



FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

ISSN 2040-0268 | Number 61, February 2019

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BLACK MAJORITY CHURCHES AND MENTAL HEALTH

Dr Rachel-Rose Burrell, Counsellor/Psychotherapist

A growing body of research exists highlighting the role of Black Majority Churches (BMCs)/ Pentecostal Churches, in supporting individuals in distress (Bhugra 1997; Leavey 2004; Edge 2010). For decades the church has provided spiritual and psychological care to members, often with no government support or resources.

BMCs have withstood changing political and social climates and have been a place of refuge and restoration for many members of the black community. Despite these huge contributions, participants of a recent study are urging for a more holistic approach which encompasses both spiritual and psychological interventions.

BMC Segments
Sturge (2005) analyses the term BMC and identifies five segments: churches emerging from the African-Caribbean diaspora; churches emerging from the African diaspora; BMCs within the historic denominations, for example, Anglican, Church of England and Methodist; BMCs within white Pentecostal denominations and African and Caribbean Spiritual churches. He proposes such churches are worshipping Christian communities comprising 50% or more people of African or African-Caribbean descent. However, the description BMC is misleading because it implies all black churches are the same, this is not the case; not all BMCs identify as Pentecostal, for example, even though they may share similar practices. In the 1950s Pentecostal churches were almost exclusively attended by Black Caribbeans and often were extensions of the churches that they belonged to in the West Indies.

What has been termed the "The Windrush era" since 1948 has seen a huge surge of black Christianity in Britain, which has had a profound effect on British society including the church. The often hostile reception to migrant members of British mainline churches from back home, for example, Anglican and Methodist, ensured that many responded by joining the Pentecostal churches that were being initiated in living rooms, school and church halls (Aldred, 2016).

Consequences of migration
However, migration came at a price; people from African and African Caribbean communities are more likely than others to be admitted to hospital for mental illness. The same is also true for people of white and black mixed ethnicity (Mental Health Foundation). In addition to everyday concerns such as money worries and work-related stress, African and African-Caribbean communities face additional problems that can affect their mental health such as bad housing, unemployment and racism. Worldwide, people who move from one country to another have a higher risk of mental illness. This is especially true for black people who move to predominantly white countries, and the risk is even higher for their children. Therefore, mental illness is a bigger problem for African and African-Caribbean communities living in the UK (Mental Health Foundation). Black people continue to be over-represented in the mental health system compared with their white counterparts, are more likely to be diagnosed as "schizophrenic," more likely to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act and since 2009 are more likely to be placed on community treatment orders (Mental Health Foundation).

Today, Pentecostals are the fastest-growing group of Christians in the UK, according to research published by English Church Census (2006). A range of factors have contributed to the growth of Pentecostal Christianity in the UK according to Clarke (2015), such as the desire to maintain a sense of cultural identity in an unfamiliar and generally unwelcoming society. According to the 2011 Census the overall Christian decline in England and Wales relates particularly to white British Christians, whereas black African Christians grew by over 100%.

Creating a supportive culture
The study "The Black Majority Church: exploring the impact of faith and a faith community on mental health and well-being" explores interpretation of problems, coping strategies and help-seeking behaviour of black Christians attending BMCs.

The qualitative study examines participants' perspectives on whether there are links between faith and belonging to a faith community, and mental health and well-being. Fifty-six participants from a broad range of BMCs were represented including New Testament, Apostolic, Independent and Catholic denominations. Eleven focus groups and eight subsequent individual interviews were conducted and analysed using Thematic Analysis and Narrative Inquiry.

Findings suggest that music, prayer, The Word (preaching, quoting/reading The Holy Bible) and belonging to a church provide a positive sense of well-being. Lack of understanding of mental



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The Demographics of Missiology

by Dr Peter Rowan, UK Director of OMF International

In his bestselling book Megatrends, John Naisbitt says "the most reliable way to anticipate the future is by understanding the present." As far as the present global Christian movement is concerned, we are living in exciting days as we see the map of global Christianity changing.

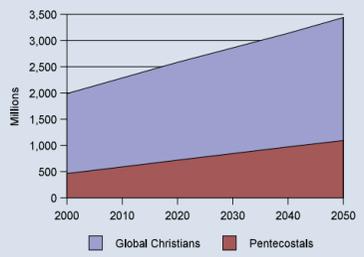
In 2014 Latin America became the continent with most Christians. In 2018 Africa surpassed Latin America and by 2050 there will probably be more Christians in Africa (1.25 billion) than in Latin America and Europe combined. As the Church continues to grow in China (current estimates range between 80 and 120 million) the projection for 2050 extends to a staggering 220 million (16% of the population).

Generally speaking, churches and mission agencies in Europe and North America have been slow to recognise the implications of this demographic shift in world Christianity, or take on board the big picture that is coming from researchers and practitioners around the world. For instance:

A. The African Church will increasingly contribute to new forms and initiatives in Christian theology and missional practice.

B. The growth of Pentecostal forms of Christianity will influence the global Church, necessitating a greater engagement with such churches from all who are concerned about world mission, discipleship and the theological health of the Church. In 2000, Pentecostals were 23% of the global church; by 2050 they will be 32% according to the World Christian Database.

Growth of Global Christianity and Pentecostals



C. The future survival of the Church in the West is connected to its willingness to listen and to learn from the majority world Church.

Global Latest

Every January the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) produces figures for the worldwide religious position for the year ahead. Their 2019 figures are shown in the Table. "% pa" means the average change between 2015 and 2020 on an annual basis.

Global figures in billions of people

Table with 9 columns: Item, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020E, % pa, 2025. Rows include Population, Children (<15), Children (as %), Christians, African Christians, Pentecostals, and Muslims.

This Table focusses worldwide and short-term, the last five years with a projection to 2025, and reflects different aspects of growth. It highlights the key issues facing global Christianity at the present time:

- The number of children under 15 globally is becoming a slightly smaller percentage of the total - 26% in 2015, but 25% by 2025. This is because the global fertility rate is dropping (6.6 in 1960; 3.3 in 1990; 2.4 in 2016), so fewer children being born and people living longer so more older people.
The Christian community is growing, 1.1% per year but at a slower rate than the population growth which is 1.3%. Christian adherents were 33.0% of the population in 2015, but only 32.8% in 2020 (although are expected to be 33.6% in 2025 according to the CSGC).
Pentecostals are the fastest growing strand within the Christian community - 7% of the total in 2015, 8% in 2020 and expected to be 9% by 2025.
Christianity is growing in Africa much faster than on any other continent. Half the new Christians in the world every year are African. They are growing faster than the Pentecostals, three times as fast as Christians globally, and 7 times faster than Christians excluding Africa! This is not just because they have more children (their fertility rate is 4.8), but also because they keep their children in church.
Muslims are growing at twice the rate of Christians. They were 23% of the global population in 2015, 24% in 2020 and expected to be 26% by 2025.

SOURCES: International Bulletin of Mission Research, Overseas Ministries Study Centre, Vol 42, Issue 1, Jan 2019; The World Bank website.

These may be helpful - Books and reports received

Looking for Lydia, Encounters that shape the Church, Sally Mann. "This book is the disruptive Spirit calling us to God's future," writes Alan Roxburgh of the Missional Network in his commendation of it. ISBN978-1-7903411-8-4, December 2018.

Do Grandparents Matter?, The Impact of Grand parenting on the Well-being of Children, University of Hertfordshire and the Family Matters Institute. ISBN 978-0-9533429-8-3, 2009.

Free Seats for All, The boom in church building after Waterloo, Essentially the history of the Incorporated Church Building Society, now the National Churches Trust, by Gill Hedley, published by Umbria Press, 2018, ISBN 978-1-910074-17-6.

Churchgoers and Evolution

The results of two surveys of a total of 2,200 of churchgoers in over 200 churches in the north of England in 2009 and 2017 have been published. Those asked in 2009 were not asked in the later survey; over half, 56%, of the two studies combined were completed by women, and almost half, 45%, by those aged between 50 and 69, with 33% younger and 22% older. They were selected from Protestant mainline and conservative churches, so cannot be taken to be representative of churchgoers generally. The question on evolution was preceded by a definition stating evolution meant Darwin's proposal that "all life evolved from simple organisms ... through natural selection ..."

The combined study found that two-thirds, 66%, rejected evolution, rather more by those under 50 (73%) than those over 70 (53%). Postgraduates were less likely to reject it (55%) - irrespective of what subject they had studied - than those who did not continue with their education after leaving school (72%). Those who called themselves liberal were least likely to reject evolution (35%), while conservatives were more likely (81%). Those attending church every week were more likely to disbelieve in evolution (81%) than those who attended monthly or less (35%). Likewise those reading the Bible every day were more likely to reject it (78%) than those who read it monthly or less often (23%).

Many of these findings were anticipated, and the surveys simply confirmed current observations, partly because the respondent sample, while large, depended upon volunteers already sufficiently interested in the topic to answer questions about it. For non-churchgoers the acceptance of evolution is likely to be much higher. Differences between the two studies were not explored in the article giving the results.

SOURCE: Article "Rejecting Darwinian Evolution" by Andrew Village and Sylvia Baker, in Review of Religious Research, Vol 60, No 3, Sept 2018, Page 285.

Grandparents' Vocation

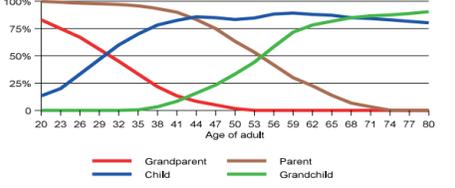
Neil and Joan's marriage wasn't very happy. In a desperate attempt to keep it together and stop Neil's womanising, Joan agreed to have a baby, and Jason came along. Unfortunately it didn't work, and like so many other families the parents went different ways, and Jason became one of the 29% of all UK children who grow up in broken homes.

However, although Jason had lost his dad - well, he only saw him occasionally - he found he hadn't lost his granddad. In the turbulent world of separation which a 7 year old found very hard to handle, here was a rock who stayed the same, still gave warm cuddles, still played the same games, and made the same silly jokes. Furthermore he still had a seemingly endless supply of surprises! And as Mum was too tired over Christmas to do anything extra, it was granddad who gladly took Jason to the pantomime. No wonder Jason and granddad had a very special relationship in which one little lad found a much-needed security.

More than one adult in four, 29%, in the UK, is a grandparent. These 17 million people have on average 4 grandchildren each. Half of the grandparents still have a living parent, so great-grandparents are also fairly common. In addition, a third of those under 60 still have a dependant child of their own living with them.

While some become grandparents in their 40s, as the chart shows, most are in their mid-50s or older, and some 80% of those over 65 are either grandparents or have grandnieces or grandnephews. Grandparents' average age is 68, and on average grandchildren live 10 miles from their grandparents, spending on average 5 hours per visit.

Percentage of British adults with immediate family links by age



Grandchild needs. In 2006 it was estimated that through their children's divorce up to 400,000 grandparents had lost regular access to their grandchildren, and the number will be larger now in 2019. Grandparents can frequently hold the world of their teenage grandchildren (and younger, like Jason) together if their parents split up (a vital, critical role helping stability). Grandparents are key relatives, who can become trusted people of influence. Some take their grandchildren out for a meal, ideally on a one-by-one basis.

Grandparent roles. Grandparents have multiple roles (at various ages for their grandchildren) as playmates, teachers, counsellors, confidants, friends, spiritual guides, mentors, elders, role models and nurturers, as well as pray-ers. They also tell stories which are long remembered, and keep children's milestones, family anecdotes and family events alive. Grandchildren will often discuss their personal concerns, school issues, family problems or their peer friendships with their grandparents, so the grandparents may be in a position to allay parental concerns or suggest courses of action, although without interfering.

Childcare. Grandparents are important for the UK economy. 6 million looked after their grandchildren in 2014; 9 million in 2017! On average they do so for 8 hours a week, 96% receiving no payment. They therefore have regular contact with their grandchildren, especially when they are small. Three-fifths, 61%, see their grandchildren every week, and a further 17% once a month.

Parental care. In the 1990s, 1% of children were brought up by their grandparents, not their parents, but that percentage had increased to 1.6% in 2010 and may be 2% in 2019 (because of parental drug or alcohol abuse, poverty, prison, etc.). Research has shown this close involvement leads to fewer emotional problems and more pro-social behaviours. Grandparents frequently provide some financial support for their grandchildren, especially clothing.

Churchgoing. Research has shown that if grandparents go to church regularly, three-fifths, 60%, of their grandchildren are likely to go to church also. Grandparental example is followed! Likewise if grandparents stop going (because of age, ill-health or death) grandchildren may stop too! One young lady of 13 wrote on a questionnaire asking about grandparents, "Since grandma died, I don't go to church any more."

Church help? Some 9 or 10% of UK grandparents are churchgoers! Would a church "Grandparents' Group," to help grandparents meet, discuss issues and pray for their grandchildren be useful? Grandparents' Day in the UK is the first Sunday in October. Should church leaders (and youth leaders?) be putting Sunday, October 6th in their diary for a special celebration in 2019? Moses' injunction to the Israelites "not to forget the things your eyes have seen ... make them known to your children and children's children" (Deuteronomy 4:9) is a constant challenge, but Psalm 92:14 is a wonderful promise!

Problems of grandparenting.

- 1. If the child's parents are separated or divorced, grandparents' relationship with the estranged partner who may or may not be their own child, could result in denial of or infrequent access.
2. Distance - workforce mobility may mean families are considerable distances apart.
3. Grandparents' unfamiliarity with or slow grasp of modern technology by which twenty-first century children live.
4. Physical difficulties such as increasing deafness and lack of mobility may hinder active participation in grandchild's pursuits.
5. Over-indulging a grandchild in a way the grandparent would never have done with their own children.

SOURCES: Website www.grandparentsplus.org.uk; Grandparents, Christian Research, 2007; Religious Trends No 7, Christian Research, 2008, Page 4.7; Do Grandparents Matter? Family Matters Institute and University of Hertfordshire, 2009; Don Bosco Today, 2000; www.answersingenesis.org/grandparents; "Twenty-first century grandparents," Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences, Volume 13, Issue 2, 2018, guest edited by Ann Buchanan et al on grandparents; article in Perspectives, Partnership magazine, No 64, Autumn 2018, Page 44; personal experience!



