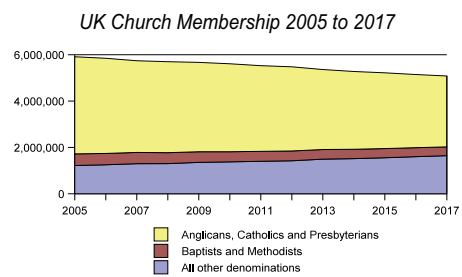


The UK Church in 2018

The church is both declining and growing! In terms of Sunday attendance, 5.3% of the English population attended on a Sunday in 2017, and 7.2% of the Scottish population in 2016. In Aberdeen City, for example, the overall percentage is 5.7% (from the Fourth Scottish Church Census), but it was 8.4% in Aberdeenshire, the only Council in Scotland where numbers grew between 2002 and 2016.

There are 270 different denominations in the UK, 95 of which exist in Scotland. For simplicity these are put into 10 groups, the three largest of which are the Anglicans, Catholics and Presbyterians. Between them, these three account for one fifth, 20%, of all the denominations, but three-fifths, 60%, of all the members, and all three are declining. (Note the switch from attendance to membership).

Two smaller groups, the Baptists and the Methodists are also declining. Together, they represent 4% of the denominations and 7% of the members.



That leaves five groups: the Independent Churches (such as FIEC and the Brethren), New Churches (such as Vineyard and Newfrontiers), Orthodox, Pentecostals and the Smaller Denominations (such as

the Salvation Army, Quakers, Seventh-Day Adventists, all the many immigrant churches, and so on). Each of these five groups is growing in membership terms. They account for 76% of the UK's denominations but only 33% of church members. Unfortunately the decline by the larger denominations is too great to be offset by the growth, as the graph shows.

These 76% of growing denominations grew at the average rate of 3.3% per annum between 2012 and 2017, but a tenth of them (19 out of 174) grew faster than that, at an average rate of 8.8%! Which are these faster growing denominations? They fall into roughly three equal groups:

1) Immigrant churches (especially Poles, Romanians, Filipinos and Koreans in England and Chinese in Scotland). Most of the Poles are Roman Catholic; many of the Romanians are Orthodox, but the others are mostly Evangelical.

2) The Pentecostal churches, which are mostly Black although welcoming all nationalities. The largest of these is the Redeemed Christian Church of God [RCCG] (planting 800 churches in the UK in the last 20 years, 50 in Scotland and 14 in Aberdeenshire), now overall in the UK just slightly larger than Elim. Also important are the Church of Pentecost, the Potters House Christian Fellowship, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Scotland (part of the New Testament Church of God).

3) What might be called the "White" growing denominations, although again many different ethnicities attend these churches which include Hillsong which originated in Australia, though yet to reach Scotland, Churches of Christ, the FIEC, Vineyard, and Messy Church (which many would say is not really a separate church but there are over 3,000 of them in the UK, and 700 in Scotland).

What is making these groups grow?

1) The immigrant churches are effectively saying, "Come and join us; we are like you and speak your language." This is a modern version of Donald McGavran's famous Growth Principle, "People like to stay with their own people," the so-called Homogeneous Unit Principle.

2) The RCCG uses a mantra straight out of Nigerian bush country, "Plant a church within 10 minutes walking distance" (of where people live), which is equivalent to about a ½ mile circle. They have a large dedicated research team to identify the key places in the UK. Effectively this is the "parish" system of the Anglicans and Catholics, and the RCCG in fact call their churches "parishes." Other Black denominations follow the same kind of principle: "You live in our area; why not join us?"

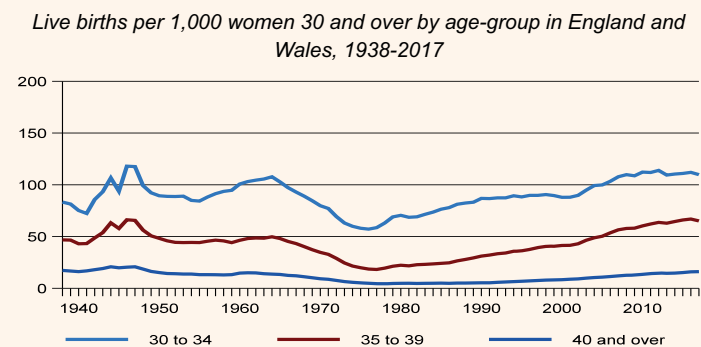
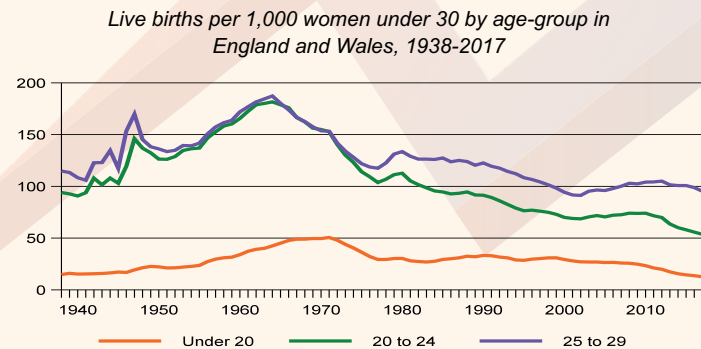
3) The "White" churches are planting churches where there is a need or an opportunity. "No Evangelical church in that community," or "Please come and help this congregation" (the HTB model), or "Can we please borrow/hire/use your school/village hall/whatever to start a church?"

Most of the Black and "White" churches are Evangelical. The above suggests three key questions to ask for an ongoing strategy: **Who** are the people like us to whom we can say, "Please join us?"; **Where** is a strategic local church/centre to attract the people who are close to us, such as neighbours and friends?; **What** should we do to attract others, new attendees/supporters/learners /disciples/ the unreached?

SOURCES: UK Church Statistics, No 3, 2018 Edition, ADCB Publishers, 2017; Growth Amidst Decline, What the Fourth Scottish Church Census Reveals, ADCB Publishers, 2017.

Changing Birth Rates

Around 700,000 children are born in England and Wales every year; the number was slightly higher in 2012, and has dropped 7% since then. White births are counted regardless of the age of the mother, essentially as a "rate" they are applicable in the main to women aged between 15 and 44 since births outside these ages are extremely few. The following two graphs illustrate the number of live births in England and Wales for every thousand women for those under 30 and those 30 and over respectively, using the six age-bands by which the Office for National Statistics analyses the data.



The graphs show that a large number of births understandably occurred after the end of WWII, especially among women in their 20s, doubtless anxious to start a family in many cases. There were also an exceptional number of births to women in their 30s. After these high numbers, births slowed in the early 1950s, but for those in their 20s especially they increased quite greatly between 1955 and 1970 when, on average, each year one woman in every 6 or 7 was having a baby.

The birth rate dropped markedly across all age groups in the 1970s, picked up a little around 1980 and has continued to decline more or less continually since then for those in their 20s, increasing slightly for the older 20s over the last 10 years. The number of births to teenagers held reasonably firm between 1980 and 2010, but has steadily dropped since to only 1 teenager in 80 having a baby in 2017 (the peak was 1 in 20 in 1971, 5%).

At the same time the number of births to older women has steadily increased over the last 40 years, especially to women in their late 30s, rising from a baby for 1 woman in 55 in 1977 to 1 woman in every 15 by 2017 aged 35-39. The number for those 40 or over has also increased, though more recently, rising from 1 for every 200 women in 1990 to 1 for every 60 in 2017.

Why these more recent changes? Many women are putting their career before starting a family. While many who cohabit do have children, more couples who are married have a family. There are reports that non-marital sex is less frequent among millennials, which presumably means that fewer women in their 20s have unexpected children. Family planning is routine. Cohabitation break-ups and divorce mean many women are in a second relationship in their 30s and often have a child with their new partner. Medical advances have decreased the risk of births to older women.

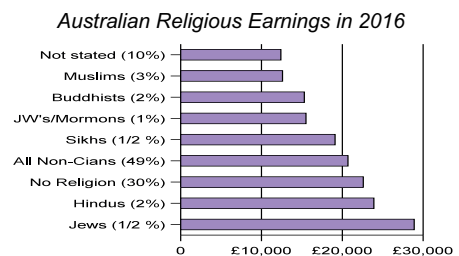
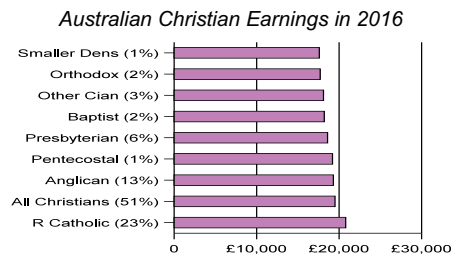
Do these changing birth rates have any relevance for the Church? Declining birth rates in those under 30 might suggest an age-group without the encumbrance of a family and more readily available to "reach and teach." Rising birth rates in those over 30 might indicate opportunity for an older "church family worker" with appropriate experience.

SOURCE: Office for National Statistics website, Birth Statistics, 18th July 2018

P2|FUTUREFIRST|1018

Churchgoer Earnings

The UK Census has never as yet requested household earnings, but the Australian Census does. Since the Australian Census also has a detailed question on religion, it is possible to see how much people of a particular denomination earned on average annually in 2016. The results are shown in the following charts, converting the published amounts of weekly income in Australian dollars into annual salaries in UK pounds, using the 2016 exchange rate of 1 A\$ = £0.5878. [Cian = Christian, Dens = Denominations, and JW = Jehovah's Witnesses]. The percentage in brackets is the percentage of that group in the population.



The overall Christian mean of Australian earnings in 2016 was £19,500 (51% of the population), influenced strongly by the Roman Catholics, 23% of the population, who earned the most on average (£20,800). The Anglicans were the second strongest denomination at 13% earning on average £19,300.

Overall, non-Christians (49% of the population) earned £20,700 in 2016 on average. This ranged from the 1/6% of the population who are Jews who received £28,900 on average, to more than double that figure to those who didn't state their religion on the form (it's a voluntary question) who averaged just £12,400. This last is very close to the Muslim average of £12,600, and both well behind the overall Australian average of £20,200.

The variation by religion is much greater than that by denomination. The lowest earnings on the Christian chart are for the Smaller Denominations, comprising the Lutherans, Salvation Army and Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA), averaging overall £17,600, which is 15% lower than the Roman Catholics. The Lutherans averaged £18,600, the SDA £17,000 and the Salvation Army £14,900 (about the same as the Buddhists on £15,300).

An interesting comparison can also be made with the earnings of Ministers of Religion, also available through the Australian Census which ask for a person's occupation. The lowest paid are the Roman Catholic priests, 60% of whom received just £7,600 in 2016, and Salvation Army officers, 57% of whom received the same amount. Some Roman Catholic priests clearly receive much more as their overall average was £17,300, while the overall average for a Salvation Army Officer was £15,400.

The overall average stipend for a Christian minister in Australia in 2016 was £31,300, while the average full-time employee received £41,000 according to the figures given. The highest denominational ministers were the Anglicans on £38,600, followed by SDA on £38,000 and those in the United Church who received £37,500. However, only two-thirds, 68%, of Christian ministers worked full-time. The average salary in the UK for a full-time employee in 2016 was £27,600, but there is a purchasing power disparity between the UK and Australia and a truer equivalent would put the UK at £31,100, but still a very large difference.

It would be fascinating if such charts could be drawn for the UK, but our Census would not only need to ask about income but also much more detail in the religion question. It should be remembered that the Census, whether in the UK or Australia, only requests information about religious adherents not actual churchgoers.

SOURCES: Pointers, Vol 28, No 2, June 2018, Page 12; Australian Bureau of Statistics results and ppp figures as given in Wikipedia, accessed August 2018.

Marital Status

The marital status of the population is no longer published in Scotland, but is still available for England, Wales and N Ireland. As mentioned below, the general population is less likely to reflect the marital status of those attending church, and this therefore may be helpful background for church leaders preparing for special outreach events or services.

The Table gives the percentage of the population by gender in each category for England, Wales and N Ireland in 2016 and for Scotland in 2008 (the latest year of publication). Civil P = Civil Partnership. The figures are for adults and thus exclude boys and girls up to the age of 15, all single (about 19% of the total population).

Adult Marital Status by Gender for each Country in the UK

Country	England		Wales		Scotland		N Ireland		UK	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Single	38.0	31.4	36.8	29.9	38.1	31.5	39.4	33.1	38.0	31.4
Married	51.9	50.0	52.1	48.3	50.6	47.4	52.6	50.6	51.8	49.7
Civil P	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	~	~	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Divorced	6.5	9.2	7.8	10.1	7.4	9.1	4.7	6.1	6.6	9.2
Widowed	3.4	9.3	3.2	11.6	3.9	12.0	3.2	10.1	3.4	9.6
Base(=100%) in millions	21.89	22.81	1.24	1.31	2.03	2.22	0.69	0.74	25.85	27.08

The Table shows that in all four countries a greater percentage of men are single than women, and also a greater percentage are married, although the gender differences are much smaller than for being single. On the other hand women are much more likely to be divorced or widowed than men, with widows outnumbering widowers almost 3 to 1.

Wales has fewer single men but more married men than in either England or Scotland (but not N Ireland). Both Wales and Scotland have higher percentages of both sexes who are divorced than England and N Ireland, and both have higher percentages of widows.

N Ireland has the most single and also the most married men and women in the UK. It also has the fewest divorced. Pro rata it has as many widowers as Wales, both countries being lower than England or Scotland. On the other hand, N Ireland has more widows than in England but fewer than in Wales or Scotland.

It is perhaps worth noting that in 2016 Civil Partnerships were well below 1% of the general population, though such observations may well become of little value if Civil Partnerships are re-defined in the future as equivalent to marriage.

There are very few studies of marital status of churchgoers. One undertaken for the Langham Partnership in 2012 showed that across the congregations surveyed about two-thirds were married (more than the half suggested by the Table), but far fewer were single, suggesting that while married people may be drawn to attend church, single people are less likely to do so. There were only half the proportion of divorced people in church as in the population, but about the same proportion of those who have been widowed.

SOURCES: Marital and Civil Partnership Status by Sex latest tables from the Office for National Statistics, National Records for Scotland and the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (Census 2011); Living the Christian Life, survey for the Langham International Partnership, Brierley Consultancy, 2012, Report 1, Appendix 2.

DISCUSSING FAITH

When a group of lay Anglican church leaders met in High Wycombe some years ago one of the questions they considered was, "What are the reasons our congregation doesn't grow?" Top of the list for five of the six churches present was "Lack of confidence in discussing our faith." Many others would support this finding, though it's unknown how true it really is.

The American research group, Barna, undertook some research to ascertain why people are reluctant to discuss their faith. They found two broad reasons why Christian people so often don't talk about their faith – avoidance and ambivalence.

The top *avoidance* reasons were:

- 28% (A) Religious conversations always seem to create tension or arguments
- 17% (B) I'm put off by how religion has been politicised

The top *ambivalence* reasons were:

- 23% (C) I'm not religious and I don't care about these kinds of topics
- 17% (D) I don't feel I know enough to talk about religious or spiritual topics

Over a quarter of those interviewed (29%) said that Reason (A) was the top reason why Christians don't want to talk about their faith. Half of those interviewed (55%) said that Reason (C) was the top reason those with no faith didn't have spiritual conversations. Reason (C) was especially true of those in their 40s and 50s (32%), while less true for Millennials (in their 20s) (17%).

Other reasons given were: "I don't want to be known as a religious person" (7%), "I'm afraid people will see me as a fanatic or extremist" (5%, but 10% for Millennials), "Religious language and jargon feels cheesy or outdated" (4%, but 9% liberals and 1% conservatives).

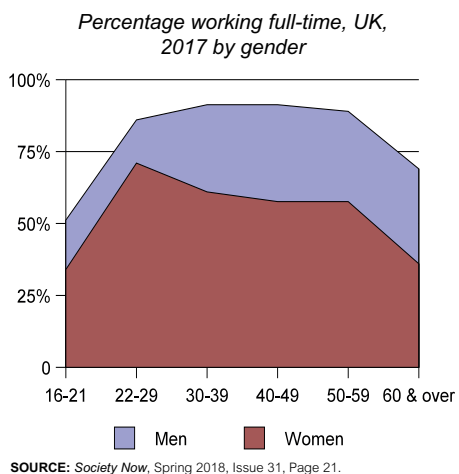
Some of the above will be true of the UK. Other UK reasons could include: "I leave that to the 'professionals' (ie ministers and other trained people)"; "I don't feel theologically or academically qualified enough"; "Belief is a personal matter; it's intrusive to push one's beliefs on someone else"; "These days it's politically incorrect to share one's faith; I might lose my job" etc. What teaching needs to be given to help Christian people overcome these hesitations?

SOURCE: Barna Update, 14th August, 2018.

P3|FUTUREFIRST|1018

SNOWFLAKES

Gender working gap. The graph shows the percentage of men and women in full-time employment (so the unemployed are excluded). Taking the percentages away from 100 shows the percentage in part-time jobs. It can be easily seen that women are less likely at all ages to work full-time.



SOURCE: Society Now, Spring 2018, Issue 31, Page 21.

Cities. The Cape Town Commitment from Lausanne states that "Cities are where four major kinds of people are most to be found: the next generation of young people, the most unreached peoples who have migrated, the culture shapers, the poorest of the poor." The average age of Christian adherents in cities is 55, that of Buddhists is 32 and that of Muslims is 25 according to the latest issue of "The best of Lausanne."

SOURCE: Lausanne Movement, communications@lausanne.org.

The Labour Market in the UK is gradually changing. 20 years ago in 1997 a quarter, 23%, of employees worked in the public sector, something not very different in 2018 (22%). The proportions working in agriculture & mining and construction have hardly changed (1%, 2%, and 7% respectively) but whereas in 1997 17% worked in manufacturing, only half as many, 9%, are thus employed in 2018. The major part of the change is seen in the growth of the education and health sectors, up from 19% in 1997 to 23% in 2018. Ministers of religion will be part of "other services," up from 5% to 6%.

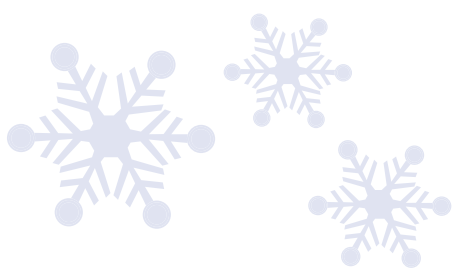
SOURCE: Employment by industry, Office for National Statistics, 14th August 2018.

Church use. Some rural Anglican churches are being used as shops run by volunteers, doctors' surgeries, post offices, a florist, gift shop, bakery and now – the latest – for camping (in the village of Booton, 7 miles west of Aylsham in Norfolk). They are also used for services when needed!

Source: Article in The Economist, 28th July, 2018, Page 21.

From a reader in Guernsey. "Many thanks for the article from Pastor John, Strengthen the Faithful (sent with the August issue), about the divine interventions in the Second World War. How the world has changed. You can remember well the events at the time. I was born in 1942 so was in the cradle in a wartime environment, which really has affected me ever since. My parents returned to Guernsey in September 1945. There were swastikas everywhere, three of the biggest guns in the world (the Mirus battery) and stories by the hundred of what happened. All this was embedded in the brain of a three-year-old and it is still there. In the teeth of certain defeat God was faithful."

Several others have also commented their appreciation for this particular enclosed article. Thank you!



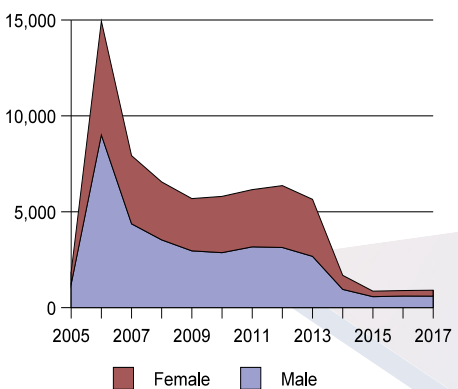
P4|FUTUREFIRST|1018

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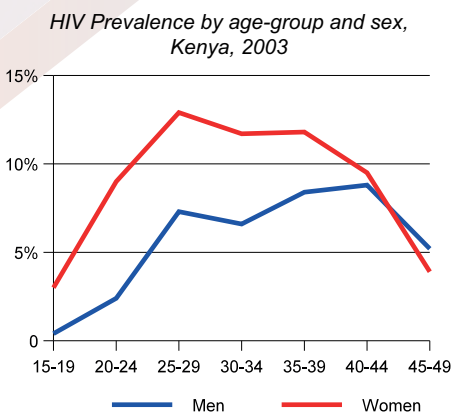
Civil Partnerships have been permitted in England and Wales since December 2005. The graph shows the number registered since then, broken down by gender. With the possibility of having same-sex marriages, since March 2014, the number has dropped quite dramatically. The number of female civil partnerships slightly exceeded the number of male in 2010, 2012 and 2013. In the 13 years since they were introduced there have been a total of 65,280, just 2% of all the 3.2 million marriages in that period.

Civil Partnerships, by gender, 2005 to 2017



SOURCE: Civil Partnership numbers, Office for National Statistics, 16th August 2018.

HIV prevalence. The Demographic and Health Surveys Programme, part of USAID, recently published its latest Report on AIDS prevalence. In 2017 some 37 million people globally (0.8% of adults) had the HIV/AIDS virus, of whom 2 million were children. A third, 30%, probably did not know they had it. The incidence is highest in Africa, where the prevalence was 19% in South Africa in 2013, 14% in Zimbabwe, 12% in Mozambique and Zambia, 9% in Malawi, 6% in Uganda, 5% in Kenya and Tanzania. These rates vary very greatly with age, as shown in these graphs of the incidence among Kenyan people in 2003, but similar graphs could be drawn for other countries:



The main age of infection by AIDS is when men and women are in their 20s, confirming the necessity of AIDS prevention teaching to be given in Secondary Schools and village classes in these countries.

SOURCE: HIV Prevalence and Associated Factors Report, John Chipeta et al, http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR175/12Chapter12.pdf

For parenting and young people. "Spiritual fatherlessness" is increasing due to the church gender imbalance, both within families, and within the Christian community. This can impact on children and young people in many ways, including how they learn about their self-identity and healthy Christian relationships. A report from Youth for Christ, Generation Z: Rethinking Culture found the Number One positive influencer for 11-18 year olds was family.¹⁶

For Christian marriage in the future. Fewer Christian women are now having children and fewer children are now able to grow up in a family with two Christian parents. Only 50% of the children of committed Christians later become committed Christians themselves.¹⁷ If current trends continue, only about 16% of today's church's grandchildren will have two Christian parents.

Ways forward

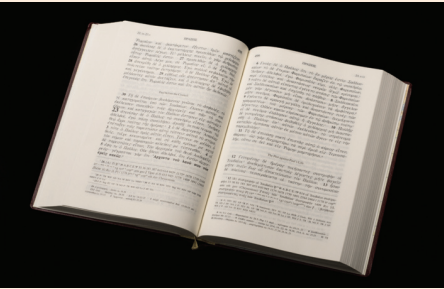
Current information suggests that ways forward include:

- Collaboration between national churches and denominations to produce relevant and more regular longitudinal data to inform further action.
- Recruitment of a wider range of people (personalities and characteristics) into church leadership.

- For local churches to develop specific men's ministries that focus on effective evangelism and discipleship.
- For initial and continuing ministerial training, national conferences and local churches to include input on effective men's ministry, healthy Christian singleness, dating, marriage, and support for young people around relationships.

These and many further practical solutions are shared in **7 Reasons Your Church Needs More Men** by contributors including Christian Vision for Men, Ridley Hall Theological College Cambridge, Marriage Foundation, New Wine, Youth for Christ, Care for the Family. The aim is that by working together, the church can successfully become gender balanced and support everyone's wellbeing.

Readers who would like the References and the Engage cross-sectional diagram please email peter@brierleyres.org.



REFLECTION

Many people seek success in life, whether in their exams, career, finances, family, sport or other activities. This man sought success also. He had been given a major assignment, and wanted to prove he was worthy of leadership. He had been given vast resources – over 200,000 soldiers (more than double the British Army in 2018!) – and he won the battle, but didn't totally follow God-given instructions he had received. Instead of destroying them, Saul kept the King of the Amalekites alive and saved the best of the sheep and cattle. Sometimes we have to aim for more than success, and Samuel made it clear that obedience is a greater priority.

He was given success beyond his wildest hopes. A foreign religion was mandated upon the entire population with priests salaried by the state, and he despaired. So much evil worship! But the extensive drought made the King desperate and, when confronted, he yielded to the astonishing demand that all the priests collectively come and pray not for the needed rain but for fire. But no fire came, despite Elijah's taunts. But the Lord did send fire for Elijah's water-logged sacrifice, and the watching crowd finished off all the Baal priests, and then the rain poured. But Elijah ran 300 miles to Sinai to save being killed himself. Sometimes fear of the consequences is greater than the triumph of obedient success.

He was successful too, and he didn't want to be! But 120,000 people were doomed unless he went with God's message. After three days in a whale, Jonah went! He was more than successful – Nineveh's people repented en masse. Jonah rebutted the accolade; success, even obedient success, is not always agreeable to the prejudiced.

An incredible sight! Walking on water! "Can I come too?" asked Peter. "Come," said Jesus, and Peter came. More than success at doing the impossible – then he saw the waves, took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. He got what he wanted but lost it and got wet!

Success often has its snares and pitfalls. The money is made, the position is obtained, the church flourishes, the credit plaudits roll. But somewhere in it all God's priority gets lost. Is the word "success" in God's vocabulary? "Triumph," yes! The triumph of obedience, tenacity, compassion, initiative, and other Spirit-given characteristics. Too much success as well as lack of success can in fact sometimes put us off focussing on the essentials. It is so easy to take your eye off the target. The main thing is keeping the main thing the main thing.

Making Sense of Life

The Christian Research Association of Australia, together with other Australian research groups, with funding from the Australian Research Council, undertook a large survey on "Well-being and Security." A total of 1,514 replies encompassing 98 questions, more than half on religious matters, was received, totalling some 441 possible answers.

The questions focussed on "who believes what," seeking to encompass all spiritualities, and from there a range of 11 levels of spiritual or secular involvement in life was deduced. Each was then analysed by a wide range of sociological and other factors, seeking to identify those which made a strong contribution to well-being from the variation in the answers. This enabled understanding of the key factors in assessing a person's spiritual attitude. It is very likely that British people would react similarly to Australians since the demographic and other measurements fit fairly closely with British comparisons.

From this list of eleven levels 8 groups were delineated and then analysed in terms of importance across a wide range of some 102 factors. Just 18 of these factors proved significantly strong (positively or negatively) and are shown in the Table. The group on other religions (2%) is omitted.

A)	18%	An active Christian religious orientation believing it right to question one's beliefs
B)	6%	An active Christian religious orientation which did not believe it right to question traditional beliefs
C)	8%	Those strongly influenced by New Age (or Buddhist) thinking
D)	9%	Land and nature spirituality
E)	16%	Others: Something beyond this life that makes sense of it all
F)	27%	Others: Uncertain about the beyond
G)	14%	Others: Nothing beyond this life

Almost three-fifths (57%), E, F and G, are in the "Others" categories, and a quarter (24%), A and B, in the active Christian orientation. What are the indicators for wellbeing in life from these?

Item	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Importance accorded to wealth	x	x	~	~	✓	✓	✓
Optimism	✓	✓	~	✓	~	x	x
I feel I know my place in the universe	✓	✓	~	~	x	x	x
I believe that my life fits into some sort of great scheme of things	✓	✓	✓	~	~	x	x
Openness to personal growth	~	x	✓	✓	~	x	x
Fears about environmental happenings	~	~	✓	✓	~	~	x
Fears about technological changes	✓	✓	✓	~	~	~	x
Fears about social happenings	~	✓	~	~	~	~	x
Satisfaction with natural environment	✓	✓	x	x	~	~	~
Satisfaction with (Australian) government	✓	✓	x	~	~	~	~
Satisfaction with business	~	~	x	~	~	~	~
Enjoying life (food, sex, leisure)	x	x	~	~	~	~	~
Broadmindedness (tolerance of different ideas and beliefs)	~	x	~	✓	✓	~	~
Being helpful (working for the welfare of others)	✓	~	✓	~	~	x	x
Being concerned for social justice and the environment	~	~	✓	✓	~	x	~
Voluntary involvement	✓	~	~	✓	x	x	x
Hours of voluntary help	✓	~	~	✓	x	x	~
Helped people in a variety of ways	✓	~	✓	✓	~	x	~
TOTAL ✓/x	11/2	7/4	7/3	9/1	2/3	1/9	1/9

This Table may be interpreted as follows. The first item (attitude to wealth's importance), for example, was strongly positive for groups E, F and G, but strongly negative for groups A and B, but neither weak nor strong for groups C and D. Only these 18 statements had an overall positive association with well-being.

Those with some kind of belief scored the most positives, and those with personally-held Christian beliefs (A) the highest number of ticks and almost the smallest number of crosses. The usefulness of such evaluations is that it allows an understanding of the different perspectives that are present in the people we meet, whether these are neighbours, strangers, or people coming to our church.

SOURCE: *Spirit Matters*, Peter Calder, Philip Hughes and Alan Black, Mosaic Press, 2010.

These may be helpful - Books and reports received

This is My Story, A Story of Life, Faith and Ministry, Rev Dr Paul Beasley-Murray, Wipf & Stock, 2018, ISBN 978-1-5326-4796-3.

The Black Majority Church. Exploring the impact of faith and a faith community on mental health and well-being, Rachel-Rose Burrell, Doctorate in Psychotherapy, Middlesex University and Metanoia Institute, 2018.

Life After Tragedy, Essays on Faith and the First World War, centred around Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, WWI chaplain and then parish minister in Worcester, edited by Michael W Brierley and Georgina A Byrne, Wipf and Stock, July 2017.

P5/FUTUREFIRST|1018



African Problems

As reported in the June 2018 edition of *FutureFirst*, African Christianity is growing fast. Half the growth in the global church each year takes place across the African continent! The global church grows annually by 29 million Christians (or Christian adherents), and 14 million of these are across the continent of Africa.

The Anglicans are 10% of Africa's Christians. Twelve of their 39 Provinces worldwide are located in Africa. This African membership was 16% of the world's Anglicans in 1970, 48% in 1995 and 62% of the total in 2015, showing just how fast they are growing. In 2015 they were 2% of the world Christian total. GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference), which is becoming the "Alternative Anglican" group, is led by a Committee of 9 Primates, seven of which are African.

However, Africa faces monumental problems, not least in its geography. A third of Africa in the north of the continent consists of the Sahara Desert and immediately south of that the Sahel, a huge area of ever encroaching wild scrubland. It is the southern two-thirds, Sub-Saharan Africa, in which both Christian and economic growth is most evident, but is hindered by having 51 separate countries (whose artificial boundaries were mostly fashioned by European states in the 19th century which tended to ignore tribal areas and their many languages), few rivers along which goods can be transported (there are far too many waterfalls on most rivers for this to be a viable option), and this has hindered communication, contact and trade between regions. There are also vast distances to be travelled, considerable climatic variations and aridity. There are also few natural harbours for ships.

It is also home to a set of diseases especially rampant in the African climate – malaria, yellow fever, and the HIV virus, not helped by having a prevalence of the mosquito and Tsetse fly. Many of its continental animals are unwilling to be domesticated or used as beasts of burden (such as giraffes, gazelles, rhinos) hindering economic development.

Africa is the poorest continent. Its 2017 GDP per capita was \$1,820, one-fifth of the world's average at \$10,830, and but 4% of North America's. Over a third, 36%, of Africa's population have to survive on under \$1 a day (= about 80p). One reason for this apart from the geographical and political difficulties is that, on balance, African people have poor education. Fewer than 5% of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa finish secondary school, despite UN members pledging that boys and girls will all have access to primary and secondary education.

Some primary classrooms in Kisumu, Kenya, for example, are crowded with 100 or more children crammed into a room built for 50, with some sitting on the floor as no "desk" space is available. A Uwezo report found that in Kenya only two-fifths, 40%, of children started primary school when they were 6 (as they should), 29% started when 7 and 31% when 8 or over.

Poverty also makes education harder. Children sleeping on a sack on the floor of their rural, maybe one room, home turn up for school tired, often hungry, and struggle to pay attention. Hence they may be at school, but are learning little. In the East Africa countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in 2014, a survey found that only a quarter of pupils aged 9 could read a sentence like "The name of the dog is Puppy." A quarter struggle because of visual difficulties, but have no glasses. Uwezo found that only two-thirds, 65%, of pupils aged 9 could do a subtraction sum taught to those aged 8.

The teachers do the best they can, but many African schools have no electricity, water or proper sanitation. Many teachers have no books or other equipment. However, parents will send their child to school if they can afford the compulsory uniform, stationery, etc. because they believe it will give them a better opportunity in life. As an article in *The Economist* pointed out, "Even a bad school is better than no school at all." No wonder many African churches and charities have started schools! Some 33 million primary-aged African children do not go to school (6% of Africa's 530 million children under 15), and out of every two who do attend, one will drop out before graduating.

SOURCES: *UK Church Statistics*, ADBC Publishers, 2017, Section 15; *Lambeth Directory*, The Worldwide Anglican Communion 1998, OCMS 1998, Page 439; *Prisoners of Geography*, Tim Marshall, Elliott and Thompson Ltd., 2016, Page 118f; wikipedia for GDP and population figures; *Are our Children Learning?*, Annual Learning Assessment Report, Uwezo, an East African Initiative 2015; *The Economist*, 7th July, 2018 Supplement Page 6.

Getting Married

Two enterprising American researchers have traced how people have met their wives or partners over the past few decades, asking people to answer the question, "Where did you meet your partner?" In particular they wanted to trace the impact of social media on the dating business. The results are shown in the Table, necessarily approximately given as the percentages were read from a graph.

Location	Opposite-sex couples					Same-sex couples		
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Through friends	34	36	37	34	29	34	29	12
At a bar or restaurant	20	20	19	16	25	27	21	19
Co-workers	18	18	19	16	10	19	13	5
College	7	7	9	10	9	10	6	0
School	13	12	9	7	4	5	3	0
Church	8	7	7	6	1	5	1	0
Online	0	0	0	11	22	0	27	64

The impact of online dating can quickly be seen, with just over a fifth, 22%, of heterosexual couples in this sample meeting in that way and also two-thirds, 64%, of same-sex couples. The declining influence of work, school and church is also apparent.

Friends remains the key means for heterosexual couples, but while important 30 years ago for same-sex couples, it is much less important today. Meeting in a bar or restaurant remains fairly popular, however, whatever a person's sexual orientation – between a fifth and a quarter of couples have first met this way over the last almost 50 years.

Student companionships have remained at about a tenth of matching opposite-sex couples over these years, and while initially important for same-sex relationships, social media has overtaken this avenue now.

Many Christian couples do meet through Christian activities such as camps, house parties, University and College Christian Unions, house groups, informal church-based events, etc. While not to be viewed as "dating agencies," nevertheless they are opportunities for finding God's direction not only in marriage prospects but in many other areas of life.

SOURCE: *Searching for a Mate*, by Michael Rosen field and Reuben Thomas, reported in an article in *The Economist*, 18th August 2018, Page 17.

P6/FUTUREFIRST|1018



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) One anagram of "denominations" can be "Not made in S(Z)ion", which is attributed to Adrian Plass!

2) The proportion of older adults (65 years and over) who shop online through the internet has trebled since 2008, rising from 16% to 48% in 2018.

3) Charity legacy income received between July 2017 and June 2018 was 5% up on the previous 12 months. Residual legacies (the remainder of a will after fixed-value gifts) averaged £58,000.

4) The free downloadable Scripture Union app game *Guardians of Ancora* is being played in 180 countries around the world in 4 languages, up to 1,000 children a week inviting a friend to play it also.

5) 89% of American people reading a Bible use a print version. However, over half (57%) search for content on the internet, and a third (35%) listen to teaching on a podcast.

6) Publishing turnover in 2016 (latest year available) in the UK was £5.1 billion, of which a quarter (25%) was academic journals. The latter has grown in importance – it was 21% in 2012.

7) Churches in Cornwall, Dorset, East Sussex, Herefordshire, North Yorkshire and Worcestershire have the most visitors on average – all 7% of attendance. On the Channel Islands though it is 25%!

SOURCES: 1) Unrequested email received 23rd July 2018; 2) Internet access and use in Great Britain, 2018, Office for National Statistics, 7th August 2018; 3) Press Release by Civil Society, 15th August 2018; 4) *Connecting You*, Scripture Union, Summer 2018, Page 20; 5) Seven top findings on State of the Bible 2018, Barna Research, August, 2018; 6) *Publishing Yearbook 2016*, Publisher's Association, 2018; 7) English Church Census figures in *Religious Trends*, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 2006, Fig 5.10.1.

Humour

Possible misinterpretations of facts:

Any infant who can crawl will undoubtedly crawl towards the nearest available fragile item.

When you're trying to look something up on a map, the traffic lights will turn green as soon as you stop at them.

A dog will never knock over a vase unless there is water in it.

All inanimate objects can move just enough to get in your way.

All DIY will inevitably take three times longer than first thought.

Fuses never blow in daylight hours.

SOURCE: Joan Hamilton-Smith, *Tonbridge Town Crier*, August 2018, Page 16.

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CONTENTS

7 Reasons Your Church Needs More Men	P1
The UK Church in 2018	P2
Changing Birth Rates	P2
Churchgoer Earnings	P3
Marital Status	P3
Discussing Faith	P3
Snowflakes	P4
Making Sense of Life	P5
African Problems	P6
Getting Married	P6

7 REASONS YOUR CHURCH NEEDS MORE MEN

Annabel Clarke, Chartered Psychologist, Co-Chair of The Engage Network

Are there really more women than men in church? If so, why? Are there consequences for you, your family, friends and church?

The church gender imbalance

There are more females than males in the UK church. Surveys about the extent of the imbalance yield different results depending on methodology and population sample. For ease of general communication, a ratio of 40 men: 60 women is currently indicated, as seen in the Table.

Relative proportion of males and females attending church monthly

Survey	Monthly church attenders		
	Male %	Female %	No of females
English Church Census (2005)	43	57	444,900
Scottish Church Census (2016)	40	60	80,130
Tearfund UK (2007) ¹	35	65	2,300,000
YouGov GB (2014) ²	45	55	500,000
Average	40	60	~

No of females = Number of additional females which equate to the different percentages

The forthcoming handbook *7 Reasons Your Church Needs More Men* by The Engage Network considers research around the possible reasons for this imbalance, which include:

Men and women are just different? On the one hand, there are research meta-analyses finding that men show more risk-taking behaviours³, prefer working with things rather than people⁴, and that they use more costly methods of aggression⁵. However, the size of these effects varies depending on study methodology. On the other hand, meta-analysis work has also shown that there is much larger within-gender variation than between-gender variation on most variables (Hyde, 2005, 2014).⁶

Personality is relevant? Differences in religiosity (worship attendance, personal prayer and attitude towards Christianity) have been found in one study to be due to personality differences rather than because of being male or female.⁷ The personality profiles of church leaders are not proportionally reflective of society as a whole - there are more introverts, but one of the strongest predictors of church growth is leadership by extroverts.⁸

Consequences of the imbalance

For men. 1.8 million fewer men than women in GB say they are practising Christians.⁹ There is a key need for the church to reach and disciple more men effectively, primarily for their own sake, but also for the health of the whole church and wider society.

For women. Up to one-third of Christian women overall (and half if they are middle class¹⁰) face a choice – marry a non-Christian, or remain single and childless? One survey of single Christian women over 35 who don't have children asked if they agreed their church offers good pastoral support for women in their situation who would like a family; 68% disagreed and 24% weren't sure.¹¹

For singleness. A third of adults in church are single, many report that they feel isolated in church, and most want to marry another Christian.¹² The increasing epidemic of unwanted singleness in churches is often 'spiritually re-framed' as a 'gift', without acknowledgement of the impact of the gender imbalance or other societal influences.

For dating and relationships. There are often unhealthy psycho-social dynamics between single men and women, with a power balance in men's favour due to the significant over-supply of women in the dating market.¹³ Combined with the lack of teaching on healthy Christian dating, this has helped to almost paralyse Christian dating: 54% of single Christian adults said that they haven't dated for at least a year, or, it is many years since they last went on a date.¹⁴

For marriage. Research by the Evangelical Alliance found that more women than men were married to a non-Christian. Over 90% of Christian couples expressed happiness with their marriage, while only 66% of those in a mixed marriage did so.¹⁵ Churches need to support the Christian spouse and welcome the non-Christian spouse.

Continued on page 4