head spirituality, our present society is thirsty for experiences involving high levels of emotion. It is not surprising, therefore, that churches emphasizing heart spirituality are growing.[33] The focus on worship and the big business of Christian music demonstrate the trends of churches to emphasize this spiritual personality and individuals to hunger for emotional transcendence.

Four children who participated in this study are of this personality. Abigail, from Northview Community Church, particularly expressed this type through her drawings and photos. After being asked to draw a picture of a place at her church where she experiences God, she drew the room where she attends a large-group children's church program (Drawing 5), "because we do songs there." She indicated that these songs help her know God and are her favourite part of Sunday morning. In her depiction of this room, she meticulously drew the aspects relating to music (guitar, keyboard, screen on which lyrics are projected) and omitted anything to do with lessons. During the

---

[30] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 67.
[31] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 67.
[32] Ware, *Discover*, 113.
[33] Ware, *Discover*, 87–8.

photography exercise, she took pictures of some audio tapes containing lyrical and instrumental worship songs "that they play [at Northview] and I feel close to God." Music is important to Abigail's spiritual life, which is typical of heart spirituality.

From Townsend Baptist Church, Owen was the only child who strongly expressed this personality. As with Abigail, music plays a key role in his spiritual life. During the social mapping exercise, he pointed to his church's sanctuary and said that this is an important place, for "they sing songs about God," to which he enjoys listening. He also identified this place as a characteristic that makes the building a church, due to the worship, singing, and prayer that take place within it. Furthermore, when I asked Owen to draw a picture of someone who helps him to feel close to God or know God, he drew his church's worship band (Drawing 6). Clearly, music is instrumental to the heart spirituality of this child.

Houston was one of two children from Sacred Heart Presbyterian Church who are of the heart personality. Throughout the focus groups, he told many stories involving music, drama, and the arts. His cherished memories at his church include Christmas pageants, choir, and other artistic events. In completing the social mapping exercise, he told me that he would like the children's choir to practice in the choir room (where the adults rehearse) and present a number of plays to the church. He feels close to God when singing songs, especially in front of others: "God feels close to me when I sing into the sanctuary." Houston's mother also spoke of his love of music, further confirming that his personality is heart spirituality.

I had difficulty pinpointing Gordon's personality, for he was quiet and, at times, seemed to copy the words and actions of his brother, making it tricky to discern what he

actually thinks and feels. After some time and analysis, however, I surmised that Gordon's personality is heart spirituality, for his emotions were a key factor in determining that church is a good and safe place for him. He knows that his church is safe because he immensely enjoys Sunday school. While looking at his photographs, Gordon identified his guitar as important to him because he enjoys music (Photograph 1). Furthermore, his affective nature surfaced when talking about how he likes "the old days… My mom tells stories [about] when she was a kid and they sound all awesome."[34] In general, Gordon feels close to God during moments of heightened feeling, thus demonstrating that his emotions drive his spiritual experiences.

Mystic Spirituality (Quietism)

At its core, mystic spirituality values "silence and hearing, connecting with [and] spending time with God so as to enjoy union with God."[35] While people of this personality speak with God, some avoid talking about God, for words fall short of describing God or spiritual experiences. Any attempt to fully explain God is believed to lose that which is precious about God.[36] Mystics agree that "The Christian Faith is mysterious to the core. It is about things and beings that ultimately can't be put into words. Language fails. And if we do definitively put God into words, we have at that very moment made God something God is not."[37] Mystics are passive, quiet, calm, and often sit in silence waiting on God. Since they see God as a mystery—"more felt than

---

[34] Gordon's fascination with bygone years could be the product of his development. David Elkind has surmised that children of this age enjoy learning about how people lived in past times. Elkind, *A Sympathetic Understanding*, 166. Regardless of this developmental characteristic, Gordon's interest in "the old days" is expressed emotionally and represented artistically, both characteristics of heart spirituality.
[35] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 64.
[36] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 69.
[37] Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, 32.

spoken"[38]—they often refer to God in non-concrete manners. People of this personality emphasize the beauty of God and creation,[39] value prayer, and tend to "push the frontiers of spirituality, enabling us to imagine what we might do if we would be open enough."[40] Mystics are likely to experience mystery-sensing[41] and, of the four personalities, they are most likely to become uncomfortable and find themselves not fitting in with organized religion.[42] The goal of this type is transformation enabling union with God.[43] Although unattainable, mystics are satisfied with the journey to discover this union.[44]

Quietism, the aberration of mystic spirituality, leads to extreme passivity and withdrawal from reality and the world, thus robbing others of the gifts that mysticism offers. Those who practice aberrations of this personality likewise experience a deficiency of the other three personalities.[45] Examples of such groups are the Essenes, the Gnostics, and several saints who practiced extreme asceticism throughout history. Mystics must be careful not to deprive others of their spiritual personality, for,

> without this mystical warmth to deepen and broaden spiritual experience, we are left with cold, hard ideas that cannot sustain us in the crises of life and do not explain the strange, supernatural encounters people have with spiritual realities, and with God, even when they say they are atheists.[46]

Of the thirteen children in my sample, three unquestionably possess mystic spirituality, while another has significant mystic tendencies. Of the former three, one

---

[38] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 68.
[39] Bellous and Sheffield, *Conversations*, 106.
[40] Ware, *Discover*, 42.
[41] Mystery-sensing is one of the three major categories of Nye and Hay's relational consciousness. See Nye and Hay, "Identifying Children's Spirituality," 148–9.
[42] Ware, *Discover*, 41. This fact was also made evident through an exercise during a class at McMaster Divinity College. After analyzing our spiritual personalities, we discovered that the majority of those who did not feel a sense of fit within their congregations were mystics.
[43] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 69.
[44] Ware, *Discover*, 41.
[45] Ware, *Discover*, 42.
[46] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 68.

comes from each church involved: from Northveiw, Caleb; from Sacred Heart, Ian; from Townsend, Laurie. Freddy, from Sacred Heart, also expressed himself in ways that allowed me to categorize him under this umbrella, even though he demonstrated a degree of balance between other personalities.

During my second focus group with Caleb, he began to discuss places where he feels safe or close to God. He told me about a "fort" near his home where he enjoys spending time. This fort, located on the peninsula of a small lake, gives Caleb a sense of peace, as does a natural pond (he referred to it as a lake) beside Northview's property,[47] where he likes to sit and watch Canadian geese. "Usually I don't feel peaceful—I feel overworked… I find that [at this pond]—I just don't know why—I just walk in there and I don't feel like I have to fear anything at all." Such special places allow Caleb to experience a transcendental peace. Caleb is a lover of mysteries and enjoys reading about Stonehenge and the Bermuda Triangle. He believes that the Bible is full of mysteries about God, but "those mysteries will have to be waited for a long time to solve." According to him, teachers at Northview focus on what is known about God, and rarely, if ever, wonder about God's mysteries. This annoys Caleb because he feels as though "they're explaining the wrong things." "I feel like they're saying that there are no mysteries of him… when I know there are." In order to satisfy his spirituality, Caleb reads the Bible to reflect upon God's mysteries, followed by quiet time in his room where he wonders about such things, sometimes for up to half a day.

At first, I was unable to determine the spiritual personality of Ian, the youngest child from Sacred Heart involved in my sample. Ian has special needs and enjoys

---

[47] The pond of which Caleb spoke is not the human-made pond at the front of Northview. Rather, this is a small, natural pond to the side of the church property.

accompanying Sacred Heart's director of Christian education as she makes her Sunday rounds, rather than participating in Sunday school. After talking with him for some time, as well as interviewing his mother, I hypothesized that Ian is a mystic. When discussing places in which the children feel safe or close to God, he stated, "My place is…in bed when I say prayers at night. It feels like God is close to me when I'm saying prayers and that's my space where I feel God the most." He identified the quiet and solitude of his bedroom and prayers as the place (and time) where he feels close to God. Theresa, Ian's mother, told me that he loves nature: "He loves to be outside. He loves going for hikes." When given his disposable camera, one of the first pictures he took was of the moon, because "I like the moon." Ian's disposition towards open spaces in the outdoors, his love of nature, and the importance of his bedtime prayers all demonstrate that he has the spiritual personality of a mystic.

Laurie clearly and frequently demonstrated her mystic personality. She identified the place where she feels close to God as a specific spot along the river across from her house. "I sit by the river and I feel close to him…because I feel really peaceful with him. I feel really peaceful there and when it's peaceful it reminds me more of God than of things around me… Most of the time I just sit alone." When she showed me a photo of this place (Photographs 2 and 3), she said, "It also makes me feel close to God because I think about all the creations that could be in the water." When it comes to the Bible, Laurie enjoys hearing about the miracles because they are "really amazing and they're exciting." Another attribute of Laurie's spiritual life that classifies her as a mystic is her focus on prayer: "God's listening to me and I feel like he's protecting [me from] all the dangers around me because I'm talking to him and he doesn't want me to get distracted…

He's just listening to me and that just makes me feel close to him." Although Laurie had difficulty verbalizing her most spiritual moments (a characteristic typical of mystics), she openly spoke about the mystical aspects of her life. Her mother verified my hypothesis about her spiritual type through a number of comments: "Laurie just seems to draw [spirituality] from everywhere." "Laurie loves it down by the river. She likes being outside. She's kind of a nature nut. And she also likes to read so she likes a quiet spot." Although she attends a conversional congregation, Laurie is certain that she was a Christian before she accepted Jesus by "welcoming him into her heart."

As I mentioned previously, Freddy seemed to exhibit mystic qualities, but his spiritual life is not dominated by this personality to the same degree as Caleb, Ian, and Laurie. Like Ian, Freddy feels particularly close to God in his bed: "I pray on my bed and it reminds me God." He took photographs of his bed, some natural places (a field, a waterfall), and pieces of art that speak of God (vines on his couch, flowers and animals, and several angels). Although he made comments demonstrating other personalities, the mystical aspects of his spirituality seemed to be most important to him.

Kingdom Spirituality (Encratism)

The final spiritual personality is the smallest group, so it is somewhat difficult to depict. Similar to its mystic neighbour, kingdom spirituality affirms that God and the spiritual life are unable to be fully expressed to others.[48] However, the apophatic nature of this spiritual type causes one to do more than pray for the world—one must seek to transform it.[49] "This is the pathway of faith in action."[50] People of this personality aim to

[48] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 68.
[49] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 68.

follow the will of God and to assertively (and aggressively) help bring forth the coming reign of God, which often causes them to "sacrifice their personal lives for their hope that the kingdom will be realized on earth."[51] Maintaining the tradition of the prophets, reformers, and liberation theologians, the transformational goal of these people is to change the oppressive, harmful, and destructive features of society, while stressing the presence and justice of God.[52] Although they can evoke embarrassment in others, these people care little about how they are viewed or judged. They are rather impulsive and avoid the restraint of rules and regulations.[53] Hence, they care less about organizational or denominational affiliations than do others.[54] Churches and spiritual directors must be cautious not to stifle their desire to transform the world, but should work to channel and interpret it for good.[55]

The distorted or unbalanced form of kingdom spirituality is encratism, which consists of a single-minded "tunnel-vision" in which those who do not espouse unbridled support for a cause are seen as outside of their world.[56] Since action is so fundamental to this personality, encratists see little use for words and are often inarticulate about their goals and theology, making it difficult to rally others in support of their vision.[57]

Only one child involved in this study demonstrated a tendency toward kingdom spirituality. Jennifer, the ten-year-old from Sacred Heart, spoke of her desire to help those in need from the beginning of the first focus group, when I asked all the children to tell me a story about one of their best memories at their church. Eager to begin, Jennifer told

---

[50] O'Brien, "4 Ways," 21.
[51] Ware, *Discover*, 43.
[52] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 68.
[53] O'Brien, "4 Ways," 22.
[54] Ware, *Discover*, 43.
[55] Ware, *Discover*, 44.
[56] Ware, *Discover*, 44.

me that she enjoyed helping with events for the homeless, specifically a free barbeque that her church hosted a few months earlier. She enjoys "the fact that I'm helping the homeless. And it's really fun doing it at the same time." Participating in such events aimed at aiding the poor of the downtown area gives Jennifer a sense of positive esteem. Since she works alongside congregants of many different age groups, her participation allows her to feel like a legitimate member of the church community.

Rather than filling up her disposable camera, Jennifer chose to capture six images, all of which were important to her. Her first photo was of her Bible, which she took because, "it's important to me and because it's God's Word and I read it sometimes." Her second and third photos, however, were different in nature, both of which were of her Operation Christmas Child shoe box (Photograph 4). Operation Christmas Child is a campaign that encourages people of all ages to bring "joy and hope to children in desperate situations around the world through gift-filled shoe boxes and the Good News of God's love."[58] By filling a box for a child in an impoverished country, Jennifer had a profound spiritual experience—one so important to her that she took two photos in order to ensure that the box was clearly captured. In her words, Operation Christmas Child is "when you give a box of gifts to a child in another country. And it helps me feel close to God because I'm giving to other people." Jennifer related helping those in need with experiencing God, a common characteristic of kingdom spirituality. While her Bible, as depicted in her first photo, provided her with the written word that grounded her practical theology, her beliefs were not complete until she put them into action through helping others.

---

[57] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 69.
[58] Samaritan's Purse, "What is Operation Christmas Child?"

During the parental interview, Jennifer's mother, Wendy, made comments further demonstrating Jennifer's spiritual personality. After sharing her view of spirituality, Wendy posited that her daughter is becoming more mature in her faith because,

> She's starting to realize that what she learns [at church] needs to have some sort of impact in what she does. And I sit with her and listen to her prayers at night and…it's changed a little bit from, you know, "Thank you for a mommy who loves me so very much"…to "Help me to make a difference in the world."

She went on to say that Jennifer has been reading books by Craig and Mark Kielburger, founder and CEO of Free the Children.[59] These books have encouraged her to raise money to build a school in an impoverished nation, a project which she has wanted to undertake for some time. While Wendy is excited about the fruits of her daughter's spirituality, she wants to keep Jennifer's goals realistic and support her "without putting up too many roadblocks." Wendy is quite aware of Jennifer's spiritual type, for she ended her discussion of her daughter's desire to help others with a short, profound statement: "That's her spirituality."

As one can see, the spiritual typology that Holmes presents and Ware and Bellous further develop helps in understanding and classifying the children involved in my research. By placing each child into his or her respective category of spiritual personality, one can examine, based upon the experiences of these children, how churches can best nurture and include children of each type. This is the focus of the next chapter.

---

[59] Craig Kielburger founded Free the Children to fight against child labour and encourage education when he was twelve-years-old. Since its founding in 1995, Free the Children has grown into "the world's largest network of children helping children through education… [and] has changed the lives of more than one million children." Kielburger and Kielburger, *Me to We*, 11.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Greg Hawkins, Executive Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, recently revealed the surprising results of a study that his church undertook. He found that every church involved in his study has congregants with different needs, yet most churches present a "one size fits all" ministry style.[1] This means that churches provide ministries, programs, services, and spiritual direction under the assumption that all people possess similar or identical spiritual needs. As my study indicates, this is not true for children. Therefore, "we have to set aside our one-size-fits-all perspective in order to educate in ways that will engage people and help them grow."[2]

What implications do the results of my research hold for local congregations? Is it possible for a church to meet the needs of children from all spiritual personalities? Should churches focus their resources on meeting the needs of one spiritual type in hopes that other congregations minister to others? These are the questions I will address in this final chapter.

---

[1] Hawkins, "Watch Greg Hawkins."
[2] Tye, *Basics*, 41.

Analysis:

Object Relations and Spiritual Personalities

Object relations theory presupposes that everyone makes meaning of people and places in unique ways. Each person experiences and makes sense of the world around them differently. As we have seen, people make meaning of spirituality and spiritual objects in four ways: through the intellect, the emotions, mystery, and actions. Yet within each spiritual type, human beings may make meaning differently than others of the same personality. Let me offer an example for clarification. Keira and Megan are of the same spiritual personality and gender, of a similar age, and attend the same church. Yet when I asked them what they thought made their congregation's building a church, their opinions differed. Keira thought the Christian people within the building had much to do with its existence as a church, while Megan supposed that the outdoor sign clearly designates it as Townsend Baptist *Church*. It is clear that these two similar individuals made meaning of my question and their church's building in different manners.

This is not to say, however, that people of the same spiritual personality hold nothing in common. On the contrary, I have discovered that there are characteristics and experiences of God and church that are shared by people of the same spiritual type. Based on the data I collected, let me offer further insight into the four spiritual personalities, especially as they are manifested in the spiritual life and experiences of children.

Head Spirituality: Nicholas, Keira, Megan, and Ben

For those who express head spirituality, the Bible is of the utmost importance to their experiences of God. Nicholas, Keira, and Megan explicitly discussed the vital

importance of the Bible, and Ben identified his VeggieTales DVDs as the only objects through which he experiences God, demonstrating that the Bible is significant to his spiritual life.[3] The value that these children place on the Bible was further disclosed when they said that their parents help them to know God by reading the Bible or assisting them in learning Bible verses.

Since the churches that these children attend (Townsend and Northview) are inclusive of children of head spirituality, most of these four children identified places throughout their churches where they experience and feel close to God. The three children from Townsend often spoke of the important roles that their congregations play in their spiritual lives. Megan and Nicholas seemed to talk about their church in this capacity more frequently than Ben and Keira. When I asked Nicholas to identify a specific place in his church where he feels close to God, he told me that this would be difficult to do, for he experiences God throughout the entire church. Clearly, Townsend is adequately meeting the needs of children whose dominant personality is head spirituality.

Ben, the only head spirituality child from Northview Church, identified the room in which we met for focus groups as the place in his church where he experiences God the most. Although this place is in his church's building, it has nothing to do with its children's ministries and Ben only occupies this space for our focus groups. According to this data, Northview may not be meeting Ben's needs, or those of other head spirituality children, as well as Townsend.

---

[3] VeggieTales, created by Phil Vischer, is a video series in which cartoon vegetables act out variations of traditional Bible stories, such as Ruth and Boaz or Joseph and his brothers. At the end of each episode, the hosts, Bob and Larry, apply the story to children's lives with the help of a Bible verse. Although Abigail placed primacy on her Bible, her VeggieTales DVDs also play an important role in her spirituality.

Church libraries seem to be of particular importance to children of head spirituality. While multiple children from this group identified this as a place in which they enjoy spending time, Caleb (mystic spirituality), was the only other person to comment on the importance of the church library.[4] During one interview, I asked each child to identify a place at church where they would like to spend time on Sunday mornings; Megan and Keira both spoke of the library. This data is consistent with the nature of head spirituality, for the spoken and written word is of central importance to people of this type.

When it comes to the people with whom they feel close to God, these children identified those who talk about God, especially Sunday school teachers. For example, Keira told me about a past Sunday school teacher who "explained everything very well so she never had to go over it any time… She was very nice and she helps us learn about God." Megan discussed the vital role that Sunday school teachers have had in her life, while demonstrating this by drawing a picture of one teacher, Mr. Donaldson (Drawing 7), holding items he used for lessons. Megan and her parents spoke highly of her schoolteacher, Mr. Lane, for "Megan's getting some very good, quality learning… through him." Nicholas learns a great deal about God through his homeschool classes, so he spoke of his parents as those who impact his spiritual life. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, Ben identified his mother and me and those who help him feel close to God, for we talk with him about God, thus nurturing his spiritual personality. From this data, it is evident that children whose spirituality is dominated by the head are most influenced by

[4] Caleb also spoke of the library as a place of importance at his church, for which there are two possible explanations. Perhaps he was demonstrating a sense of balance in his spirituality by discussing his love of books and the library. On the other hand, however, he loves to read mystery novels, which exhibits his

those who talk about God and help them understand the Bible. For the children from Townsend Church, Sunday school teachers are adequately meeting their intellectual and spiritual needs. For Ben, his mother and I—those outside of the church's children's ministries—were most important, which also reveals that his church may not be completely inclusive of children who primarily express head spirituality.

Let me summarize the spiritual needs of children of this personality. According to the gathered data, these children need to be surrounded and influenced by people who can adequately teach them about God through lessons and conversations. The Bible is of central importance, and those who read the Bible with these children have a profound impact on their spirituality. The places where they are apt to experience God include those in which God is spoken of, the Bible is taught, and books are read, especially Sunday school classrooms and church libraries. These children readily demonstrate Bellous' description of this spiritual personality: "Scripture is highly valued. Words and accuracy are important… The transformational goal is personal understanding."[5]

Heart Spirituality: Houston, Gordon, Owen, and Abigail

As I mentioned in the last chapter, music is central to the spirituality of the heart. This proved to be true for those children involved in my research, for all four heart children place high value on their experiences with religious music. While Gordon does not seem to cherish music as readily as the others, he demonstrated the value he places on music through a photo he took of his guitar.

---

dominant mystic spirituality. Either way, he was the only child that was not of head spirituality to talk about the importance of the library.

[5] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 66.

The places where these children hear religious music at church is important to them. For Abigail, this place is her children's church room, where she sings songs with other young people. For Owen, the sanctuary is important because the adults (and visiting children) sing worship songs there.[6] Houston identified the choir room, the sanctuary, and the summer children's church room as those places where music feeds his spirituality. Gordon was eager to admit that he wants to spend more time with his family in the sanctuary, where music is heard.

The kataphatic nature of heart spirituality, which is shared with people of head spirituality, was manifested through the children's emphasis on the Bible. Since God is revealed through Scripture, three of the four children identified their Bible as an important object in their lives. According to Owen, the Bible "helps me experience more about God and learn." Abigail took a photo of her Bible because it helps her to know God. As with their head neighbors, these children emphasize the role of the Bible in their spiritual life.

According to these children, corporate worship—which often stresses affective responses—is a necessary component of church life. When the children and I discussed what they felt was important for visitors to know about their church, most spoke of worship. While Abigail explicitly answered by saying, "there's worship," Owen pointed to the worship centre on a map of his church, saying, "Here is [important]...because they sings songs about God." During another interview, Owen ruminated on what it was that makes Townsend's building a church, rather than a school. Although his brother thought what made it a church is, "we talk about [God]," Owen disagreed:

---

[6] It is interesting to note that Owen does not spend a significant amount of time in the regular services of his church, yet these rare moments were vital to his spiritual life.

> O: Well, there are Christian schools and maybe in Christian schools they talk about God. [The church] could be bigger than a school. It does have a gym, like schools do. Upstairs—the place where there's a stage and the lighting board.
>
> D: The worship centre? Do you think that's what makes it a church?
>
> O: Yeah, because it's called a worship centre and we worship God and learn about God.

Evidently, acts of worship, which these churches associate with emotive responses to music, are vital to the life of children whose personality is heart spirituality.

Since Christian culture is currently dominated by heart spirituality, all three churches involved in this study emphasize and nurture this spiritual personality in their ministries and programs. As such, every child who shared this spiritual type expressed fondness for their church programs and leaders.

During the social mapping exercise, I gave each child an opportunity to describe any changes they would like to make to the physical location of people within their congregations (as outlined in Chapter Two). While most made changes to their church's demographics, two children did not. Abigail and Owen, both of whom are of the heart personality, are satisfied with where children and adults reside on Sunday mornings. This demonstrates that their churches are meeting their spiritual needs through the current structure of Sunday programs and ministries, since they are geared toward those who share their spiritual personality.

All four children also identified their church leaders as people who help them to feel close to or experience God. Both children from the Presbyterian congregation spoke of their church's minister. Through a drawing, Houston also identified Sacred Heart's Director of Christian Education as an important person (Drawing 8). Abigail had fond

things to say about past and present Sunday school teachers. Owen specified his church's worship band and his Sunday school teachers as those who help him experience God, but expressed a general feeling that many people at his church impact his spiritual life. Since many of the leaders and ministers at these churches emphasize heart spirituality through their respective ministries, it is not surprising that these people nurture children of this type.

According to these four children, there are certain objects, places, and people that are important to those of heart spirituality. Since music is such a vital component of this personality, the spaces in which the congregations make music are important, and children enjoy spending time in these places. The Bible, as a means by which God is revealed, is valued by these children. Worship also takes a central place in the spiritual life of these four children. Since all their churches emphasize worship during their Sunday services, these children focus on this action as a vital characteristic of their churches and their experiences with God. Those who lead the children through affective exercises, like corporate worship, are those who nurture and impact their spirituality.

Mystic Spirituality: Laurie, Ian, Freddy, and Caleb

Gandhi once said, "In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light."[7] This is unquestionably true for the four mystic children, each of whom values quiet[8] as part of their spiritual experience. While Freddy demonstrated this through a picture of a field where he quietly sits and listens to the leaves in the wind, Ian told me

[7] Taken from the online quote database "The Quotations Page," accessible at http://www.quotationspage.com.

that he feels close to God in his bathroom and bedroom, places where he spends time by himself. As disclosed in Chapter Three, Caleb enjoys sitting beside a pond near his church and spending time at his fort near the lake in his neighbourhood. In both of these places, he feels a sense of peace and quiet that he does not receive elsewhere. Laurie spoke of a place near a river where she loves to sit in quiet solitude, looking at the animals and water. Of this place, she says, "I feel really peaceful there and when it's peaceful it reminds me more of God." She also likes sitting on the beach of Lake Huron, where she can quietly listen to the wind rustling the leaves. Quiet, a common characteristic of mystics, is important to these children, each of whom has a "special spot" where they spend quiet time and receive spiritual nourishment.[9]

An emphasis on prayer is another common characteristic, although each mystic child spoke of this practice in unique ways. Laurie showed that she valued prayer by taking a photo of her sister's hands in a typical prayer formation (Photograph 5). Freddy also used his camera to demonstrate the importance of prayer through a picture of an armchair in his house where he likes to sit and pray (Photograph 6). Upon asking Ian if he has a special place where he feels particularly close to God, he replied, "My place is…in my bed when I say prayers at night. It feels like God is close to me when I'm saying prayers and that's my space where I feel God the most." Caleb was the only child who did not speak about his prayer life in great detail, yet the other three children where quite overt in their appreciation and love of prayer.

---

[8] I intentionally use the word quiet, rather than silence, to refer to this non-verbal aspect of mystic spirituality. While silence can be imposed from an outside source, the motivation for quiet is inward. See Berryman, "The Nonverbal Nature," 17.

[9] Through his qualitative research, Tobin Hart also noticed that some children have special places that "provide a kind of spiritual nourishment." Hart, "Spiritual Experiences," 165.

As one may have noticed, the natural world is of significance for these children. During my last interview with the girls from Townsend, Laurie made a point of saying, "I also like the animals, but just everywhere, in trees and stuff. So basically, nature." Her mother verified this: "[Laurie] likes to be outside. She's kind of a nature nut." This was a sentiment that Ian's mother also expressed regarding his preferences, which was confirmed through his words and photos, one of which captured the moon. As previously mentioned, Freddy likes to sit outside in a field near his home, listening to the sounds of nature, the sounds of God. Caleb loves animals, so he enjoys sitting near bodies of water (near home and church) and watching the wildlife. It is clear that each of the mystic children spoke fondly of the role of nature in their spiritual lives, demonstrating that nature is "a special locus of divine revelation and a place for humans to encounter God."[10]

Since these four children enjoy spending time out of doors, it should not be surprising that most of them prefer to be in open spaces. Unfortunately, three of them informed me that they feel crowded at their churches. Spaces like Sunday school classrooms, which exist to nurture the spiritual life of children, often make mystics uncomfortable. Referring to different rooms at her church, Laurie exemplified this feeling by saying, "I like the big [rooms] because whenever I'm in the little ones I feel all shoved up—like I'm being crammed inside of a locker." Ian also identified his preference for open spaces by placing numerous children and adults outside of the church building during the social mapping exercise (Social Map 1).[11]

---

[10] Baker and Mercer, *Lives to Offer*, 55.

[11] Upon my asking Ian to change the social map in any way he would like, he moved many of the adults and children from inside the building to the outside because he thought they should have room to run around with each other.

The final characteristic that these children hold in common is the importance of their families in their spiritual lives. Through their photographs and artwork, each identified their family members as those with whom they feel safe or close to God. While Caleb captured photographs of his parents and sister, he also drew a picture of his father (Drawing 9). Ian took photos of his mother and grandfather and began to paint a picture of his brother, until he became distracted. Laurie photographed her mother, father, and two siblings and meticulously painted a picture of her parents (Drawing 10). Freddy captured a picture of his brother and painted an image of key spiritual leaders in his life, including his parents (Drawing 11). Although it is unusual for these children to spend long periods of time at church with their families, these are the individuals with whom the children are most apt to experience God.

To summarize, mystics value places with plenty of room where they can quietly spend time with God. Since they value the natural world, such places are often outside. Many of them feel crowded and uncomfortable in their church classrooms. Prayer is a vital practice for these children, which is often manifested in quiet, private ways. Finally, their families are the key influences of the spiritual lives of these children. Such data demonstrates that some of the churches involved, especially Townsend and Northview, are not providing places of inclusivity in which mystics feel a sense of fit and belonging.

Kingdom Spirituality: Jennifer

Since Jennifer was the only child to express kingdom spirituality as her dominant personality, I cannot compare her experiences to other children of the same type.

Therefore, in this section I will discuss, according to her, what is important to children of this type.

Jennifer's spiritual personality includes a few characteristics that link her to other spiritual types. Like mystics, she values an active prayer life, although her prayers are frequently responses to disaster and injustice.[12] To her, what makes Sacred Heart a church is the prayer that goes on within its walls. Jennifer also has a strong appreciation of worship expressed through music, likening her to heart spirituality. While she said that singing in a Christmas pageant was a fond memory of her church experiences, her mother also told me that she loves to sing in the church's children's choir. Finally, the speculative nature of her spiritual type was expressed through a focus on the Bible and learning about God. Even though she only took six photographs, she was determined to capture a picture of her Bible. The importance she places on learning about God was further demonstrated by the fact that she thinks a characteristic that makes the building a church is, "we discuss [God's] word and what it means." These spiritual qualities, while not of the utmost importance to her spiritual life, are valuable to her.

When it comes to the critical aspects of her spirituality, three were repeatedly manifested. First, Jennifer expressed a deep appreciation for her church's intergenerational community, which her mother confirmed by disclosing how much Jennifer loves to worship and volunteer alongside a diverse group of Christians. In Jennifer's own words, this community is important, for there are "lots of people that take

[12] A recent Australian study discovered that many children of Jennifer's age use prayer "to respond to world events such as disaster, poverty, and war." Mountain, "Prayer," 299.

care of you if anything happens." She can enjoy time at her church because she has a sort of "extended family"[13] in her church community that looks out for her.

While she appreciates being cared for, Jennifer's kingdom spirituality is most vividly expressed through the care she shows to others, especially through acts of social justice. Her favourite memory of her church, giving food to homeless people, gave her satisfaction knowing that "I'm helping the homeless and it's really fun doing it at the same time." Through her photographs, she expressed the important role of her involvement in Operation Christmas Child, for, "it helps me feel close to God because I'm giving to other people." Furthermore, when I asked her where she would like to go if she could be anywhere on a Sunday morning, she said she wants to go to Africa on a missions trip. To quote her mother, "she's starting to realize that what she learns [at church] needs to have some sort of impact in what she does."

For Jennifer, being in a local community and acting for the betterment of the global community is expressed through communion, a ritual which the children and adults at Sacred Heart celebrate together. She feels especially connected to God during this ritual. Even though she sees other people talking or moving around during this special time, Jennifer takes time to pray "for what communion's about." For her, the sacrifice of Jesus is not to be taken lightly and must influence the sacrifices that she makes in order to help others.

According to this data, Jennifer experiences God through actions of justice, rather than through particular places. People, however, have a great impact on her spiritual life, for her membership in her church family allows her to feel loved and cared for, and is physically manifested through intergenerational works and communion.

---

[13] Allen, "Nurturing Children's Spirituality in Intergenerational," 270.

Implications and Recommendations

"People come to experience God and learn about him in unique and personal ways."[14] Therefore, the means through which churches minister to children must take into account the different spiritual personalities through which they can come to know and experience God. This is done through the activity of including.

Since "children cannot flourish unless they fit to a satisfying degree,...a feeling of fit is important for spiritual growth."[15] Therefore, churches must intentionally[16] work to create environments in which children of head, heart, mystic, and kingdom spiritualities are included and experience a satisfying degree of fit. Bellous writes,

> Inclusive teachers [and churches] provide for the study of words, so that children become precise and make cognitive gains; offer opportunities to learn through feeling and open up occasions for telling personal stories and explaining what they mean, using the arts; allow time for silence, wonderment and imagination to set the agenda for interpreting experience; and bring children into settings where they can take specific, focused action aimed at improving the world.[17]

The research of Karen-Marie Yust[18] and the testimonies of children involved in this study demonstrate that, although churches attempt to create spiritual environments, many miss the mark and fail to include children of all personalities. Those who do not feel a sense of fit are at risk of keeping their spiritual experiences and sensibilities private, thus robbing others of the richness of spiritual diversity.[19] Including, therefore, is

---

[14] Anthony, "Putting Children's Spirituality," 33.
[15] Bellous, "Five Classroom Activities," 100.
[16] Mercer et. al. provide an important comment regarding intentionality: "intentionality alone does not guarantee a particular effect in relation to practice... However, when congregations do exercise intentionality in their practices with children, they create 'webs of meaning' and action that form a more comprehensive matrix to nurture children." Mercer et. al., "Children in Congregations," 252.
[17] Bellous, "Five Classroom Activities," 102.
[18] See Yust, "Creating an Idyllic World."
[19] Bellous, "Five Classroom Activities," 102.

vital for environments in which "every child who wants might learn to dance"[20] with God along the spiritual journey.

Let me exemplify this using the three churches involved in my research. Sacred Heart Presbyterian Church, with its artwork, rituals, and symbolism, its focus on biblical teaching, its emphasis on music and worship, and its opportunities to serve the community, has created an environment that is relatively inclusive of all four personalities. As such, the children from this church expressed high degrees of love and appreciation for their congregation. Northview Community Church, on the other hand, primarily ministers to those children of head and heart personalities, placing emphasis on the latter. While Abigail and Ben are reasonably satisfied with their church experiences, Caleb expressed dissatisfaction as to the lack of mystery surrounding God in the church's teaching. What matters most to his mystic personality is excluded from the church's overt or covert curriculum. Townsend Baptist Church also takes great measures to include children from the head and heart quadrants. Recently, they have also taken steps to include mystics,[21] but they still have much to develop before being completely inclusive of these people. Unfortunately, any major inclusion of kingdom spirituality seems to be lacking. In order to effectively minister to the spiritual needs of all children, churches must develop spaces, programs, and leaders that include and nurture all spiritual personalities and provide all children with a sense of fit.

---

[20] Cooey, "That Every Child," 196. In this article, Paula Cooey discusses dance as a metaphor for love. Here I use it to symbolize a dance with God in which one experiences intimate spiritual relationality with the Almighty.

[21] During an interview, Megan's parents spoke extensively about Townsend's new vision and message. The church is espousing a message that says, "it's alright not to know everything. Humans aren't meant to understand it all." This message, which is inclusive of mystics, was most clearly demonstrated through a recent sermon of which Megan's parents told me. I saw little evidence, however, that this vision and message has been espoused or demonstrated to the church's children.

In this final section, I offer advice as to how churches can provide environments and ministries that are inclusive of children of all spiritual personalities. While many ministry models and ideas exist, I will present generalized suggestions about those which I believe to be most effective for nurturing children's spirituality. Although ministry models and techniques which prove to be effective with one congregation could be inappropriate or unproductive at another, I believe that these suggestions, when employed, work to create environments of intentional inclusivity.[22]

Head Spirituality

At the core of head spirituality is the Bible—the revealed word of God. Without a focus on the Bible, people of this type believe that children's ministry is "merely morality training."[23] It goes without saying, therefore, that children of this personality can be included through the cognitive study of the Bible through reading, study, and memorization.[24] The task of the teacher is to "translate the great truths of Christian faith into terms that can be both understood and experienced by boys and girls as they grow up in the Christian community."[25] From reading Bible stories[26] to making narratives come alive[27] through drama, the cognitive abilities of the child must be stimulated through teaching that helps one increase in knowledge of the Bible and God.

---

[22] In the sections that follow, I will devote more attention to mystic and kingdom personalities, for these two are usually more overlooked than head and heart. From my experience, many churches are adequately meeting the needs of these latter spiritual types.
[23] Fowler, *Rock-Solid Kids*, 42.
[24] Carlson and Crupper, "Instructional-Analytic," 130.
[25] Richards, *A Theology*, 123.
[26] For an excellent discussion on the use of Bible stories, as well as various types of stories, see Yust, *Real Kids*, 41–67
[27] For a discussion of such stories, see Feinberg, "Making Stories Come Alive."

Words matter to children of this type.[28] Therefore, teachers must ensure that their words are precise and accurate, so children can develop positive, cogent understandings of presented material. If lessons involve complex or ambiguous terms and concepts, children may become dissatisfied and confused. One must also ensure that the material is taught in ways that are appropriate to the cognitive abilities of children.[29]

Since children of this spiritual type focus on understanding God and the Bible, many may ask questions throughout and after the lesson or ministry. When this happens, the children may be experiencing cognitive dissonance[30] and require clarification or further instruction to achieve balanced understanding. Teachers should acknowledge questions or comments and offer clear and precise answers. Should a teacher be unable to answer a question, he or she can explore possible answers together with the inquisitive child.

Finally, churches can provide an inclusive environment for these children by ensuring that their young congregants have access to a wide range of resources available at church libraries. For these children, "*reading is the avenue of God's speech*" (emphasis hers)[31] and reading beyond the Bible is vital to formation. By accessing a resourceful church library, children can satisfy their spiritual needs through reading about God, the church, and other subjects. Furthermore, adults should take time to read with the children to whom they minister, for through this practice they can joyfully learn together.

---

[28] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 66.

[29] Several scholars have written on teaching according to the cognitive abilities of children, one of which is Cathy Stonehouse. See Stonehouse, *Joining Children*, 73–84

[30] Cognitive dissonance refers to the experience of encountering ideas that conflict with one's existing thoughts and makings of meaning or a gap between one's actions and one's espoused theories. Since a common reaction to cognitive dissonance is shame, teachers and leaders must strive to help those experiencing dissonance to positively transform one's understandings. This is not always an easy task. See Farber-Robertson, *Learning While Leading*, 10.

[31] Ware, *Discover*, 86.

"Children are a gift. Books are a gift. Engaging both can be an immense pleasure in life."[32]

Heart Spirituality

"Music and children are a natural combination."[33] Such a statement is particularly true for children of the heart personality. To be inclusive of such children, ministries must intentionally include elements of music.

Choosing music for children, however, is not a task to be taken lightly. Rather, music guides one's emotions and theology and has transcendental power beyond comprehension. Music has the unique ability to penetrate multiple dimensions of human life—the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.[34] Since it is so vital to this spiritual type, let me offer a few brief suggestions for using music with children. First, do not be limited by contemporary Christian music fads; there is a richness in hymnody and traditional music that speaks to children as well as adults. Second, choose songs with lyrics that are simple enough to be understood by children, but espouse a rich and accurate theology. Use songs with repeated phrases so children can rely on their memory rather than reading or vocabulary skills.[35] Finally, choose songs that are easy to sing and are free of complex rhythms and melodies.[36] Although it would be difficult to choose songs that meet all of these suggestions, it is wise to critically examine the music used with children to ensure that at least one or two of these suggestions are taken.

---

[32] Miller-McLemore, *In the Midst*, 158.
[33] Ng and Thomas, *Children in the Worshipping*, 103.
[34] Ng and Thomas, *Children in the Worshipping*, 103.
[35] Ng and Thomas, *Children in the Worshipping*, 106.
[36] Hopkins, "How to Lead Music," 116.

To adequately nurture the heart spirituality of children, churches must offer opportunities for children to participate in authentic worship. "Because worship is, usually quite subtly, a strong formative agent, we must be sure that what we do in worship nurtures the kind of people we want our children and ourselves to be as church."[37] As participants in worship, children can be involved in formal congregational worship and informal, small-group worship, the latter of which "reveals the inner spiritual lives to both children and adults."[38] Regardless of how churches provide children with opportunities to worship, they must guard against excessive emotionalism, especially with children of this spiritual personality.[39]

Mystic Spirituality

To be inclusive of mystics, church ministries must allow children to experience prayer. The practice of praying can take many forms, so children should be free to pray in diverse ways, rather than limited to "fold your hands, close your eyes, and repeat after me." Children can be given opportunities to lead prayers in manners they prefer, including quiet, inner prayer. When such practices occur, mystics will be more apt to experience God within their church ministries.

Of all the children involved in this research, the four mystic children seemed to be most affected by their church environments, though often in negative ways. Since they felt crowded, churches must work to provide spacious areas for these children. If there is no room for such spaces indoors, leaders are advised to allow children time outside, where they are not enclosed by walls. Allowing the children time out-of-doors can also

---

[37] Dawn, *Is it a Lost Cause?*, 66
[38] Allen, "Nurturing Children's Spirituality in Intergenerational," 269.

satisfy their desire to experience God through nature, a need that cannot be fully met in a classroom or gymnasium.

Children of this spiritual personality must be provided with worship and ministries that "transform ordinary time and space into sacred time and space."[40] This can be accomplished through quiet, a slow pace, and wonder. Although often overlooked, quiet is a legitimate spiritual practice through which one can connect to God, for "In the silence and quietness of heart a devout soul profiteth much…that she may be so much the more familiar with God."[41] Rather than an empty silence, mystic spirituality is nurtured through the quietness of full silence.[42] Dallas Willard goes so far as to say that only through such practices can one experience "life-transforming concentration upon God."[43]

Second, the pace of ministries should be slow, not rushing the child, but allowing time for reflection.[44] Without such a pace and rhythm, children are in danger of passing by "great things without ever being able to grasp, interiorize, and make these realities [their] own."[45] Although a flashy, fast-paced ministry may entertain children, it can do so to the detriment of mystics.

Overall, ministries that meet the needs of mystics focus on God with mystery, wonder, and awe.[46] Rather than giving answers, teachers must wonder together with the children, for when the teachers wonder, it allows the children time and space to do likewise.[47] This ministry style respects the thoughtfulness of children and avoids

---

[39] Dawn, *Is it a Lost Cause?*, 70.
[40] Stewart and Berryman, *Young Children*, 13.
[41] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, 41.
[42] May and Ratcliff, "Children's Spiritual Experiences," 158.
[43] Willard, *The Spirit*, 164.
[44] May, "Contemplative-Reflective," 70.
[45] Cavalletti, *The Religious Potential*, 60.
[46] Stewart and Berryman, *Young Children*, 13.
[47] Berryman, *Godly Play*, 62.

presenting a "kiddie Gospel," which focuses on token answers and moralisms.[48] In order to create appropriate spaces for mystery and wonder, churches should include symbols and rituals in their ministries, for these elements allow children to reflect on that which is transcendent and existential and "provide formational stability and familiarity."[49]

When all these characteristics—silence, a slow pace, wonder, and symbols and rituals—are present, an intentional environment that nurtures mystic spirituality will be created.[50] Such an environment maximizes the potential for children to become creatively engaged, experience God, and have meaningful insights about the spiritual.[51]

Kingdom Spirituality

When it comes to prepackaged and marketed curricula, few (if any) satisfy the spiritual needs of kingdom spirituality. While many ministry leaders and educators believe that "application-oriented teaching is important,"[52] such curricula often focus on individual choices and personal morals, failing to nurture the world-changing drive of kingdom children.

This is not an excuse, however, to omit kingdom characteristics from children's ministries. Prayer, as demonstrated by Jennifer, is vital to this personality. The applications surrounding prayer that I outlined while discussing ministry with mystic children can also be applied here. I would like to add that prayer with children of this spiritual type must go beyond asking God for a good day and thanking the Lord for pets.

---

[48] The term "kiddie Gospel" was coined by Gretchen Wolff Pritchard in her important book, *Offering the Gospel to Children.*

[49] May, "Contemplative-Reflective," 63.

[50] Since this type of ministry, often called the "contemplative-reflective model," is often absent from church ministries, I would like to offer a good resource for practitioners who would like to incorporate aspects of this ministry style: Berryman, *Teaching Godly Play.*

[51] Stonehouse, "Knowing God," 38.

Rather, some prayer must be dedicated to asking God to alleviate the suffering of the oppressed, diseased, and poor, and soliciting aid in changing the world.

Children can be agents of change in the world. "Their dependence on love and care keeps them open to an ever new and surprising future,"[53] one in which children are able to make a difference. Although often unnoticed, the achievements of children can be seen across the globe.[54] Craig Kielburger, for example, began an organization to stop child labour and promote education when he was only twelve-years old. Speaking from experience, he writes, "At first, no one believed that children could actually make a difference. But they can. We proved it."[55]

Churches must provide children with opportunities to make decisions, promote change, and help those in need in their own communities and around the world. Although they, like adults, can make poor choices, churches must risk giving children the power to make decisions.[56] Jennifer's church, for example, allows her to work alongside others at their barbeques for the homeless and participate in Operation Christmas Child. [57] When it comes to the content of ministries, kingdom spirituality can be nurtured by "promoting a sense of connectedness to develop tolerance, empathy and compassion."[58] Furthermore, ministries can work to teach children about the world's social injustices as a way of empowering them to make a difference. Too often, adults want to protect children from hearing about such evils for fear that they may become afraid or depressed. Doing so,

---

[52] Miller and Staal, *Making Your Children's Ministry*, 73.
[53] Herzog, *Children and Our Global Future*, 165.
[54] Herzog, *Children and Our Global Future*, 164.
[55] Kielburger and Kielburger, *Take Action*, vi.
[56] Herzog, *Children and Our Global Future*, 166.
[57] Studies have shown that children such as Jennifer, who are involved in their local congregations in such ways, are likely to care about issues of social justice and responsibility, have a sense of being cared for by those in the community, and have positive relationships with adults. See Roehlkepartain and Patel, "Congregations," 326.

however, can rob children of the capacity to think critically and deal with their experiences,[59] and can lead to "mean-world syndrome."[60] Marc Kielburger recommends that children turn their anger and frustration into action.[61] Such an attitude allowed his brother, Craig, to free children from socially constructed conceptions that say they must be seen and not heard and that they are too young to make a difference.[62] Rather than sheltering them completely from injustice in the world, churches should teach children about God's desire for them to bring about changes for the betterment of the global community. This is the role of the church in nurturing children of kingdom spirituality: to encourage and teach them to work for the betterment of the world, always reminding them that they can make a difference.

In this section, I have offered advice to churches seeking to nurture the spirituality of all children. I have presented a number of ideas and ministry models that teachers and pastors should examine and evaluate based on their church's needs. While I fail to see how any one of these models or practices can be inclusive of children of all spiritual personalities, when aspects of each work conjunctively, every child present can feel a sense of inclusivity and fit within the spiritual environment. Yet a balance of these different tactics must be presented so that children do not become so embedded in their personality that they fall into one of its aberrations. If such a balanced tension exists, children will be more likely to develop what Holmes refers to as a sensible and sensitive

---

[58] de Souza, "Educating for Hope," 173.
[59] Erricker, "Against the Protection," 5.
[60] Mean-world syndrome is a theory posited by George Gerbner that argues that a child's increasing awareness of violence and destruction through television and films "results in a reduced sensitivity to the consequences of violence along with an increased sense of vulnerability and dependence" (Gerbner, "Reclaiming," para. 9). I believe that intentionally discussing violence and social evils and examining ways to alleviate such problems can positively result in the ability to critically think about violence in the media, rather than becoming fearful of a world that is perceived as mean and dangerous.
[61] Kielburger and Kielburger, *Take Action*, viii.

spirituality: "'Sensibility' defines for us that sensitivity to the ambiguity of styles of prayer [and spirituality] and the possibilities for a creative dialogue within the person and within the community as it seeks to understand the experience of God and its meaning for our world."[63] Such balanced sensitivity is a mark of churches that provide all children with a healthy sense of inclusivity and fit.

[62] Kielburger, "Free the Children," 98–9.
[63] Holmes, *A History*, 5.

CONCLUSION

Including All Children

Carl Jung once wrote, "The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases."[1] This is true for those children involved in this study—each expressed different manners through which they came to know and experience God. Yet within this diversity, four legitimate spiritual avenues were demonstrated: the path of the intellect, the way of the emotions, the journey of mystery, and the road to justice.

As I reflect back on what I have discovered about the mystery of children's spirituality, I cannot help but feel a sense of wonder. Wonder regarding the theological truths professed from the mouths of these thirteen children.[2] Wonder regarding the children's personal experiences of transcendence. Wonder regarding the spiritual diversity that God has given to human beings.

With so many things to wonder, I have come to realize that this study is not the end of a journey; it is a starting point. It is a chance for researchers to begin to seriously consider spiritual personalities and children. While there is a growing body of research into the spiritual life of children, little has been said about spiritual types and personalities. Scholars have demonstrated the importance of narrative, wonder, worship, music, and many other practices that can nurture the life of children, but there has been

---

[1] Jung, *Modern Man*, 69.

no discussion as to how these vital practices can impact children of different spiritual personalities. It is becoming widely known (in academic circles) that children should be included in the life of the church, but I am not aware of any studies that demonstrate how this can be done in a way that is inclusive of children from all types.

This study is also a starting point for practitioners. It is an invitation for churches and ministers to begin including children of all four types, so that each one feels a satisfactory sense of fit within their congregations. This is of the utmost importance, for "unless their spiritual life is prioritized and nurtured, [children] will miss out on much of the meaning, purpose and joy of life."[3] Children who do not feel included in their churches risk becoming dull to their spiritual needs and can lose the spiritual vitality that is necessary for a healthy world view that can sustain oneself through the trials of life.[4]

Bellous has written that "children's well-being indicates a society's overall health."[5] A church that fails to nurture the spirituality of all of its children is not a spiritually healthy congregation. But including head, heart, mystic and kingdom children is difficult and time-consuming. As a healthy human body is only maintained through intentional and difficult work (proper eating habits, exercise, etc.), "effective ministry to children…demands substantial energy, time and interaction."[6] Yet the yield from such work is well worth the effort.

Although I have offered ideas as to how churches can create environments that successfully nurture children of all spiritual personalities, I know that further implications and reflections are needed. This, however, is advice that I cannot offer. Since each

---

[2] See Ps 8:2.
[3] Barna, *Transforming Children*, 29.
[4] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 21, 26.
[5] Bellous, *Educating Faith*, 10.

church, minister, child, and environment is unique, a church's ministries must be individually tailored to effectively include every child in its context. Even though this can be difficult and time-consuming work, it is important and imperative to the spiritual flourishing of children. Only when an environment is created that nurtures and speaks to the inquisitiveness of head spirituality, the emotive nature of heart spirituality, the wonder and astonishment of mystic spirituality, and the crusade against injustice that is kingdom spirituality, can a church honestly say that it is including all children.

---

[6] Barna, *Transforming Children*, 129.

APPENDIX A

AN OVERVIEW OF COLLECTED DATA

	Positive Church Memory	**Negative Church Memory**	**Social Mapping**	**What Makes the Building a Church**
Nicholas	Nothing at first; meeting a new SS teacher	None		God; people talk about God
Keira	Having chicken pox for Easter play	Forgetting a line and freezing during Christmas play		Worship centre; outdoor cross; baptismal tank; it's filled with Christians
Megan	Helping her mother with Vacation Bible School	None		Cross; sign says "Townsend Church;" worship centre
Ben	Playing with toy castle in JK/SK room; 8-day teaching series; meeting friends at church	None		Faith
Houston	Sacred Heart's Christmas pageant	Seeing an elderly man fall down the stairs during choir rehearsal		People learn about God and what God's done
Gordon	Thanksgiving	None		People talk about God; big bell
Owen	At midweek program, being in places where he is not usually allowed		No changes	Worship centre
Abigail	Meeting new children each year; being a flower girl for cousin's wedding	Losing a ring at church	No changes	People; sign; classes
Freddy	First coming to Sacred Heart	Having a leader at church tell him to "chill" before the Christmas pageant		People talk about God; sing hymns; it's big; there are places where people praise God
Ian	Halloween	None		
Laurie	Meeting new leader during the first year she can remember	Getting lost at church a number of times		If it wasn't a church, it should be a school; people make it a church
Caleb	Church fair	None	Children should be able to see their parents, if they like	Structure of building; lesson material; pictures
Jennifer	Helping with free barbeque for homeless	None		People pray to God and learn about God and discuss God; sanctuary

Notes:
SS = Sunday school
CE = Christian education
( ) = comment from parents

☐ = head spirituality
☐ = heart spirituality
☐ = mystic spirituality
☐ = kingdom spirituality

	Important People	Important Places	Important Objects	Influence of Family
Nicholas	Parents; family; SS teachers	Marineland; house; SS classroom; everywhere at church; worship centre; (cottage)	Light-up Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus; Bible; Nintendo DS and games	Reads the Bible; prays; (Christian homeschool curriculum)
Keira	Researcher; siblings; parents; SS teachers; children's pastor; (grandparents)	Church gym; parents' bed; back yard; kitchen; house	Candy; squirrels; hot tub; dolls; pet fish; books; Bible	Refers to Bible verses; (incidental discussions; devotions)
Megan	Mr. Lane; SS teachers; parents friend from school; church friends	School; school classroom; living room; church elevator; bedroom; library; sanctuary; house; lake near church; church	Animals; blackboard with Bible verses on it; dog	Helps her learn Bible verses for school; read devotions; pray with her; she helps her mom with SS
Ben	Parents; researcher; neighbours; (grandparents; friends from school)	Closet; room where focus groups were held; worship room; treehouse; school; portable at school; bedroom	VeggieTales DVDs; trees in autumn	Ask questions; (watch VeggieTales; music)
Houston	Minister; CE director; grandmother; God	His heart; church; chapel; sanctuary; (another church's Christmas pageant)	Bed; Bible	Read together; (pray at bedtime)
Gordon	Sister; minister; (mother)	Church; open field; school; (cottage)	Sky; blanket; stuffed animal; guitar; angel ornaments; awards; books; church craft; pictures of olden days	Give him instructions about the Bible; play games with him
Owen	Worship band; a lot of people at church; SS teachers; father	Church; SS classroom; worship centre; house; (cottage)	Bible; light-up Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus	Read the Bible; (Christian homeschool curriculum; pray)
Abigail	SS teachers; parents; grandparents; aunt and uncle	Bedroom; house; worship room; homeschool classroom; church; aunt/uncle's house	Bible; bed; Christian audio tapes; VeggieTales DVDs; Christian art; angel statue; books; cross; crèche	Talks about God; (midweek program at Townsend; Odyssey audio tapes)
Freddy	CE director; minister; parents; Gordon; God; Jesus; people in the Bible;	Room in which focus groups occurred; church; sanctuary; house; open field; grandma's house; porch; (cottage)	Stained-glass widows; bed; prayer chair; toys; couch; poppy; angel ornaments; flowers; animals; pictures in focus group room; coaster; Bible	Let him go to church; talk about God and put angels on the tree at Christmastime, read the Bible with him
Ian	Houston; mother; strangers; friends; teachers; (CE director)	Washroom; church; church garden; school; bedroom; (outdoors)	Moon; toy cars; Yu-Gi-Oh card; dogs; hamster	(bedtime prayers)
Laurie	Parents; Keira; people who run SS; pastors at church; (grandparents)	Riverbank; church gym; kitchen; house; near Lake Huron; worship centre	Pet fish; bed; prayers; WWJD bracelet; Bible; deceased guinea pig; animals; nature in general	Bring her to church; devotions; remind her to pray; (incidental discussions)
Caleb	Parents; himself; sister; (SS teacher and wife; grandmother)	Fort at pond; lake near church; library; house; (camp)	Books; stuffed animals; trampoline; Bibles; macaroni casserole	Father helps him understand a lot; father teaches at churches; (Odyssey audio tapes; midweek club)
Jennifer	CE director; minister; mother; step-father; step-siblings; friends	Room in which focus groups occurred; church; chapel; house; (camp)	Bible; Operation Christmas Child shoebox; stuffed animals; bed	Go to church with her; talk about complicated spiritual things; (devotional)

	Important Elements of Church	Where on Sunday (Anywhere)	Where on Sunday (at Church)	Miscellaneous
Nicholas	People learn about God there	Disneyworld	No where in particular	
Keira		Grandparents' church	Library	Classrooms are small—but she likes them small
Megan		Home	Library	
Ben	Human-made pond; offices; bathrooms	Watching TV at home; at a friend's house; playing Webkinz	Outside swimming in pond or skating on pond; in focus group	Feels crowded at church
Houston	People sing; it's 154 years old; chapel is original building	Fancy hotels in New York City	Church kitchen	Like old buildings; thinks that new churches with neon lights are not aesthetically pleasing
Gordon	Book corner [library] and Odeon [movie room]	None	Odeon [movie room]	Sometimes wants to sit with his family at church; (relationships with others at church are very important)
Owen	Worship centre	At friend's house	SS classroom	Decided that church was a lot like a school
Abigail	Worship; weird door; lots of rooms; pool table; games/toys; stage	At friend's house	Outside near pond; playing inside	Feels crowded at church
Freddy	It looks small on the outside and big on the inside	Indoor jungle-gym; hockey practice/game	Plateau on roof; running around all over the place	Feels crowded at church sometimes; (relationships with other at church are important)
Ian		Indoor jungle-gym	Kitchen	
Laurie		At school with her friends	Have a friend sleepover and then bring her to church	Kids should teach adults to be kids again; feels crowded at church; noticed a classmate was Christian because she was praying; hard to read Bible because of busyness; prayer is vital
Caleb		Antarctica or the Arctic, playing with Arctic foxes	Lake; lobby, due to more space; library	Loves mysteries; felt close to God when friend hurt himself; sometimes feels crowded at church
Jennifer		Africa, for missions projects; amusement parks	Kitchen; Odeon [movie room]	Sometimes feels as though church is boring

APPENDIX B

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH CHILDREN

The following questions served as guiding statements throughout the process of conducting focus groups with the children who made up my research sample.

1. Can you tell a story about people or places that have helped you to feel close to God?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you felt really close to God or loved by God? Where did this happen? Where you alone or with someone when this happened? Who were you with?
3. Does your family help you to know God? How?
4. Is there a place at church where you feel really close to God? If so, where and why?
5. Who helps you to understand God? How do they help you?
6. Many people have special places where they feel really good, safe, and happy. Do you have a place where you feel good, safe, or happy? Is this place at church? Why does it make you feel this way?
7. If you could be anywhere on a Sunday morning, where would you want to be? What if this place had to be at church?

APPENDIX C

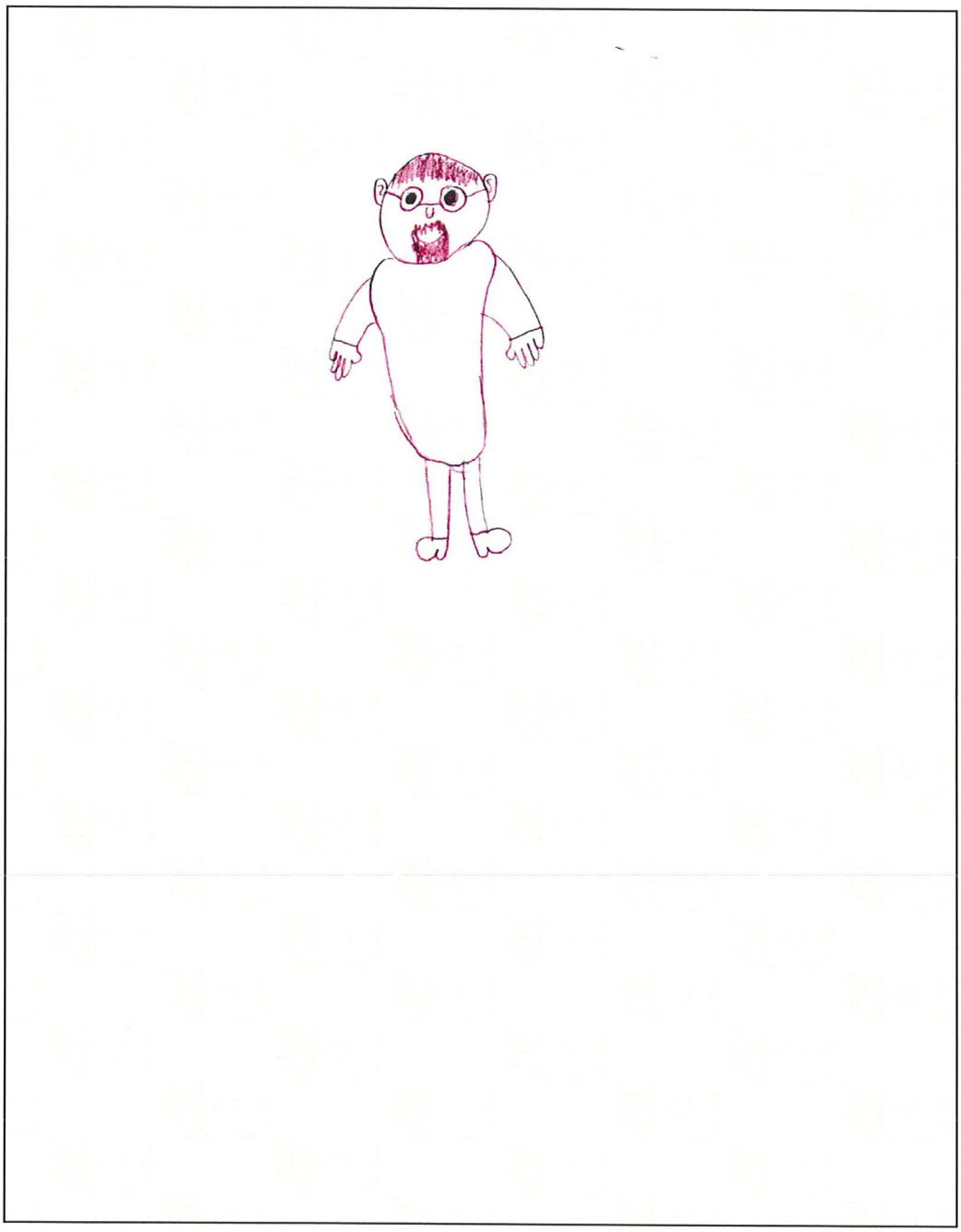
QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS

The following questions were asked to the parents of the children during the interviews of which they were a part.

1. How do you understand the word spirituality?
2. Who has the most influence on your child's spirituality?
3. Where is your child's favourite place to be at church?
4. Can you tell me about a time when your child seemed to experience God, feel especially close to God, or especially loved by God?
5. How do your children feel about their leaders at church?
6. How do you think you nurture your child's spirituality at home?
7. Who helps your child to understand God? What do they do?
8. On average, how often do you talk to your child about God? Who brings up the subject?

APPENDIX D

SELECTED RESEARCH ARTIFACTS



Drawing 1

After receiving instructions and drawing materials, Nicholas immediately began to create this simple pencil-drawing of his father. He helps Nicholas to know God because he reads the Bible to him every day.

Drawing 2

Keira had a difficult time deciding who to draw when I asked her to draw someone who helps her know God or feel close to God. After some time and lots of giggling, she drew this picture of me because talking about God with me helps her to know God.

Drawing 3

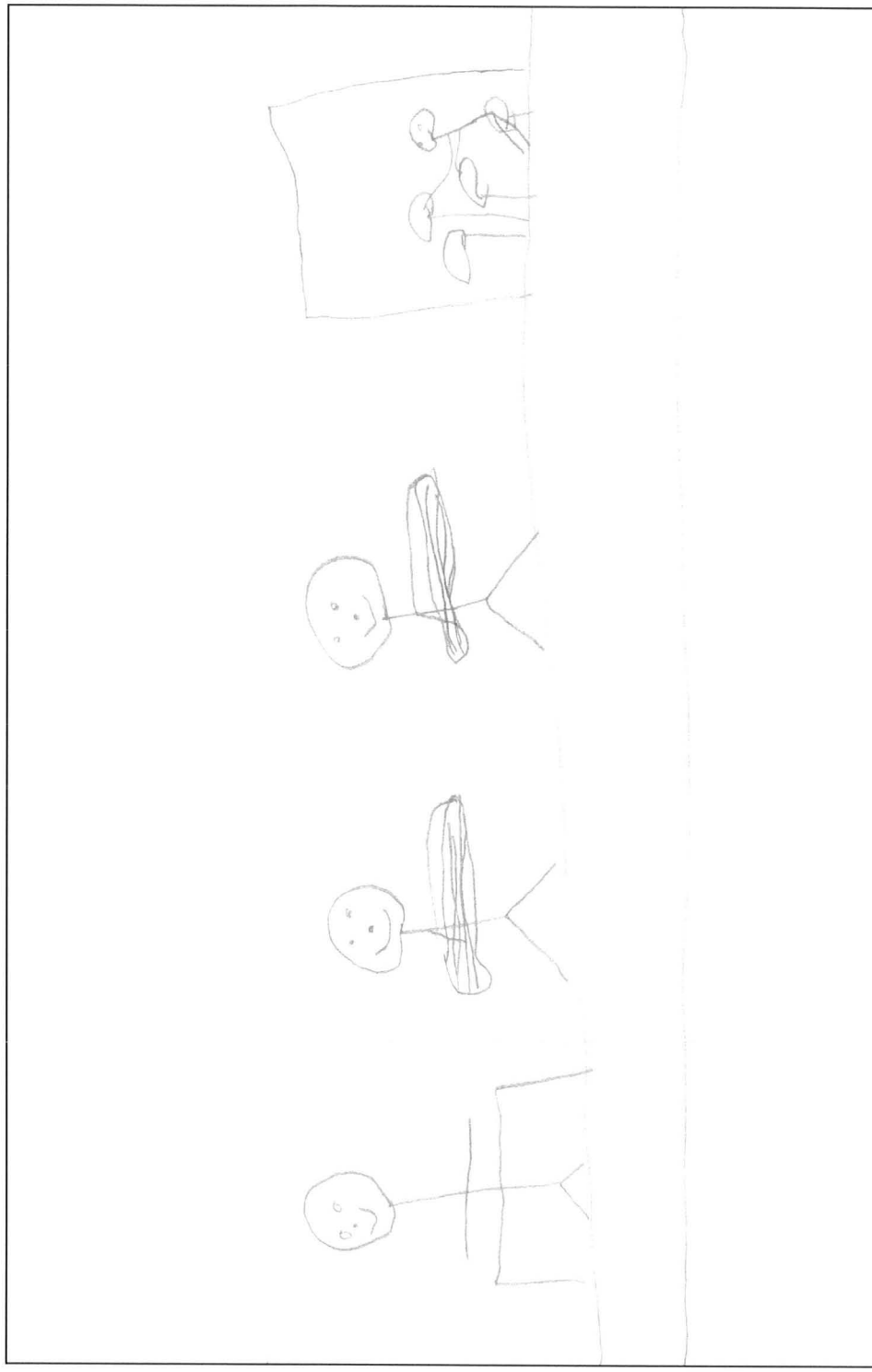
Ben drew this silly picture of his mother and me. At first, he said he had "no clue" why he chose to draw us. After some time, however, he told me he drew us because we help him to know God by asking him questions.

Drawing 4

In this picture, Ben drew the room in which we met for the focus groups, which is the receptionists' office at his church. The importance he placed on the role the focus groups in his spiritual life demonstrates that his church may not be meeting his spiritual needs.

Drawing 5

Abigail created this drawing of the room in which she meets for large-group children's worship and lessons. By including the guitar, keyboard, and projection screen, she showed that music is very important to her.



Drawing 6

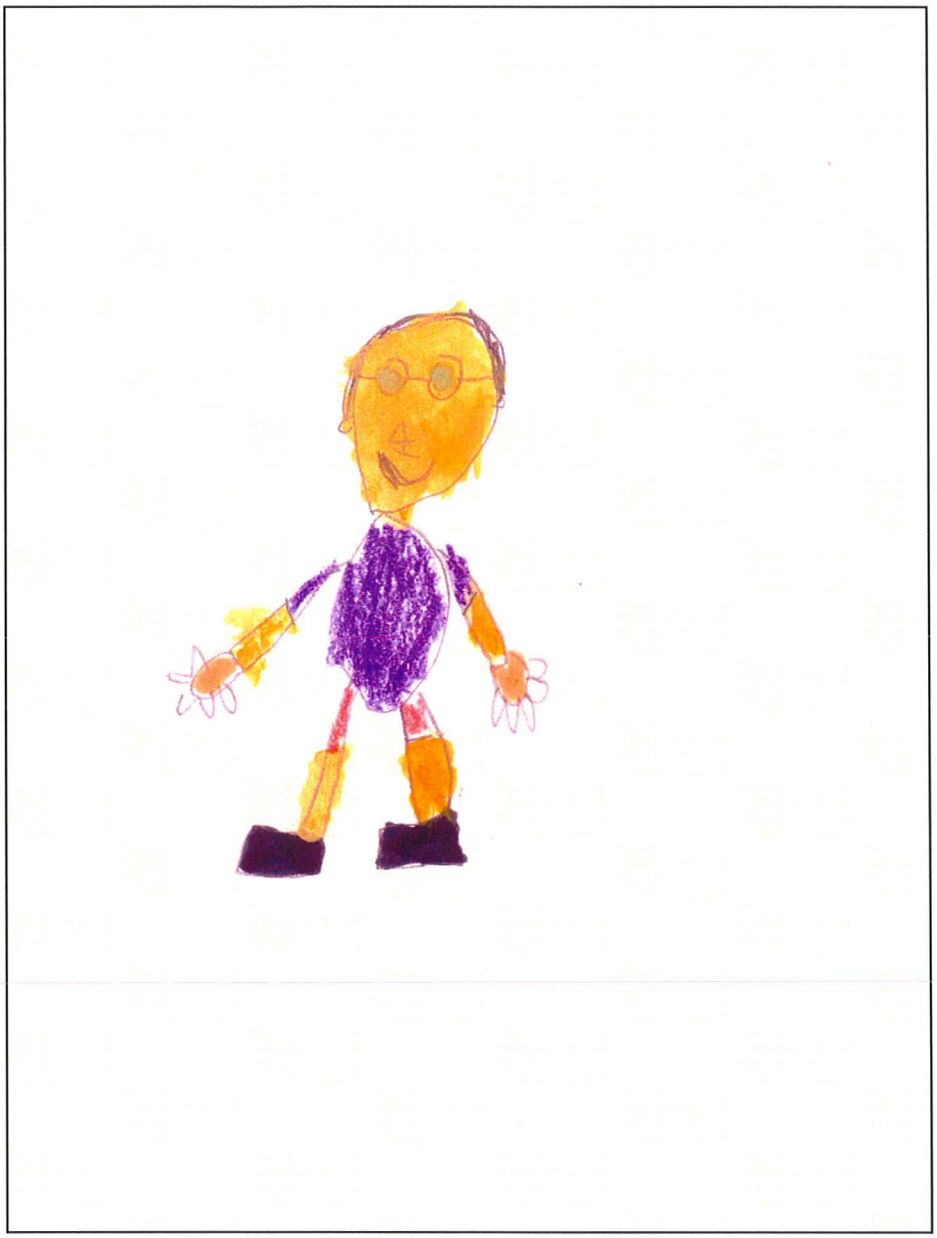
Owen used pencils to draw this picture of his church's worship team. They help him to know God because they "sing songs about him and they talk about him before leading next songs and they pray."

Drawing 7

Megan drew this image of her Sunday school teacher, Mr. Donaldson, holding two objects. The green item is a vegetable that he used for an object lesson. The red item is a piece of licorice with which he rewards children who learn their Bible verses. Megan's inclusion of these items in her drawing further demonstrates the importance she places on learning the Bible.

Drawing 8

In this drawing, Houston drew his minister, the director of Christian education, his grandmother, and the church, which he labeled as "God's House." He was very clear to tell me that, while the minister teaches people about God, the CE director teaches the *kids* about God. He included his grandmother because she "likes church" and influences him.



Drawing 9

Immediately after I asked Caleb to draw a picture of a person who helps him know God or with whom he experiences God, he told me he was going to draw his father. His father is a doctoral student at a university in another city. He lives at the university during the week, so Caleb prizes the time he spends with him on the weekends. Caleb seems to have a very close relationship to his father.

Drawing 10

Laurie took the entirety of the third interview to paint this picture of her mother and father because they bring her to church and Sunday school.

Drawing 11

In this drawing, Freddy drew several people that are important to his spiritual life: his mother and father, Sacred Heart's minister, and the church's Christian education director. He also drew his house and the church.

Photograph 1

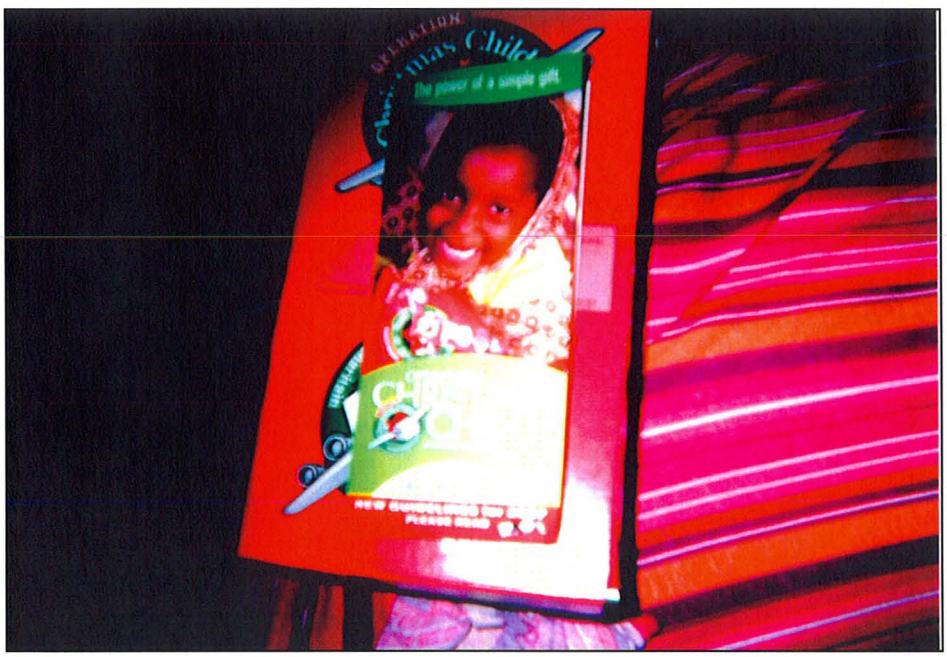
Gordon took this photo of his guitar because, "I like to play it and I like to learn songs on it."

Photograph 2

This is the patch of grass on which Laurie sits and looks out over the river near her house.

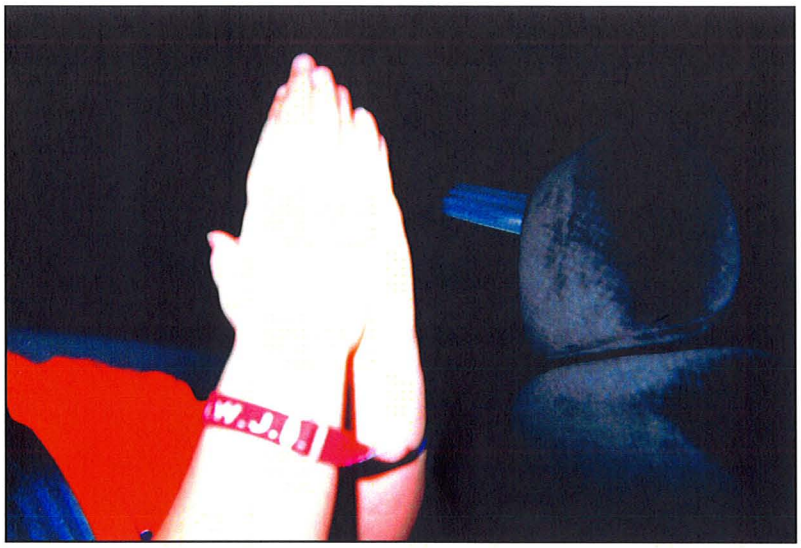
Photograph 3

This photo captures the stretch of the river that Laurie likes to sit beside.



Photograph 4

This is one of the two photos that Jennifer took of her Operation Christmas Child box, of which she said, "It helps me feel close to God because I'm giving to other people."

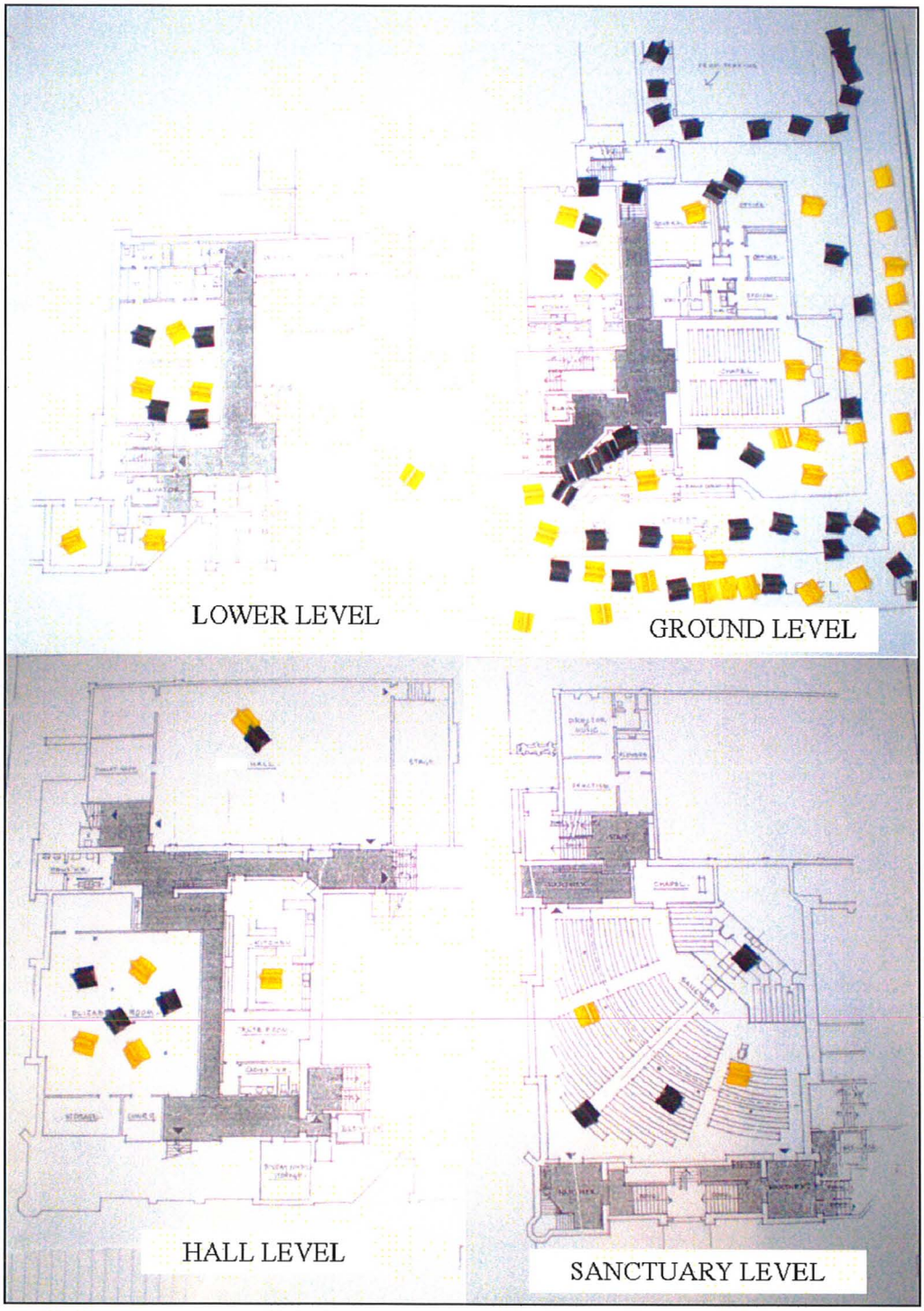


Photograph 5

Laurie took this photo of her sister's hands in a prayer formation. The act of praying helps her to think about the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) on her sister's bracelet.

Photograph 6

In this photograph, Freddy captured an image of an armchair at his house. He likes to sit in this chair and pray.



yellow = children; black = adults

Social Map 1

This is the social map that Ian produced when I told him that he could change the location of people on Sunday morning. He moved most people out of the building, demonstrating that he would prefer both adults and children to have more room to move around.

Bibliography

Allen, Holly Catterton. "Exploring Children's Spirituality from a Christian Perspective." In *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices*, edited by Holly Catterton Allen, 5-20. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

———. "Nurturing Children's Spirituality in Intergenerational Christian Settings." In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 266–83. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

Allen, Holly Catterton and Donald E. Ratcliff. "A Working Definition of Children's Spirituality from a Christian Perspective." Accessed February 28, 2008. Online: http://childspirituality.org/conference/definition.htm

Anthony, Michael J. "Putting Children's Spirituality in Perspective. In *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation: Four Views*, edited by Michael J. Anthony, 1–43. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006.

Anthony, Michael J. and Warren S. Benson. *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003.

Ariès, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Translated by Robert Baldick. New York: Vintage Books, 1962.

Baker, Dori Grinenko and Joyce Ann Mercer. *Lives to Offer: Accompanying Youth on Their Vocational Quests*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2007.

Barna, George. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children should be Your Church's #1 Priority*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003.

Bell, Rob. *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Bellous, Joyce E. *Educating Faith: An Approach to Christian Formation*. Toronto: Clements, 2006.

———. "Five Classroom Activities for Sustaining a Spiritual Environment." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 11:1 (2006) 99–111.

Bellous, Joyce E. and Dan Sheffield. *Conversations that Change Us: Learning the Arts of Theological Reflection*. Toronto: Clements, 2007.

Benson, Peter L., et. al. "Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence: Toward a Field of Inquiry." *Applied Developmental Science* 7:3 (2003) 205–13.

Berryman, Jerome W. *Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001.

———. "The Nonverbal Nature of Spirituality and Religious Language." In *Spiritual Education: Cultural, Religious, and Social Differences: New Perspectives for the 21st Century*, edited by Jane Erricker et. al., 9–22. Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2001.

———. *Teaching Godly Play: A Sunday Morning Handbook.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Boyatzis, Chris J. and Babette T. Newman. "How Shall We Study Children's Spirituality?" In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 166–81. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

Carlson, Gregory C. and John K. Crupper. "Instructional-Analytic Model." In *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation: Four Views*, edited by Michael J. Anthony, 103–63. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006.

Cashdan, Sheldon. *Object Relations Therapy: Using the Relationship.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988.

Cavalletti, Sofia. *The Religious Potential of the Child: Experiencing Scripture and Liturgy with Young Children.* Translated by Patricia M. Coulter and Julie M. Coulter. New York: Paulist, 1993.

Clark, Alison. "The Mosaic Approach and Research with Young Children." In *The Reality of Research with Children and Young People*, edited by Vicky Lewis et. al., 142–56. London: Sage, 2004.

Coles, Robert. *The Spiritual Life of Children.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.

Cooey, Paula M. "That Every Child Who Wants Might Learn to Dance." *Cross Currents* 48:2 (1998) 185–97.

Csinos, David. "The Biblical Theme of Welcoming Children." *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 8 (2007) 97–117.

Dawn, Marva J. *Is It a Lost Cause?: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

de Souza, Marian. "Educating for Hope, Compassion, and Meaning in a Diverse and Intolerant World." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 11:1 (2006) 165–75.

Douglas, Mary. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. 2nd ed. London/New York: Routledge, 1996.

Eisner, Elliot W. *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1985.

Elkind, David. *A Sympathetic Understanding of the Child: Birth to Sixteen*. 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994.

Emond, Ruth. "Ethnographic Research Methods with Children and Young People." In *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*, edited by Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan, 123–39. London: Sage, 2005.

Erricker, Clive. "Against the Protection of Childhood Innocence." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 8:1 (2003) 3–7.

Farber-Robertson, Anita. *Learning While Leading: Increasing Your Effectiveness in Ministry*. Bethsada, MD: Alban Institute, 2000.

Feinberg, Jeffrey. "Making Stories Come Alive." In *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices*, edited by Holly Catterton Allen, 146-163. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008.

Fowler, Larry. *Rock-Solid Kids: Giving Children a Biblical Foundation for Life*. Ventura, CA: Gospel Light, 2004.

Fraser, Sandy. "Situating Empirical Research." In *Doing Research with Children and Young People*, edited by Sandy Fraser et. al., 15–26. London: Sage, 2004.

Garbarino, James and Frances M. Stott. *What Children Can Tell Us: Eliciting, Interpreting, and Evaluating Critical Information from Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992.

Gerbner, George. "Reclaiming Our Cultural Mythology." *In Context* 38 (1994). No pages. Cited February 28, 2008. Online: http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC38/Gerbner.htm

Graves, Trisha. "Pragmatic-Participatory Model." In *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation: Four Views*, edited by Michael J. Anthony, 165–223. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006.

Greig, Anne and Jayne Taylor. *Doing Research with Children*. London: Sage, 1999.

Grenz, Stanley J., et. al. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1999.

Hamilton, N. Gregory. *Self and Others: Object Relations Theory in Practice*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1990.

Hardy, Alister. *The Living Stream: A Restatement of Evolution Theory and its Relation to the Spirit of Man*. London: Collins, 1965.

Hart, Tobin. "Spiritual Experiences and Capacities of Children and Youth." In *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, edited by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et. al., 163–77. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006.

Hawkins, Greg. "Watch Greg Hawkins: Hear the Heart Behind *Reveal*." No pages. Accessed February 28, 2008. Online: http://revealnow.com/story.asp?storyid=48

Hay, David, et. al. "Spiritual Development: Intersections and Divergence with Religious Development." In *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, edited by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et. al., 46–59. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006.

Hay, David and Rebecca Nye. *The Spirit of the Child*. Revised ed. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2006.

Heller, David. *The Children's God*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Herzog, Kristin. *Children and Our Global Future: Theological and Social Challenges*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2005.

Hill, Malcolm. "Ethical Considerations in Researching Children's Experiences." In *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*, edited by Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan, 61–86. London: Sage, 2005.

Holmes, Robyn M. *Fieldwork with Children*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998.

Holmes, Urban T. *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction*. New York: Seabury, 1980.

Hood, Dana Kennamer. "Six Children Seeking God: Exploring Childhood Spiritual Development in Context." In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 233–48. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

Hopkins, Mary Rice. "How to Lead Music with Kids." In *Children's Ministry that Works: The Basics and Beyond*. Revised ed., edited by Craig Jutila et. al., 114–20. Loveland, CO: Group, 2002.

Johnson-Miller, Beverly C. "Transformation, Religious." In *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*: 455–7.

Jung, C. G. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. Translated by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Bagnes. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934.

Kegan, Robert. *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Kielburger, Craig. "Free the Children: The World's Largest Network of Children Helping Children through Education." In *Notes from Canada's Young Activists: A Generation Stands Up for Change*, edited by Severn Cullis-Suzuki et. al., 96–105. Vancouver: Greystone, 2007.

Kielburger, Craig and Marc Kielburger. *Me to We: Finding Meaning in a Material World*. New York: Fireside, 2004.

Kielburger, Marc and Craig Kielburger. *Take Action!: A Guide to Active Citizenship*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2002.

Klein, Josephine. *Our Need for Others and its Roots in Infancy*. London: Tavistock, 1987.

Klein, Randall S. *Object Relations and the Family Process*. New York: Praeger, 1990.

Klepsch, Marvin and Laura Logie. *Children Draw and Tell: An Introduction to the Projective Uses of Children's Human Figure Drawings*. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1982.

Lloyd-Smith, Mel and Jane Tarr. "Researching Children's Perspectives: A Sociological Dimension." In *Researching Children's Perspectives*, edited by Ann Lewis and Geoff Lindsay, 59–70. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press, 2000.

Lykes, M. Brinton. "Creative Arts and Photography in Participatory Action Research in Guatemala." In *Handbook of Action Research*, edited by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, 363–71. London: Sage, 2001.

Magill, Lucanne. "Music Therapy in Spirituality." *Music Therapy Today*. (December, 2002). No pages. Cited February 28, 2008. Online: http://www.musictherapyworld.de/index_mtt.php?issue=27&article=40

Mandell, Nancy. "The Least-Adult Role in Studying Children." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 16:4 (1988) 433–67.

May, Scottie. "The Contemplative-Reflective Model." In *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation: Four Views*, edited by Michael J. Anthony, 45–102. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006.

May, Scottie, et. al. *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

May, Scottie and Donald Ratcliff. "Children's Spiritual Experiences and the Brain." In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 149–65. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

McLaren, Brian D. *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006.

Mercer, Joyce Ann, et. al. "Children in Congregations: Congregations as Contexts for Children's Spiritual Growth." In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 249–65. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

Miller, Sue and David Staal. *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. *In the Midst of Chaos: Caring for Children as Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

———. *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Mountain, Vivienne. "Prayer is a Positive Activity for Children: A Report on Recent Research." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 10:3 (2005) 291–309.

Myers, Barbara Kimes. *Young Children and Spirituality*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Nesbitt, Eleanor. "Researching 8 to 13-Year-Olds' Perspectives on Their Experience of Religion." In *Researching Children's Perspectives*, edited by Ann Lewis and Geoff Lindsay, 135–49. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press, 2000.

Ng, David and Virginia Thomas. *Children in the Worshipping Community*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1981.

Nye, Rebecca. "Christian Perspectives on Children's Spirituality: Social Science Contributions?" In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 90–107. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

———. "Relational Consciousness and the Spiritual Lives of Children: Convergence with Children's Theory of Mind." In *Psychological Studies of Children's Spiritual and Religious Development*, edited by K. Helmut Reich et. al., 57–82. Lengerich, Germany: Pabst, 1999.

Nye, Rebecca and David Hay. "Identifying Children's Spirituality: How Do You Start Without a Starting Point?" *British Journal of Religious Education* 18:3 (1996) 144–54.

O'Brien, Roger. "4 Ways to Become Holy." *U.S. Catholic* 61:3 (1996) 17–23.

Pritchard, Gretchen Wolff. *Offering the Gospel to Children*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1992.

Ratcliff, Donald. "The Beginnings of a Christian Perspective on Qualitative Research." Accessed February 28, 2008. Online: http://qualitativeresearch.ratcliffs.net/christianperspective.pdf

———. "Qualitative Research Methods." No pages. Accessed February 28, 2008. Online: http://don.ratcliffs.net/qual

———. "Rituals in a School Hallway: Evidence of a Latent Spirituality of Children." *Christian Education Journal* 5 (2001), 9–26.

Ratcliff, Donald and Scottie May. "Identifying Children's Spirituality, Walter Wangerin's Perspectives, and an Overview of this Book." In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 7–21. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

Ratcliff, Donald and Rebecca Nye. "Childhood Spirituality: Strengthening the Research Foundation." In *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, edited by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et. al., 473–83. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006.

Richards, Lawrence O. *A Theology of Children's Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Rizzuto, Ana-Maria. *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Roberts, Helen. "Listening to Children: and Hearing Them." In *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*, edited by Pia Christensen and Allison James, 225–40. London: Falmer, 2000.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C. "Exploring Scientific and Theological Perspectives on Children's Spirituality." In *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications*, edited by Donald Ratcliff, 120–32. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2004.

Roehlkepartain, Eugene C. and Eboo Patel. "Congregations: Unexamined Crucibles for Spiritual Development." In *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood*

and Adolescence, edited by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain et. al., 324–36. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006.

Rubin, Jeffrey. "Psychoanalytic Treatment with a Buddhist Mediator." In *Object Relations Theory and Religion: Clinical Applications*, edited by Mark Finn and John Gartner, 87–107. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992.

Samaritan's Purse. "What is Operation Christmas Child?" No pages. Accessed February 28, 2008. Online: http://www.samaritanspurse.org/OCC_About.asp?OCCPath=1

Sheldrake, Philip. "What is Spirituality?" In *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, edited by Kenneth J. Collins, 21–42. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

St. Clair, Michael. *Human Relationships and the Experience of God: Object Relations and Religion*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1994.

———. *Object Relations and Self Psychology: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1996.

Stewart, Sonja M. and Jerome W. Berryman. *Young Children and Worship*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.

Stonehouse, Catherine. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

———. "Knowing God in Childhood: A Study of Godly Play and the Spirituality of Children." *Christian Education Journal* 5 (2001) 27–45.

Sutherland, Neil. *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.

Thomas à Kempis. *The Imitation of Christ*. Translated by Richard Whitford. New York: Pocket Books, 1956.

Tye, Karen B. *Basics of Christian Education*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2000.

Veale, Angela. "Creative Methodologies in Participatory Research with Children." In *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*, edited by Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan, 253–72. London: Sage, 2005.

Wallis, Jim. *The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith & Politics in a Post-Religious Right America*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.

Ware, Corinne. *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth*. Bethsada, MD: Alban Institute, 2000.

Westerhoff, John H, III. "The Church's Contemporary Challenge: To Help Adults Grow Up Spiritually *With* Their Children." In *Nurturing Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives and Best Practices*, edited by Holly Catterton Allen. Eugene, OR: Cascade, forthcoming.

———. *Will Our Children Have Faith?* Revised ed. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2000.

White, David F. "Christian Spirituality." In *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*: 77–81.

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988.

Wlodarczyk, Natalie. "The Effect of Music Therapy on the Spirituality of Persons in an In-Patient Hospice Unit as Measured by Self-Report." *Journal of Music Therapy* 44:2 (2007) 113–22.

Yust, Karen-Marie. "Creating an Idyllic World for Children's Spiritual Formation." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 11:1 (2006) 177–88.

———. "Creating a Spiritual World for Children to Inhabit." *Family Ministry* 18:4 (2004) 24–39.

———. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.