

STATE OF THE  
**CHURCH**

SINGAPORE 2025



**salt&light**

# THE CHURCH AND CHILDREN

**DEMOGRAPHIC WEIGHT  
OR FUTURE CRITICAL?**

THE 4TH ANNUAL *STATE OF THE CHURCH IN SINGAPORE*  
STUDY ON LOCAL CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRY,  
CONDUCTED JANUARY TO NOVEMBER 2025.  
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# INTRODUCTION

The State of the Church (SOTC) in Singapore Study is a combined effort between Biblical Graduate School of Theology, Singapore Bible College, Trinity Theological College and *Salt&Light* to serve the Church in Singapore. SOTC provides empirical research with data from the Church in Singapore, for the Church in Singapore. The SOTC's aims are to help the Church know herself better, with the hopes of stimulating constructive reflection leading to positive change.

Since the inaugural study in 2022<sup>1</sup>, the annual SOTC study has focused on specific age groups. In 2023<sup>2</sup>, in response to the observation of significant young adult movement between churches, we conducted a qualitative study on "*Churches Attracting Young Adults*".

The studies in 2024 and 2025 have been a response to the reality that Singapore is fast becoming a super-aged society, where 21% of the population is aged 65 and above.

In 2024, we conducted the *Church and Seniors* study<sup>3</sup> to examine how the church was shaped demographically and responding to the reality of being in such a society. To complete the picture, we decided this year to study the opposite end of the age spectrum: children aged 12 years and below.

We reasoned that in an increasingly aged society, with a total fertility rate of less than 1.0, church children's ministries will experience pressure from there being fewer children.

To help us better appreciate the kinds of issues that children's ministries face, we conducted a Focus Group Discussion on 7 May 2025 at Singapore Bible College. This Focus Group involved leaders of parachurch organisations or church ministries that served children and parents. Many of the concerns raised by these seasoned leaders found their way into the study at hand.

This present study is a small-scale endeavour. Hence, we are not attempting to generalise the findings to the wider population of churches in Singapore, but rather to raise important questions for all church leaders to consider. Our study findings are thus framed around a series of questions.

We offer this study not as comprehensive statistics of children's ministry in Singapore, but as a stimulus to encourage churches to reflect on the state of their children's ministry. May we learn from one another's best practices and challenges as we seek to disciple our children, for they reflect our present and are critical for our future.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://saltandlight.sg/sotc2022/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://saltandlight.sg/sotc2023/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://saltandlight.sg/sotc2024/>

## METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

**Survey Instrument.** Our data collection took place from July to October 2025. We asked the Lead Pastor (or equivalent) of a church to do an online survey that had 26 questions.

We also asked the Lead Pastor to forward a separate online survey to their children’s ministry (CM) staff or leader. The CM leader survey had 32 questions, some of which allowed us to compare and contrast the responses of the Lead Pastor and the children’s ministry leader. This is the first time SOTC surveyed two groups of leaders from the same church.

**Survey Frame.** A database of local churches was formed by pooling multiple existing databases – a combination of open and closed sources.

We received responses from 20 churches, with representation from Assemblies of God, Baptist, Bible-Presbyterian, Brethren, Evangelical Free, Methodist, Presbyterian and independent churches.

These churches together comprised 15,404 regular attendees.

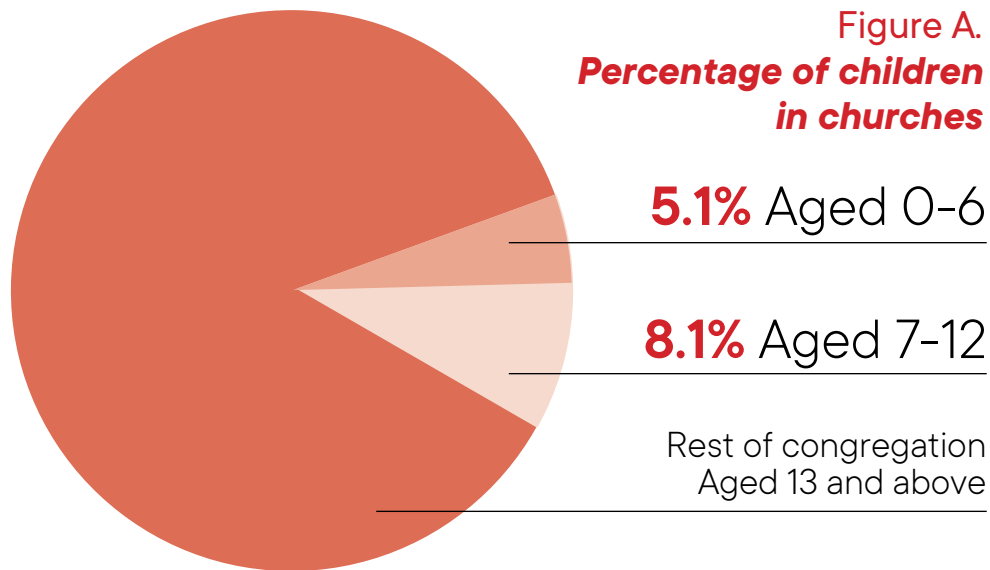
Of these 20 churches, we received 20 responses for the Lead Pastor survey, and 18 responses for the CM leader’s survey.

**Table 1. Number and Size of Churches involved in SOTC 2025**

NUMBER OF REGULAR ATTENDEES	NUMBER OF CHURCHES	LEAD PASTOR RESPONSES	CHILDREN’S MINISTRY LEADER RESPONSES
< 100	3	3	2
100 – 249	6	6	6
250-499	3	3	2
500-999	4	4	4
1,000-1,999	1	1	1
2,000 or more	3	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

What follows are our findings, organised in the form of critical questions posed to all church leaders.

## WHAT'S THE MAKEUP OF THE CHILDREN IN YOUR CHURCH?



Out of 15,404 regular attendees, 2,043 (or 13.3%) were children. That's roughly one out of every 7.5 people in the congregation. For comparison, 10.9% of the total Singapore population, and 13.6% of the resident population (Citizens and Permanent Residents) was aged 14 and below <sup>4</sup>.

Of these 2,043 children, 790 were aged 6 years and below (5.1% of total), while 1,253 were aged 7 to 12 years (8.1% of total). This only included children regularly attending children's ministry.

The percentage of children in the church ranged from 4.5% to 21.9%. Small churches – those with fewer than 100 regular attendees – tended to have a smaller percentage.

Of these 2,043 children, 156 (7.6% of children, or 1% of total) came from unchurched families. Only 3 churches had no children from unchurched families.

## WHAT IS SUCCESS IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TO YOU?

We reasoned that the answer would depend on the stated **mission, vision or objectives** of the CM, and so we asked this of the Lead Pastors. We also asked both Lead Pastors and CM leaders what CM success looked like, which could be taken to be tangible signs that the ministry was fulfilling its mission, vision and objectives.

Of the 20 Lead Pastors, 13 responded to the question on CM mission, vision and objectives. The majority, 10 out of 13, gave an answer around the theme of *Relationship with God and Discipleship*.

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<sup>4</sup> Statistics correct as of 29 Sep 2025. Source: <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/population-and-population-structure/latest-data> retrieved 9 Dec 2025.

Concepts included growing children into lifelong disciples; that the children have a vibrant personal relationship with God; nurturing them into people who serve in the way of Jesus; making young disciples; and knowing and growing in Christ.

Closely related was the theme of *Biblical Knowledge and Christian Character* (9 out of 13 responses). Concepts included 'growing children in God's word', obedience to God's word, imitation of Christ, Christian character, and selfless service.

Another popular theme (7 out of 13 responses) was on *Evangelism and Outreach*: Sharing Christ; evangelising and impacting the community; desiring to see friends come to know God.

We asked **both** Lead Pastors and CM leaders what **Ministry Success** looked like to them. Both defined *spiritual growth and application* as a primary measure of success.

**Among Lead Pastors**, most (90%) wrote about children professing their faith, reflecting Christ-like attitudes, applying truth in their daily lives, developing personal Quiet Time and prayer habits, and demonstrating Bible knowledge.

**Among CM leaders**, two-thirds (67%) wrote about spiritual fruit, understanding and applying God's Word, change in attitudes, and observation of worship/prayer.

For both groups, success was fundamentally transformational with the focus being on the child's personal relationship with Jesus, and observable character change.

There were two notable differences: Compared to CM leaders, Lead Pastors tended to emphasise more (a) the importance of outreach and evangelism, and (b) the successful transition of the children into youth ministry and service within the church. The CM leaders, on the other hand, tended to emphasise general attendance numbers of the ministry as an indicator of success.

### **How aligned are Pastors and CM leaders on the mission, vision, strategy and outcomes of their children's ministry?**

Regardless of what success looks like, achieving it comes down to the activities done with the children. The bulk of CM time was clearly given to giving Bible lessons as foundational teaching for the children's discipleship (see *Table 2*).

Furthermore, bearing in mind that the children both within the CM and outside the CM needed to be evangelised, CMs conducted evangelistic events for children, ranging from 0 to 4 a year, with a mean of 2.3 events. In the past 12 months, CMs reported 333 praying to receive Christ, ranging from 0 to 100 with a mean of 22. Eight CM leaders (44%) answered 0 or did not answer the question.

Table 2. **Children’s Ministry Sunday Class Activities and Time Allocated**

ACTIVITIES	MENTIONS (OUT OF 20 CHURCHES)	AVERAGE DURATION (IN MINUTES)
<b>Bible Lessons</b>	20	37.8
<b>Worship</b>	18	15.3
<b>Prayer</b>	10	12.1
<b>Games/Activities/Craft</b>	7	20
<b>Fellowship/Serving</b>	4	-

## HOW DO YOU RAISE, TRAIN AND CARE FOR CHILDREN’S MINISTRY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS?

This was clearly a matter of significant importance, as *Manpower and Team Capacity* was the most frequently identified “pain point” for both Lead Pastors and CM leaders. This referred to the need for more people to step up and serve; a general shortage of CM teachers; and the problem of workers serving in multiple ministries.

Here are some CM ministry demographics from our study sample:

The 20 churches had a total of 24 dedicated full-time CM staff, with a range of 0 to 6 and a mean of 1.2 staff serving in each local church. 7 (35%) of the churches did not have any full-time dedicated CM staff.

If we compared this figure with the total number of children in the churches’ CMs (2,043), this translates to **an average of 85 children per full-time staff**.

We wonder if this is sufficient to raise the next generation well.

**85:1**

Ratio of children to full-time staff in surveyed churches (aggregated)

**22.6%**

Percentage of male staff or volunteers in Children’s Ministry

**6%**

Percentage of attendees in churches who serve in Children’s Ministry

The total number of CM staff and volunteers was 906, making up 6% of the aggregated church size. Churches had a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 250 CM staff, with a mean of 60.4 regular attendees serving in CM.

Less than a quarter (an estimated 200) of these staff or volunteers were male. In fact, we found that the average church had a mean of 22.6% of their staff or volunteers being male – that’s less than 1 in 4.

The number of regular attendees mobilised for CM depends in part on the size of the CM. We calculated the CM staff/volunteer to children ratio, and found that this ranged from a minimum of 0.1 (1 staff/volunteer for every 10 children), to a maximum of 2 (2 staff/volunteers per child). The mean ratio was 0.5 – this amounts to 1 staff or volunteer for every 2 children.

### REFLECTION

*What is a healthy ratio of staff and volunteers to children?  
 How proportion of your church’s CM staff and volunteers are male?  
 What benefit would there be if your church’s CM had a substantial number of males serving, and how can more male CM staff and volunteers be raised?*

## How long do Children’s Ministry volunteers serve for?

Table 3. *Typical actual length of commitment of Children’s Ministry volunteers*

DURATION OF COMMITMENT	NUMBER OF CHURCHES (OUT OF 15 CHURCHES)
More than 2 years	9 (60%)
1 to 2 years	5 (33%)
7 to 12 months	0
4 to 6 months	1 (7%)
Fellowship/Serving	0

15 out of 18 CM leaders answered our questions related to CM volunteers.

The majority of churches had volunteers typically serving for more than two years. This suggests that CMs are generally successful at fostering long-term dedication which is vital for relationship-building and discipleship consistency.

## What are the requirements for being a Children's Ministry volunteer?

The majority – 12 out of 15 churches (80%) – mentioned *Spiritual Health and Maturity* as a core requirement, with exemplar indicators being regular church attendance, being active in cell group or a Bible study group, and being grounded in the word.

The second most frequent theme (11 out of 15 churches; 73%) was on *Character and Temperament*, indicated by having a love for children, a willingness or passion to serve, exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit, being teachable, and having “good character”.

Ten out of 15 churches (67%) had some form of *procedural and safety vetting*. This came in the form of having some application or interview process, a minimum six months' church attendance, background reference or recommendation checks (from the cell group leader or Pastor), including no criminal record or conviction for child-related crimes.

## How are you equipping volunteers for Children's Ministry?

Eight out of 15 churches (53%) provided *Formal Training and Development* such as CM specialised training (e.g. from KidMinSG or Metro World Child), external seminars and workshops, or in-house training plans.

Similarly, 8 out of 15 churches (53%) utilised *On-the-job Training and Mentorship Support*, whereby junior volunteers were paired with a senior volunteer who served as a mentor or coach, and started serving as Teaching Assistants or merely as observers of CM class sessions.

Other forms of equipping were in the form of *Curriculum and Teaching Resources* (5 out of 15; 33%), and *Peer and Feedback Support* (4 out of 15; 27%) through group sharing sessions for volunteers to talk about struggles and challenges, for instance.

## How are you caring for the well-being of your Children's Ministry volunteers?

Nine out of 15 churches (60%) spoke of providing *Pastoral and Relational Care* for volunteers, with practices such as regular check-ins by staff and leaders, pre-service prayer and catch-ups, and by organising volunteers into small teams with a leader providing oversight and care.

Six out of 15 churches (40%) spoke about showing *Appreciation and Recognition* for volunteers through celebration events, gifts, bonding outings, and appreciation meals.

Four out of 15 (27%) addressed *Rest and Burnout Prevention* – in the form of having recesses during school holidays, retreats for soul care, and days off for certain events.

Four out of 15 (27%) touched on *Spiritual and Educational Support*, such as prayer, spiritual guidance, and the sharing of useful materials and courses for CM.

## WHAT ARE THE PAIN POINTS OF YOUR CHILDREN’S MINISTRY?

We earlier highlighted the issue of *Manpower and Team Capacity* as the number one CM pain point felt by Lead Pastors and CM leaders alike. *Table 4* below lists the top five pain points or challenges mentioned by Lead Pastors and CM leaders.

**Table 4. Top 5 Pain Points or Challenges highlighted by Lead Pastors and Children’s Ministry leaders**

PAIN POINTS	LEAD PASTOR MENTIONS (OUT OF 20)	CHILDREN’S MINISTRY LEADER MENTIONS (OUT OF 18)	ELABORATION
<b>Manpower and Team Capacity</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	The need for more people to step up and serve; a general shortage of CM teachers; and the problem of workers serving in multiple ministries.
<b>Parent Partnership and Expectations</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	Parents were perceived to “delegate” or “outsource” the spiritual development of children to the church, viewing CM as an “enrichment programme”. One Pastor wrote of a “consumerism” mindset.
<b>Discipleship and Spiritual Efficacy</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	Specifically with respect to the challenges of addressing external culture trends and peer pressure. This matter was highlighted by the Lead Pastors in particular.
<b>Numerical Base and Growth</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	The concern that there were too few children in CM or in the church.
<b>Logistics and Environment</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	The lack of space, or having to share or to turnover space for other ministry use.

### REFLECTION

*How are you addressing the pain points in your Children’s Ministry?*

# HOW ARE YOU PREPARING CHILDREN TO RESPOND TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES?

What exactly are the cultural trends or issues that Lead Pastors felt needed to be addressed in the CM?

The top 4 sets of issues are listed in the table below.

Five (25%) of the Pastors indicated NIL concerning teaching on contemporary issues.

We also found that most churches that taught their children about responding to contemporary issues did so once or twice (8 churches) in the past 12 months. Four churches did so three or four times, and three churches did so more than four times.

**Table 5. Contemporary issues that CMs taught children in the last 12 months**

THEME	ELABORATION	MENTIONS (OUT OF 20 RESPONSES)
<b>Sexuality &amp; Gender Identity</b>	God’s design for family, marriage and sexuality; homosexuality and transgenderism; and puberty, sexual identity and purity.	<b>8 (40%)</b>
<b>Media, Technology &amp; Identity</b>	Online safety, harmful and idolatrous media trends, gaming addiction, and self-image.	<b>7 (35%)</b>
<b>Social &amp; Behavioral Challenges</b>	Bullying and abuse; relationships, and relating to parents in particular; and managing emotions, in particular anger.	<b>6 (30%)</b>
<b>Spiritual Life &amp; Apologetics</b>	Prayer/dependence on God; defending the faith (Apologetics); differences in faiths and Christian traditions; Serving/Compassion; Trusting God in challenges.	<b>5 (25%)</b>

## REFLECTION

*Which of these issues do you think need to be addressed in your Children’s Ministry?*

## HOW ARE YOU DISCIPLING THE CHURCH TO DISCIPLE CHILDREN?

When it comes to discipling children, more than just the CM is involved.

We asked the Lead Pastors how the CM collaborated with other ministries in the church.

The youth ministry came up on top, with 15 Pastors (75%) making mention of the need for a smooth transition of the Primary 6 children out of CM and into youth ministry.

Next was Family Life or Parenting Ministry, where the focus was on equipping parents for children's discipleship or spiritual formation. We asked Lead Pastors to share how their church partnered with parents in this.

**Table 6. How churches partner with parents in the spiritual formation or discipleship of their children**

THEME	ELABORATION	MENTIONS
<b>Lesson/Curriculum Communication</b>	Providing lesson or curriculum communication to parents about what was covered in CM (in the form of lesson summaries, follow-up activities, photos and videos).	<b>14 (70%)</b>
<b>Resource Provision</b>	Providing resources for parents, such as devotionals, Bible reading plans, homework or follow-up material (for children to do at home), and recommended online resources.	<b>9 (45%)</b>
<b>Parent Training/ Workshops/ Seminars</b>	Annual Parents Summit, parenting workshops, seminars/talks, Alpha Parenting Course, training on parenting.	<b>9 (45%)</b>
<b>Dedicated Parent/ Family Groups</b>	WhatsApp/Telegram class groups; separate chatgroups with families; A dedicated "Parenting Ministry."	<b>7 (35%)</b>
<b>Mentorship/ Journeying</b>	Pairing parents with experienced couples, mentorship panels, Family Matters ministry mentoring, one-on-one check-ins by Pastor.	<b>4 (20%)</b>

Other ministries that CM collaborated with were the *Worship or Creative Arts Ministry* and the *Outreach/Missions/Social Concern Ministries*.

## HOW IS YOUR CHURCH LEADERSHIP INVOLVED IN AND SUPPORTING THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY?

Over 12 months, Lead Pastors met with the CM leadership to discuss CM-related issues an average of 4.5 times (minimum of 0, maximum of 30).

**CM representation at the top-decision making body however was somewhat limited.** Only 9 out of 20 (45%) churches had CM represented in the pastoral or staff team, and only 8 out of 20 (40%) Pastors indicating that CM was represented in the top decision-making body of the church.

**Nonetheless, the support given to CM by church leadership** was perceived by the CM leaders to be good, with CM leaders giving an average 4.1 on a 5-point scale<sup>5</sup> - amounting to "Good Support". This is not very different from how Lead Pastors rated themselves (average of 3.9 on a similar scale).

Furthermore, the **importance of CM was regularly stressed to the wider church congregation.** Out of 16 responses:

- 10 Pastors said they regularly emphasised CM through the pulpit;
- 9 indicated that they held special services (such as inter-generational services, "children's Sunday", CM weekend) or that the children were present at all Holy Communion Sundays;
- 7 Pastors mentioned involving the children in ministry service (e.g. ushering, corporate worship) or in providing visibility to the ministry by having the CM leader share annually at the main service.

We conclude with two issues that church leadership may want to lend emphasis to for their CMs.

<sup>5</sup> 1 = "No Support At All", 2 = "Very Little Support", 3 = "Moderate Support", 4 = "Good Support", 5 = "Very Good Support".

# 40%

*Percentage of churches that indicated that CM leaders were among their church's top decision-making body*

# 4.1 vs 3.9

*How Children's Ministry leaders rated the level of support given to their Ministry by church leaders (on a scale of 5)*

*How Lead Pastors rated the level of support given to their Children's Ministry leaders (on a scale of 5)*

## HOW SAFE ARE THE CHILDREN IN YOUR CHILDREN’S MINISTRY?

We asked CM leaders to share what child protection policies they had in place. 14 out of 16 CM leaders responded, of which 9 (50% of total) indicated detailed policies and measures. 5 indicated NIL or that they had no concrete measures in place.

Of particular note was that only 5 CMs (28%) had a code of conduct, with relevant training (or briefing) provided.

Other measures included supervision and vetting of CM teachers and volunteers, and the provision of security and forms.

**Table 7. Top 3 Forms of Child Protection Policies Children’s Ministries had in place (based on number of mentions).**

THEME	ELABORATION	MENTIONS (OUT OF 9 RESPONSES)
<b>Code of Conduct &amp; Training</b>	Written Code of Conduct for all volunteers; Yearly refresh and signing of conduct; Aligning expectations of conduct; safeguarding policies.	<b>5</b>
<b>Supervision &amp; Vetting</b>	Two teachers in each class (two-adult rule), multi-level interviews for new volunteer sign-ups, volunteer safety policy.	<b>4</b>
<b>Security &amp; Forms</b>	Security Officer; Welcome team; Guidelines on “what to do/not to do,” (for children); Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA); children’s ministry indemnity form.	<b>3</b>

### REFLECTION

*How can we be pre-emptive in putting basic safeguarding practices in place to protect our children, instead of waiting till harm happens to address safety frameworks?*

## HOW INCLUSIVE IS YOUR MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

We also asked CM leaders to share how their churches made provisions to include children with special needs (SN) – that is, children who require additional support due to disabilities or learning differences

This came primarily in the form of (a) SN-related training for CM teachers and volunteers, (b) Parent-driven communication and partnership, and (c) Customised in-class support and accommodation.

Eight CM leaders (44%) indicated no provision for children with SN.

**Table 8. Top 4 Kinds of Measures to Include Children with Special Needs (based on number of mentions)**

THEME	CORE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED	MENTIONS (OUT OF 10 RESPONSES)
<b>Teacher &amp; Volunteer Training/Equipping</b>	Teachers informed about SN, training workshops (external/internal), distributing handbooks, helping teachers understand/teach/manage SN children.	<b>7</b>
<b>Parent-Driven Communication &amp; Partnership</b>	Communicating with parents to find support, working with parents to clarify expectations, parent or volunteer sitting with the child, check-ins to understand needs.	<b>7</b>
<b>Customised In-Class Support &amp; Accommodation</b>	One-on-one assistance (youth assistant/teacher assistant), personal reward system, teacher assistants providing support, making all teachers aware of the child's needs.	<b>6</b>
<b>Dedicated/ Segregated Programmes</b>	Separate Special Needs Ministry, "Ohana" ministry catered for SN, separate SN classes, additional SN services on different days (Saturdays).	<b>4</b>

### REFLECTION

*How ready is your church's Children's Ministry to welcome children with special needs?*

## CONCLUSION

We hope that this study will stimulate churches to attend further to the state of their Children's Ministry, in recognition that the children are indeed critical for our future.

We conclude by restating the questions that were asked throughout this study, and by providing reflective responses from Pastors and Children's Ministry leaders who have seen the report.

1. What's the makeup of the children in your church?
2. What is success in Children's Ministry to You?
3. How do you raise, train and care for Children's Ministry staff and volunteers?
4. What are the pain points of your Children's Ministry?
5. How are you preparing children to respond to contemporary Issues?
6. How are you discipling the church to disciple the children?
7. How is your church leadership involved in and supporting the Children's Ministry?
8. How safe are the children in your Children's Ministry?
9. How inclusive is your ministry for children with special needs?

## ANNEX A

# **WRITTEN RESPONSES TO THE “CHURCH AND CHILDREN” STUDY 2025**

# THREE WAYS TO MEASURE SUCCESS IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

**SAMMI SI-HOE,  
HEAD OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY, SCRIPTURE UNION SINGAPORE**

Our children are the future of the Church. Presently, in this report, the 13.3% of children in churches is representative of the demographic of children within the general Singapore population. Though, Singapore faces a greying population, Christians need not be a dwindling number.

With a Christian population of about 18% in Singapore, there is still margin for growth in Christianity. If we could see an increase of children in the church beyond the average demographic of children in Singapore, the future of the Singapore Church could still have a positive outlook. As such, not only is discipling the children from the families within church important, evangelising the children beyond church walls becomes pertinent.

To do so, success in Children's Ministry should be three-fold:

- to reach children for Christ,
- to build children up in Christ and nurture children to remain committed to Christ as they transition into youth ministry
- to eventually become active serving members of their local church.

It is widely acknowledged that most Christians (around 94-95%) make their decision to follow Jesus before age 18, with a significant portion in the "4-14 Window". Hence, there is the impetus to reach children in ways that are contemporary to their generation yet firmly rooted in Biblical Truth.

It would be encouraging to see Lead Pastors support and raise awareness of their church's Children's Ministry, as well as, to get everyone involved in the building up of our children within the church. To do so, the local church must come alongside families so that families are better able to provide the primary discipleship for their children. Finally, we must keep praying for our children to encounter and experience the love of Christ which anchors them as committed Christians all through their lives.

Together, may churches and parachurch organisations in Singapore join hands in winning the children for Christ! God willing, perhaps, the next wave of revival in Singapore could even come through the children.

# ARE WE HELPING OR HINDERING OUR CHILDREN FROM COMING TO KNOW JESUS?

**ELVIN AND ESTHER FOONG**

**FOUNDERS/PRINCIPAL TRAINERS, KIDMIN SINGAPORE**

We would like to thank the State of the Church team for raising timely and necessary questions through this study. Children and children's ministry have often been overlooked or misunderstood within the wider life of the church, so it is both critical and commendable that attention is being given to this demographic. This report rightly invites churches to reflect on whether children are merely accommodated, or intentionally disciplined as vital members of God's Kingdom today.

While the small sample size and reliance on self-reporting limit how broadly the findings can be generalised, the data nonetheless surfaces important patterns that merit serious reflection.

For instance, only 13 out of 20 Lead Pastors articulated a **clear mission or vision for children's ministry**. This raises important questions:

- Are some churches unclear about the purpose of CM?
- Is its direction assumed rather than intentionally articulated?
- How clearly is vision communicated to CM leaders and volunteers?
- How does this shape downstream realities such as curriculum choices, volunteer equipping, and parent partnerships?

It is encouraging that both lead pastors and CM leaders identify **discipleship and transformation towards Christlikeness** as key measures of ministry success. This aligns with KidminSG's 2024 survey of 120 practitioners, where an emphasis on spiritual formation emerged as the strongest indicator of ministry vitality. Nevertheless, future studies should explore how effective churches have been in achieving these aims.

One notable omission in reported CM practices is **intentional reflection**. While teaching and application are rightly emphasised, insufficient space is often given for children to wrestle with Scripture and allow God's Word to take root in their hearts. When lessons are rushed, the outcome can unintentionally prioritise information transfer over deep conviction and transformation, thus running counter to the stated goal of discipleship.

The report also highlights persistent challenges around **manpower and volunteer equipping**.

We must ask how these pressures affect the quality of Christian education. Do our budgets, training priorities, and expectations reflect what we say children’s ministry is meant to be? In KidminSG’s 2024 survey, 67% of CM leaders and volunteers felt that their congregations viewed children’s ministry primarily as child-minding rather than discipleship.

Related to this is how the importance of children’s ministry is **communicated to the wider congregation**. While it is encouraging to see greater visibility and inclusion of children in corporate worship, presence alone does not equal meaningful engagement. Intergenerational engagement must move beyond tokenism towards shared spiritual formation.

Finally, the findings on **safeguarding** should alarm us. The absence of clear, enforced policies in many churches is deeply concerning. If recent cases of abuse have taught us anything, it is that good intentions are no substitute for clear policies and accountability. There is no such thing as a “safe church” if the most vulnerable among us are inadequately protected.

The subtitle of this report poses a question we cannot ignore: **Are children merely demographic weight, or are they future critical?** If they are truly critical, then their discipleship, dignity, and safety cannot be deferred.

Jesus’ words — “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them” (Matthew 19:14) — call us to examine whether our structures, priorities, and assumptions are helping or hindering children from encountering Him. Our prayer is that this report will not only inform us, but move the Church in Singapore towards deeper conviction and faithful action on behalf of a demographic close to the heart of God.

***Do our church budgets, training priorities and expectations reflect what we say children’s ministry is meant to be? Intergenerational engagement must move beyond tokenism towards shared spiritual formation.***

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY AS MIRROR, NOT MARGIN

**HOWARD KUAY**

**PASTOR, CHANGI BAPTIST CHURCH**

Children are probably the most ironic age group in the Church. We pray for more children to come, lament declining birth rates, and worry about the future of our congregations. Yet, when children make noise in the sanctuary, fidget during worship, or ask awkward questions, our instinct is to hush them or contain them elsewhere.

As a parent, I feel this tension personally. As a Pastor, I recognise it institutionally. We want children present, but often on adult terms.

## WHO DISCIPLES OUR CHILDREN?

One aspect of the report that stood out was the lack of male representation. As a parent of two boys, I hope my children will encounter good role models, both male and female. As a Pastor of a small church, I am keenly aware of manpower limitations. In my experience, this lack of male presence is not because men do not care about children, but many struggle to see CM as a place where they belong or are needed.

This raises uncomfortable but necessary question: Is there an unspoken gender bias in how we view children's discipleship?

As both a father and a Pastor, I wonder what this communicates to our children, especially our boys, about faith, leadership, and discipleship. Perhaps this is less a problem to be solved and more an invitation for churches to gently reimagine children's ministry as a shared responsibility rather than a specialised corner.

## WHO GETS TO SERVE AND WHO GETS LEFT OUT?

The report also highlights how churches assess and recruit CM volunteers. Like many Pastors, I want those who serve our children to be spiritually mature, trustworthy, and committed. At the same time, as a parent, I am aware that knowing church life well does not always translate into knowing children well.

Children need adults who understand their world, their fears, their questions, and their ways of learning. The fact that fewer than half of the churches surveyed provide formal training or mentorship for CM volunteers gives me pause. I wonder whether we place high expectations at the point of entry, but offer limited support once people step in.

This raises gentle questions worth pondering: Are our requirements and equipping practices adequate, or might they unintentionally discourage willing individuals who could grow into excellent children's ministers with the right support?

From a child's perspective, the most formative adults are often not the most polished, but the most present – those who puts them before the lesson.

## **A MIRROR HELD UP TO THE CHURCH**

As a small-church Pastor, I also resonated with the question of what children's ministry is meant to be. With only a handful of children, CM can feel fragile – one family away from disappearing.

Yet the report nudged me to think differently. What if children's ministry is not about gathering children by age group, but shaping the whole church to be a place where children belong, are known and are disciplined alongside others? Is CM worth a whole-of-church approach?

As a parent, I would say yes. As a Pastor, I am still learning what that looks like in practice.

In the end, the report gently reminded me that children's ministry is a mirror. It reflects how we treat those with the least power, the smallest voices, and the shortest attention spans. It reflects priorities and our theology in lived form. For churches like mine, this report is not a critique to defend against, but an invitation to reflect, adjust and grow.

Perhaps the future of the Church will depends less on how many children we have, and more on how faithfully we walk with the ones God has already entrusted to us.

***What if children's ministry is not about gathering children by age group, but shaping the whole church to be a place where children belong, are known and are disciplined alongside others? Is Children's Ministry worth a whole-of-church approach?***

# RAISING FAMILIES OF FAITH WILL REQUIRE COUNTER-CULTURAL LIFESTYLES

**DELIA NG**  
**CEO, FOCUS ON THE FAMILY SINGAPORE**

In a world where there are many cultural narratives competing for children's impressionable minds, it is critical that we are proactive to not only disciple them in biblical truth but also partner with them to win their peers. Reaching one child often means reaching an entire family. When children encounter Christ, parents are more likely to engage with the church, creating a ripple effect of discipleship.

*2 Corinthians 5:14-15*

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

When we are hungry for more people to experience the reality of God, it compels us towards a counter-culture lifestyle of making daily choices that go beyond our own comfort and convenience to connect with them.

Here are three lessons we glean, both from this study and our experience working with families.

## **1. WE NEED A POSTURE SHIFT FROM BEING CONSUMERS TO CONTRIBUTORS.**

To raise children who love God and love people, our children must see faith modelled in tangible ways by parents who are committed to go beyond discussions of the Christian faith, but to also demonstrate a life on-mission.

This may be seen in lifestyle shifts such as making time to serve and build God's house, fostering a family culture that proactively befriends with unchurched families. When children see their parents doing this, they learn that Christianity is not a Sunday ritual but a daily worship.

### ***Practical ways for children to see faith in action:***

- Family Service Days: Organise opportunities where families serve together in outreach projects (e.g. adopt a block with regular visits, prayer walks).
- Come to the Table: Going beyond evangelistic events, explore inviting classmate's family or neighbour to join a family meal where more personal connections can be established.

## 2. DIRECT LINEAR GROWTH PATHWAYS INTO A CYCLICAL PROCESS

While emphasis is placed on ensuring smooth transition from children ministry to youth ministry, there is value to promote cyclical renewal where opportunities are given for older youths to return to serve in children's ministry and outreach.

### ***Practical ways to promote intergenerational impact:***

- Junior Volunteers: Establish roles for older teens to assist in children's camps, worship, activities, or small group discussions.
- Community Outreach: Older youths and tertiary students can be involved in reading groups, creative arts or sports clubs to reach unchurched children in the community.

## 3. FAITH AT HOME REQUIRES PRACTICE

Oftentimes, Christian parents are familiar with content from the Bible but find it challenging to engage in conversations about the application of the Word. While curriculum and resources are helpful, parents would benefit from gaining confidence to have faith conversations.

### ***Practical ways to practice faith conversations:***

- Combined Service: Instead of neatly segmenting the church congregation, combined services can be designed to create opportunities for parents to try facilitating reflection and devotionals on the spot (e.g. short object lessons).
- Primers: Going beyond conversation starters, a simple guide for parents with various perspective and examples on contemporary topics.

***To raise children who love God and love people, our children must see faith modelled in tangible ways by parents who are committed to go beyond discussions of the Christian faith, but to also demonstrate a life on-mission.***

# 危机: CRISIS OR RENEWAL?

**NORMAN NG**

**SENIOR PASTOR, 3:16 CHURCH**

**STRATEGIC COORDINATOR, WINNING THE CHILDREN, LOVESINGAPORE**

This year's State of the Church survey shows that children (aged 12 and below) make up 13.3% of Singapore's churches, a figure that closely mirrors the resident population, where about 13.6% are aged 14 and below. In other words, our churches are aging at roughly the same pace as the nation.

As followers of Jesus, this should give us pause. These aging demographics raise important questions about how we value children and whether the life of the church is being renewed from one generation to the next. Our response will shape how the Church in Singapore navigates this crossroads of crisis or renewal.

Looking ahead, national trends suggest that the number of children in Singapore will continue to decline. While this may not apply uniformly across all churches, SOTC data indicates that smaller churches often have a lower proportion of children, making generational renewal more difficult.

Over time, families with children may gravitate toward churches with stronger and more stable children's ministries, leaving others increasingly vulnerable.

Aging churches, especially those with few children also face a crisis of continuity. Without intentional focus on raising the next generation, long-term sustainability beyond the current generation becomes uncertain.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES LOOMING FOR SMALLER CHURCHES

On the surface, churches in Singapore often appear very healthy. We are home to vibrant mega churches, impressive cathedrals, and global conferences. Yet the reality is that most churches in Singapore are small to medium-sized congregations.

Pastoring such a church myself, I know how every member, including every child, is precious. Children are not an optional demographic; they are inherently valuable and essential for succession and renewal.

If we ignore the declining presence of children today, we will feel the consequences sooner than we expect.

Throughout Scripture, God consistently emphasises the place of children in His purposes. From the call to be fruitful and multiply to Jesus' own welcome of children, they are presented as a source of strength and hope. Through the blessing of children, churches are meant to be fruitful communities where life is renewed from generation to generation.

Yet as a relatively young pastor, I have observed that more young Christian couples are choosing not to have children. This may reflect a broader cultural shift, where children are sometimes viewed as burdens rather than blessings, and other forms of self-actualisation are prioritised.

This shift is reflected in a sobering statistic. A 2019 Institute of Policy Studies working paper reported that two out of three young Christians in Singapore (aged 18 to 35) believe abortion is permissible in certain circumstances. Beneath this lies a diminished recognition of children as sacred gifts God intends for families and for the church.

### **DO WE SEE CHILDREN THE WAY JESUS DOES?**

Similar attitudes were not uncommon in Jesus' day. Children were often overlooked and undervalued. They held no social status or power and were entirely dependent on adults for protection and provision. On one occasion, the disciples even rebuked those who were bringing children to Jesus to be blessed.

Yet Jesus assigned children great value. He welcomed them, blessed them, and repeatedly used them as examples for His disciples.

The question we must ask is: Do we value children the way Jesus values them?

There is a well-known Chinese saying that the word crisis (危机, wēiji) is made up of two characters: Crisis and opportunity. This aptly describes the moment we are in. The crisis of an aging church; the opportunity is to course-correct by recognising the value of children and prioritise winning them.

The Lord desires His churches to be filled with children. There are many children today who are searching for a good Father. We have the privilege of bringing them home, so they may know what God's family feels like. Let the little children come to Jesus!

STATE OF THE  
**CHURCH**  
  
SINGAPORE 2025

**THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN SINGAPORE STUDY**  
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