

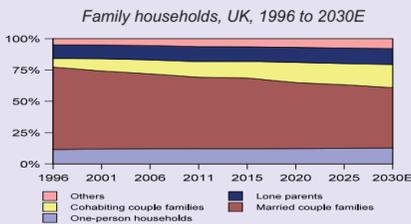
Families in England

Of the 56 million people living in England in 2018, half (50%) were living in families and a further half were living alone (“not living in a couple” as they are officially called). For church attenders, few such estimates exist, but one result of a large survey in 2012 for Langham Partnership found the church percentage for families was very different, at 71%.

Of the half in the general population living alone, some 11% were either widowed or divorced. That percentage is virtually identical to the percentage widowed or divorced in the church. The percentage of those who are single in the general population, 39%, is more than double the 17% single in the church. The ages of those who are single are also very different, as in the general population only 18% of the single (ignoring children) are 45 or over, whereas in the church the majority are that age. There is also a gender difference. In the general population a slightly greater proportion of the older singles are men, whereas in the church more are female.

Returning to the half living as families, the Office for National Statistics classifies them in various ways. In 2018, two-thirds, 67%, of these families were married couples. Half of the remainder, 17%, were opposite-sex cohabiting couples, and 15% were lone-parent families (86% lone-mother), and the remaining 1% were either civil partnerships or same-sex cohabiting couples. In church families in 2012, 98% were married couples and 2% cohabiting or lone-parents. In 2018 this last percentage will be higher, perhaps 5%, but still massively different from general societal patterns.

The proportions in these different family types are changing, as shown in the chart. The proportion who are married is reducing and the percentage cohabiting is increasing; if present trends continue these will be, respectively, 55% and 21% by 2030, down -8% and up +6% respectively on 2018, and with a +2% increase in all others. They are changing among churchgoers also, but much more slowly.



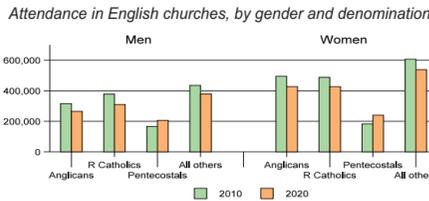
Across the UK in 2018, the average size of a family unit was 2.8 people per family. This average varied from 2.9 for married couples, 2.8 for those cohabiting, 2.6 for lone-parents and 2.1 for the others. When people first started socially acceptable cohabiting in the second half of the 20th century many delayed starting a family till after they were married; that is simply no longer true now, which means that a number of children will become adults with unmarried parents. The same will be true of some church families. The average size of church families is not accurately known, but it is probably higher than for married couples in the general population, perhaps 3.1 or 3.2 people.

In 2018 two-fifths of all families, 43%, had no children or no children yet. About the same proportion, 42%, had one or more dependent children (which means either under 16 or 16 to 18 in full-time education and not having a spouse). The remaining 15% of families had children all old enough to be non-dependent. Over the last 20 years the average size of a family with children has not changed – the average is 1.8 children per family and this seems likely to continue in the years ahead.

SOURCES: *Families by Family Type and Living Arrangements*, Office for National Statistics, 2018 figures, 7th August 2019.

Gender Imbalance

The latest report on American Christianity indicates that slightly more men have stopped regular church attendance than women. The Pew Research Centre regularly undertakes both “Religious Landscape Studies” and various political polls in which a question on a person’s religious affiliation is asked. In 2009 47% of American men attended church at least every month; in 2018 it was 40%. For women the percentages were respectively 56% and 50%.



Is the same true in the UK? The answer is YES, although the percentages are very different. In England 5.0% of men attended church on a Sunday in 2010 and the projected figure for 2020 is 4.1%, the figures for women being respectively 6.6% to 5.7%. The methodology between the two countries is different. In America, people were asked how frequently they attended church, in England the figures are a result of counting the numbers actually in church. The trend is clearly the same, however.

Despite the proportions of men and women in the population being very close (49.4% men to 50.6% women), that is not so with churchgoers as there are more women than men in church in every denomination, and have been for many decades. The overall current balance in 2020 is likely to be 42% men to 58% women, down from 45% men, 55% women in 1980, and which will probably reduce slightly further to 41% men, 59% women by 2030 if present trends continue.

The graph shows the numbers in the three largest denominations (Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Pentecostals) and the rest as a combined total. Men are declining faster in numbers than women in all denominations except the Pentecostals where they are growing more slowly than the women.

The difference may also be seen across all age-groups, but least in the teenage years where the proportions are closest to being equal.

The highest proportions of men in church in 2005 (46%) were seen in two quite different types of churches –the Catholic (not the same as Roman Catholic) and the Charismatic, while the lowest percentages were in the churches which described themselves as Broad, Liberal or Low Church (averaging 39%).

The ratio of men in church varies across the country also. The greatest share is in London – 48% of churchgoers in 2005 were male in both Inner and Outer London, followed by 45% in Oxfordshire and 44% in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire. The smallest share was 37% in the Channel Islands, followed by 38% in Shropshire, 39% in Durham, the Isle of Wight, Tyne and Wear, Wiltshire and the Isle of Man. Apart from London, men were not above average percentage-wise in other urban areas, nor less in rural areas.

A research project completed in 2019 for a Dissertation in Theology, Ministry and Mission looked at the primary factors contributing to keeping men in (and out) of evangelical churches. While this was based on churches in Sheffield, the findings will surely be relevant more widely.

What kept men in church? (A) Primarily the friendships they made with other men, the latter often being cemented by joint activities, and especially a sense of adventure (women did not like a sense of adventure in their friendships!). Other research would support this finding – having a sense of joint vision, and knowing where you are going and what might be done.

(B) Men also wanted to have clear roles and responsibilities. They were happy to help but wanted to know exactly what they were required to do. They preferred to *do* rather than *talk*.

(C) Their personal faith was hugely important as they needed personal motivation to come to something likely to be dominated by women.

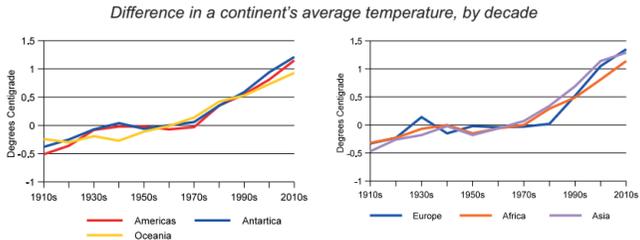
(D) This research found that they also preferred to be led by men, while women are equally content to be led by either men or women. Other research has shown the clear importance of practical Bible teaching, and that this overrides the gender of the teacher.

What put men off church? This research showed: (A) A lack of personal faith, or religious conviction, and (B) the pressures of work, sport and family. Ultimately for both men and women, church attendance is likely to be a matter of priorities, based on personal faith, though in some situations, influenced by circumstances.

SOURCES: *Factors keeping men in evangelical churches*, Toby Butler, Dissertation in Theology, Ministry and Mission, Durham University, July 2019; *Does the Future have a Church?* ADBC Publishers, Table 4.1; *Decline of Christianity continues*, Pew Research Center, 17th October 2019, Page 13.

Climate Change

Evidence for the rather brutal climate changes which are taking place is shown in these rather complicated looking graphs. Against a continent’s average temperature between 1910 and 2000, the graph plots the difference between a specific decade’s actual average temperature and this century’s average.



The graphs show that in the early two or three decades of the twentieth century average temperatures were below the norm, and then for the period 1940 to 1970 they were about the norm. Since the 1970s across every continent the average temperature has risen, with particularly steep rises since the 1990s. Globally, 18 of the 19 warmest years on record have occurred since 2001. Asia and Europe are the two continents which were most above their average in the 2000s and 2010s, and Africa the least.

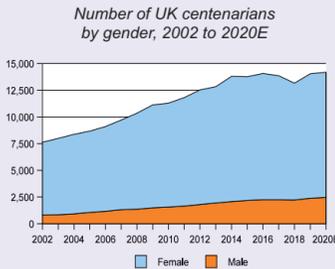
The other obvious conclusion from these graphs is that these rises in average temperatures are truly global – every continent is shown, and each individual graph is similar to all the others.

SOURCE: Numbers for the graphs given in a double issue of *Time* for 23rd September 2019.

Centenarian Increase

The number of centenarians in the UK is increasing! The number has almost doubled in the 16 years 2002 to 2018 from 7,600 to 13,200, an increase +3.4% per annum. This perhaps follows from the rapid increase of people living longer. There were 390,000 in the UK in 2002 who were 90 or over, 0.65% of the total population, but over 580,000 in 2018, or 0.88% of the population.

The increase is seen among both men and women. The 2002 centenarians were 11% men and 89% women. By 2018 the male proportion had increased to 17%! While this shows more men are living longer, and more pro rata to women, the 2018 proportion may be due to an unexpected (and unexplained) decrease in female centenarians in 2017 and 2018 as the graph shows. The figures for 2019 and 2020 are projected, and the female numbers may be too high.



A number of these older people will be Christian. Of those who were 100 in 2018, and hence born at the end of the First World War, 51% would have attended Sunday School, mostly held then on Sunday afternoons. Subsequently there would have been many churchgoers among them. So BBC programmes like *Songs of Praise* will be especially meaningful to them as many will remember some of the old hymns (they may not know the new songs!). Some 15% of them will probably today still retain a sense of belonging to a church.

Many centenarians will probably be living in Care Homes or with their children and their families. Most of those who were married will have lost their spouse, and many will probably now be great-grandparents. Government figures show that on average grandparents have 4.4 grandchildren, but how many great-grandchildren is not known.

How can Christian centenarians nurture their own faith and pass it on to their descendants?

A few centenarians are hale and hearty and still lead active social lives, and these will include a few Christians also. Most will probably only get to church if they are specially taken, although in 2015 some 2% of centenarians, 230 in total, were still driving their car (and would never have taken a driving test). Others may use mobility scooters or buggies (can such be parked easily in your church?).

In a survey of 2008 people were asked, “What constitutes old age?” and while a third of the sample put it at 70, a quarter (23%) put it later. For others, physical deterioration and limitation may blight their closing years whether centenarians or just “elderly” and such may often feel neglected by the church in general.

If we attempt to put centenarians into their context, they would probably have served in the Second World War, would have been in their 30s when Elizabeth II became queen, have been about 50 when man first walked on the moon, in their 60s when the Falklands War occurred and 70s when Nelson Mandela became President of South Africa! If born in 1918 they would have been 17 when George V died.

Many will find it difficult to cope with modern technology, not having been brought up with mobiles or smart phones, computers, electronic gadgets, etc. Many were in their late 30s or early 40s when television became generally available, or frozen foods, Xerox, contact lenses, the pill, credit cards, laser beams, ball-point pens, dishwashers, air conditioners, FM radios, yogurt, guys wearing earrings, “software,” Pizza Hut, McDonald’s and instant coffee!

Even if physically able to attend church, centenarians may well find the modern pattern of worship in many churches today unhelpful, with little provision for impaired mobility, hearing and sight. Most will be white British citizens. They are likely to be concentrated in particular parts of the country, and especially along the South Coast, and in many of the Boroughs in Outer London. Finance is likely to be a problem for many.

It is easy to read this and see them like the final act in a play with the curtains closing, but for many Heaven is not a certain next stop and they still need reaching for Christ.

SOURCES: Basic data from Office for National Statistics, 25th September 2019; commentary and minor facts are from *Does the 2030 future have a church?*, Brierley Consultancy, ADBC Publishers, September 2019.

CONTENTS

Baptists in Anglican Churches	P1
Noel Ford, FRSA	P2
Rural Church Life	P2
Happy Christmas!	P2
Church Schools	P3
RCCG Expands	P3
Losing church leaders	P4
Families in England	P5
Gender Imbalance	P5
Climate Change	P6
Centenarian Increase	P6
E-books Only	P6



FUTURE FIRST

FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

ISSN 2040-0268 | Number 66, December 2019

SNIPPETS

1) More than 1½ million cans of Heinz Baked Beans are bought every day – that’s 100,000 cans every hour the shops are open! The UK is the biggest baked bean-eating nation in the world.

2) Household incomes in the UK vary considerably. The middle 50% is in the range of £20,000 to £55,000 per annum.

3) A YouGov poll found that 18% of British men and 12% of women say they have no close friends. If the same were true of churchgoers that would be 10 friendless people in every church in the country.

4) It is reckoned that there are 1,710,000,000 websites globally available in 2019, an increase from 238 million in 2009, or almost 200 million growth per year! There were 969 million in 2014.

5) Of all payments made in the UK in 2018, two-fifths (42%) were still made by cash. That’s about the same as in the US (37%) but much more than in South Korea (only 14%).

6) The World Values Survey of 201 covered 83 countries in the world and over 90% of the population. It found that 37% of those aged 18 to 30 said they attended religious services “regularly.”

7) In 2015, Pentecostals were 27% of all the Christians in the world; in 1970 they were just 2%.

SOURCES: 1) and 2) *Impact*, Market Research Society, Issue 27, October 2019, Pages 39 and 53; 3) Survey reported in *The Times* and in *The Week*, 28th September, 2019, Page 6; 4) John Batten at Statista.com, 19th August and 2nd November 2019; 5) Niall McCarthy at Statista.com, 7th November 2019; 6) *Does the Future have a Church?* ADBC Publishers, 2019, Table A2; 7) *Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Kenneth Ross and Todd Johnson, University of Edinburgh, 2017.

BAPTISTS IN ANGLICAN CHURCHES

A retired Baptist minister decided to attend a local Anglican church each week! He wondered if there were other Baptist ministers doing the same, and if perhaps there were, why they had decided to do this. Anglican clergy after all are asked to move to another parish when they retire.

In an earlier survey looking at the retirement of Baptist ministers, Dr Paul Beasley-Murray found to his surprise that a quarter, 26%, of them now worshipped in a non-Baptist church. Since he did the same, he was intrigued by this and decided to do a further survey among these, although admittedly a small sample. None had actually become Anglicans in the process even if, on the face of it, they were doing something seemingly quite strange, although 2 had received confirmation.

Not all had moved to regular worship at an Anglican church – other denominations also featured, and one had given up going to church altogether, one of a number of those Christians “outside the church” who are being evaluated by another group altogether. Why move? As one person answering the questionnaire replied, “Reasons are rarely theological. Age, mobility, nearness, health, partners all feature.”

Finding such ministers understandably proved difficult, and a total of 32 were eventually located, which included three past Principals of Baptist Colleges (including Paul Beasley-Murray)! Twenty of these, 63%, replied to the questionnaire. These 20 were out of an estimated total of 170 ex-Baptist ministers worshipping at Anglican churches, the 170 being out of 250 retired Baptist ministers worshipping in non-Baptist churches, and this 250 out of a thousand Baptist ministerial retirees nationally. The results of this small study are not a viable statistical response, but nevertheless the answers may be of interest.

Of the 20 who answered Paul’s questionnaire, 19 were male, 16 were married, 14 were in their “Third Age” (65 to 74) and 6 in their “Fourth Age” (75 to 84), all were White British. The proportion of women does not reflect the 13% of current Baptist ministers who are female. 13 had been brought up in a Baptist home, 10 had been baptised as a believer between 15 and 17, most of the rest a few years later. Most had not attended an Anglican church as a young person, but 7 had done so while at university.

Almost half of the sample (9 people) had been to Spurgeon’s College, the largest of Baptist ministerial training colleges, and just over half (11) had a degree in theology. When Baptists are ordained they are ordained into Christian ministry not just Baptist ministry. 15 of the sample had served in the ministry for over 30 years, meaning that most had been ordained fairly early on in their life even though most had also had some form of initial secular employment. All except one had been engaged in some kind of ecumenical ministry.

Two-thirds (13) of the sample sometimes followed the lectionary in their preaching, 14 followed the church year including Advent and Lent, four-fifths (16) always had 2 or 3 Bible readings in their service, while half (10) wrote out their public prayers, though most did not use “set” prayers. Virtually all presided at Communion services. The researcher comments that these answers are, in his opinion, not typical Baptist answers and perhaps help to explain why all those responding worshipped at an Anglican church. He also comments that “the more evangelical a church, the less the Scripture is read!”

Anglican worship

The nearest Anglican church for those in this small sample was on average closer than the nearest Baptist church (2 miles to 2½ miles). The average size of the church was the same (120 people) for these 20 people though, when measured generally, Baptist church attendance is often double that of an Anglican church. Half the Anglican churches attended were Evangelical. Three-quarters (15) had decided to attend an Anglican church only after retirement and most began to do so virtually immediately. While two-thirds (13) of the wives were amenable to the change, three now worshipped in a church with a different denomination. Most (13) of the ministers had found the decision to worship at an Anglican church quite easy, and three-quarters (15) were happy with their decision. They all attended weekly, unless preaching elsewhere, even though this was mostly a Eucharistic service.

Why not go to a Baptist church? On a scale of 1 to 10, the top mark (9) was given because those in the sample were unhappy with the Baptist Union’s current “direction of travel.”. On the positive side there were three equally supported reasons (10 out of 10) – the breadth of Anglican worship, that the Anglican church serves the whole community and they liked the vicar. When asked to amplify their answer, respondents tended to indicate their dislike with superficial worship which they often found in Baptist churches. Several said they had received an exceptionally warm welcome.

The respondents had found lay leadership prominent in their Anglican churches – leading, reading and praying. Consequentially, the ex-Baptist minister was often asked to preach (almost half doing so every other month, mostly without the Bishop’s specific permission), assist in pastoral duties, with communion, or in other ways.

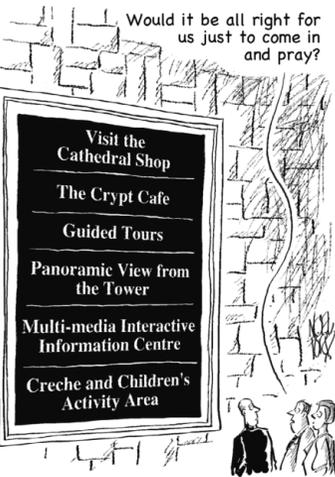
It is the liturgical framework of the Anglican church which these Baptist ministers like (so 15 out of 20), followed by the centrality of the Eucharist (13), and the liturgical repetitiveness (11). The sacramental worship is not seen as detrimental to

Noel Ford, FRSA

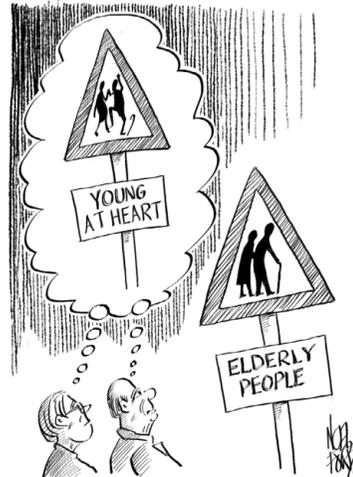
Ever since *FutureFirst* began in January 2009, Noel Ford has kindly drawn a cartoon every two months, over 70 in total, and he mostly drew two each time so that we could choose one. He was always on time, masterly in his wording, perceptive in his power of observation, clever in his understanding of issues and a very helpful person to work with. Sadly he died of liver cancer in September just after giving us his final cartoon which appeared in the October 2019 issue. We shall miss him and his quality insight. Thank you, Noel, for all you have contributed to this little paper. May you rest in peace.



Page 4, June 2015



Page 1, October 2016



Page 2, April 2011

This may be helpful

Report received

Factors keeping men in evangelical churches, Toby Butler, Dissertation in Theology, Ministry and Mission No 42360 at Durham University, July 2019.

Happy Christmas!

$$y = \log_e \left(\frac{x}{m} - sa \right)^{\frac{1}{r^2}}$$

$$yr^2 = \log_e \left(\frac{x}{m} - sa \right)$$

$$e^{yr^2} = \frac{x}{m} - sa$$

$$me^{yr^2} = x - msa$$

$$me^{r^2y} = x - mas$$

SOURCE: King's College London Engineering Association Christmas Letter via David Longley 13th December 2017.

Rural Church Life

Rev Anne Lawson, Vicar of a 3 church rural benefice in the Diocese of Chester since 2014, undertook a small survey of churches in remoter rural villages in 2018 to identify some of the key problems associated with such churches. She had previously researched the issue and her latest survey broadly confirmed the stressors she had found previously. These were:

- Financial pressure and anxiety about dwindling resources;
- Inability to replace churchwardens (or a fear of being unable to)
- Too few volunteers to take on church responsibilities (because of too few new people joining the church);
- No critical mass of children (sometimes this was because of a complete absence of any children, few children in the community itself, and even if there were children who came to church, the inability to retain any long-term);
- Lack of clergy time and energy to start new things;
- Tiny congregations in single figures with a rising age profile (something not confined to rural churches, even in the largely urban Diocese of London there are some single-digit congregations);
- Relentless nature of keeping churches going;
- Potential for mistakes to alienate extended families.

Of these 8 factors, the researcher identified 5 as being the most important – poor finances, inability to replace churchwardens, lack of clergy time and energy, no or too few children and single figure congregations when the average age is 75+. While these were measured in an Anglican context, similar research across other denominations in remoter rural areas would yield similar results.

Anglican rural churches are in serious decline. In 1989 there were 5,900 in remoter rural areas, dropping to 5,400 by 2005, and now about 4,900

in 2019. Attendance has also declined, from about 220,000 collectively in 1989 to 120,000 by 2005, to about 90,000 in 2019, giving average congregations of about 40 in 1989, 22 in 2005 and 18 in 2019. They were a sixth of all Anglican church attenders in 1989, dropping to 13% by 2005, and remaining the same in 2019.

Not all rural areas are in decline. In the rural North Yorkshire Local Authority District of Ryedale the numbers attending church rose between 1998 and 2005 because of the number of families moving into the area, "greenshifting" as it was called, moving out of an urban area for a better quality life in a rural area, but close enough to a major urban area (in this case the city of York) so that commuting to work was still a viable economic possibility. So decline is not necessarily inevitable, although in many rural areas the challenge is very great.



SOURCE: Article "The Marks of the Fragile Rural Church" by Rev S Anne Lawson in *Rural Theology*, Vol 17 No 1, 2019, Page 51; data extrapolated from *Religious Trends* No 6, 2006/2007, Christian Research, 2006, Pages 5.16, 5.17 and Table 12.75.4.

CHURCH SCHOOLS

While the number varies slightly from year to year, as schools open or close, throughout the UK in 2019 there were about 30,000 schools of all kinds, or roughly one for every 350 children aged between 5 and 18. Of these 30,000 schools, four-fifths, 82%, were in England (one for every 360), 6% in Wales (1 for every 290), 8% in Scotland (1 for every 320) and the remaining 4% in N Ireland (1 for every 300 children), so England has slightly larger schools than elsewhere on average.

Two-thirds, 68%, of these schools are maintained by the State, the rest being independent in various ways. In 2019, 20,200 of these maintained schools were in England, of which one sixth, 17%, were secondary schools and the remaining five-sixths, 83%, were primary schools. The Department for Education undertakes an annual census of these schools.

In 2019, just over a third, 37%, of primary schools had a religious foundation, 99% of which were Christian, and 1% were other religions (36 Jewish, 14 Muslim, 6 Sikh, 5 Hindu and 2 "multi-faith"). Of the Christian schools, almost three-quarters, 72%, were Church of England (one of the 4,370 was called "Anglican"), 27% were Roman Catholic, 0.4% were Methodist, and 1% were a mixture of other denominations like the Seventh-Day Adventists, Greek Orthodox, Moravian or Pentecostal. Just over three-fifths, 63%, of primary schools had no religious character.

Secondary schools were different. Here four-fifths, 82%, had no religious character, and of the 18% which did have such a character over half, 54%, were Roman Catholic and 36% were Church of England, with 10% in other denominations. These proportions, of both primary and secondary schools, have remained largely unchanged over the last ten years, although a small number of schools, simply calling themselves "Christian," have started, many of which are Academies.

There was a baby "boom" between 2002 and 2012 when the number of babies born in the UK rose from 670,000 to 810,000 (an increase of 22%, or +2% per annum). As a consequence the number of children attending primary school has increased each year since 2010, rising from 4.1 million to 4.7 million (also at the rate of +2% per annum). The increase in the number attending Christian schools has been at an average of +1% per annum in this period, including Church of England schools, but +6% per annum for religious but non-Christian schools, and +2% for non-religious schools, reflecting where the bulk of the new births has been.

The size of primary schools varies. Overall the English average was 280 children per school in 2019 (270 in Wales, 260 in Scotland and 290 in N Ireland). Christian schools were smaller, averaging 215 children (Church of England 200 and other Christian 260), while other religious schools averaged 170 pupils each. Non-religious schools had an average of 320 pupils. On the whole therefore Church of England primary schools are much smaller than other primaries.

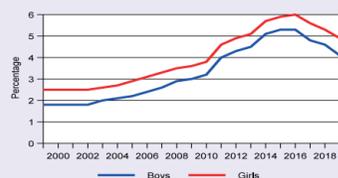
The baby boom has yet to impact the numbers at secondary school, although there was a marginal rise of 70,000 in numbers between 2018 and 2019. The average secondary school is almost 1,000 pupils (actually 970), so one immediate impact of moving up from primary is that numbers attending are three or four times as many, and therefore every child has a much larger number of peers to meet and get to know. Christian secondary schools and those with no religious character both also average almost a thousand pupils, but those in religious but non-Christian schools are in smaller establishments, averaging just 600.

How well are the schools performing in the Christian sphere? The number of GCSE and A Level examinations taken in Religious Studies is known, and the results, but these are not available broken down by type of school. A recent survey by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) found that many schools are ignoring their statutory obligations to teach RE, with a huge decline in the number teaching it since 2012. Almost two-thirds, 64%, of pupils in Year 11 (their GCSE year) received no RE in non-religious schools, which suggests that most of the RE GCSEs are taken by pupils at Christian and other-religious schools.

The number taking RE at GCSE has been falling since 2016 as the graph shows, having risen steeply between 2010 and 2016, with more girls taking the subject than boys. Similar trends may also be seen in those taking RE at A level, although taken by twice as many girls as boys.

In a report on GCSE studies, Dr David Lundie, senior lecturer in education at Liverpool Hope University, states, "While the percentage of pupils in all state-funded schools that took part in GCSE in 2018 is 39%, for Catholic schools the levels are significantly higher at 95%, 68% for Church of England schools, but as low as 30% in schools with no religious character. These findings are troubling for the future of the subject."

Percentage GCSE RS studies are of all subjects taken



NATRE also found that there had been "a huge decline in specialist RE teachers" and that RE teaching "was not good enough to prepare pupils adequately for the religious and belief diversity they will encounter."

Another survey, this time by Teacher Tapp, found that while 39% of teachers (in general) had been brought up in a Christian home (31% Anglican, 8% other), only 15% identified as Anglican as adults (of whom 18% attended services weekly, 68% less often, and 14% not at all), findings similar to those found in the British Social Survey. In Anglican schools (primary and secondary), only 22% of teachers were Anglican, whereas in Roman Catholic schools 48% were Catholic. There was no daily act of worship in two-fifths, 37%, of Anglican secondary schools, in 11% of Anglican primary schools and 87% of non-religious schools.

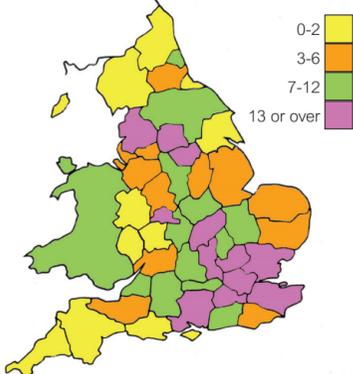
It is clear that an overhaul of legal responsibilities needs to be made, more Christian people encouraged to teach RE, and a re-think on taking RE as a GCSE subject is a necessity.

SOURCES: NATRE survey results given in *The Tablet*, 6th October 2019, Page 29; Teacher Tapp details in *Church Times*, 27th September, 2019, Page 7; schools figures from Department for Education, Office for National Statistics in successive years; GCSE results from www.bstutubs.co.uk/gender/; *GCSE Religious Studies: At a Crossroads*, Dr David Lundie and Dr Mi Young Ahn, given in *The Tablet*, 31st August 2019, Page 29.

RCCG Expands

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), which began in Nigeria in 1952 and came to the UK as a kind of "reverse mission" in 1988, has continued to start new churches, or "parishes" as they call each one in the UK in the 21st century. There were 670 RCCG church plants by 2012, and 751 by 2015, an increase of 27 a year over this period. Their latest count for 2018 is 851, a further 100 in 3 years, averaging 33 a year! The map shows how many they have in each part of the UK, and by county in England.

The map shows that RCCG is primarily starting churches in urban areas – 214 in Greater London, 50 in the West Midlands (Birmingham) and 28 in Greater Manchester, for example, but it is also starting churches in suburban areas such as the Home Counties.



Between 2015 and 2018 it has started 26 churches in London, an increase of 14% of its parishes in the capital. In Kent the number has gone from 69 in 2015 to 82, a 19% increase, and in Essex there are now 10 more churches, giving a total of 95, a 12% increase. UK-wide their total has increased by 13% in 3 years.

There are not gains everywhere. Some of their churches have closed, with fewer churches in 2018 than in 2015 in 7 counties – Durham, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and West Sussex, and there are 13 counties where the number is the same. That leaves 27 counties where they've grown!

RCCG are 3% of all the churches in Birmingham, 4% of those in London, 7% of those in Kent and 8% of those in Essex! At this rate of increase they could reach 1,000 churches in 2022, an estimated 2% of the projected number of UK churches in that year.

RCCG also begins churches especially where Nigerians are working, such as the oil fields close offshore to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire (where 14 churches have been started in the last 10 years). RCCG has a clear vision, a strong strategy, and the mantra "a church within 10 minutes walking distance" of where people live (equivalent to about a ½ mile radius).

SOURCE: The RCCG website <http://www.rccguk.church/places/> where numbers can be counted for each county, accessed October 2019.

Losing church leaders

In July, Joshua Harris, a US Christian author and former pastor, said he was no longer a Christian. Billy Kennedy, the international leader of the Pioneer Network of churches, and the leader of New Community Church, Southampton, commented that a number of UK church leaders were having similar experiences. He put the question, "Why are so many pastors, leaders and ministers having breakdowns, going down with stress, deconstructing their faith?" on his Facebook page and very quickly received many answers. He summarised these into seven major reasons which were given in the August 2019 issue of *Premier Christianity* magazine. This is our summary of that article.

1) The church "model" seems wrong. The leader can easily find him/herself focussing on success as measured by attendance or financial growth. He/she has a constant need to help church members, and it's seen as his responsibility to challenge those who are not. There is great pressure on his/her family, and often inadequate time (and finance) to recuperate properly, with a huge demand on private time not least at weekends. The leader has less freedom to act than a CEO would in industry.

2) A solitary walk. Leadership is lonely and challenging – having to cope often with difficult pastoral situations, and few people to share them with. Worthwhile friendships are difficult to cultivate.

3) Targets are set too high. People expect the leader to do more than can realistically be done, and give little praise but often much criticism. This but re-inforces the loneliness of the path. Often a leader is expected to have a near-perfect skill-set, both theologically and pastorally, with little opportunity to own up to weaknesses or problems.

4) "It's not working." It is easy to think one hasn't achieved something, disappointed yet again, making the same mistake twice (or more), and it's time to give up. A leader reads or sees something or meets someone that is going really well, and the contrast can easily become just too big.

5) Forgetting we are just human beings. A leader is expected to do more, be more, show more, explain better, and often this can be beyond them. Weakness can be a virtue not a disgrace. The stigma of mental health is a front-line issue, and leaders are not always at full strength in this area.

6) Not knowing ourselves. Many people have found the Belbin or other type of test evaluation very important for identifying their strengths; and following those strengths is hugely vital for well-being, and ultimately, success. You can't do what you are not made for, and you may not be doing what you feel you were called to do. For leaders, Sunday attendance size is not the magic measure of success; sharing Christ with one person you've met this week might be God's bull's-eye. Know how you are wired.

7) A crisis of faith is not always the same as burn-out. It is possible to over-do leadership, and recuperative rest is then essential to recover one's poise. It is also possible to feel overwhelmed by circumstances and see no way out. Offers of help, however well meaning, are not always helpful, and misunderstandings can easily occur. Leaders are perhaps more vulnerable than others because the spotlight is on them.

Not every Biblical leader got it right, or led well, or always went in the right direction. Mistakes don't mean you've lost it, though you might need to apologise. Forgiving yourself, however, can be much harder and take much longer. Deconstruction is so devastating because it rocks our lives' foundations and causes us to question who we are. But it's not the end of the road but just a point on the journey. Mr Kennedy ends his article: "Can't go over it, can't go under it, can't go through it. I think the next bit can be exciting. Let's not give up."

SNOWFLAKES

Fertility rate. The global average fertility rate is going down. The replacement level is 2.1 children per woman, and by 2100 it is forecast to be 1.9 worldwide. It is, however, slightly increasing from a low level in the Western World (1.7 to 1.8) while decreasing in the Developing World (2.6 to 2.3). It is highest in Africa and is likely to remain so for the next 30 years.

Year	Developing World			TOTAL	Western World			TOTAL	World Total
	Latin America	Africa	Asia		Europe	North America	Oceania		
2019	2.0	4.4	2.2	2.6	1.6	1.8	2.4	1.7	2.5
2050	1.8	3.1	1.9	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.1	1.8	2.2

SOURCES: UN Population Division website for fertility rates and Population Pyramid website for the populations, both June 2019.

Local Authority Districts. Parliament agreed that as from 1st April 2019 there should be two changes to current Local Authority Districts, one minor, one major. The minor one was the combining of the old Taunton Deane and West Somerset Districts into the Somerset West and Taunton Council. The new Council has approximately two-fifths of all the 21,000 churchgoers in Somerset. The other was the combining of the 8 Districts or Authorities within Dorset into two: Dorset Unitary Authority and the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Unitary Authority (UA), splitting the 33,000 churchgoers three-fifths and two-fifths respectively between these two UAs.

SOURCE: Office of National Statistics website on Live Births, and other relevant websites.

Number of Bishops. The number of Bishops in the Church of England has been relatively stable over the last 40 years but recently has seen a slight increase. In 1983 there were 43 Diocesan Bishops and 68 Suffragan Bishops (the latter including 1 Assistant Bishop), a total of 111. In 2003 there were 43 Diocesan Bishops and 65 Suffragan, a total of 108 Bishops but excluding 3 "Flying" Bishops. In 2017 there were 41 Diocesan Bishops (the creation of the Leeds Diocese in the interim), but 69 Suffragan, including at least two for non-area responsibilities. In addition there are two vacancies where no new appointment has yet been made (over several years), and one (Bishop of Hulme) where it has been stated there will not be an appointment.

SOURCES: Church Statistics, CIO Publishing, 1984; *Archdeacons in the 21st Century*, Christian Research Report, 2004; *Ministry Statistics*, Research and Statistics Dept., 2017.

Transgender has various definitions. Human beings are born with 23 chromosomes, each a pair. 22 of these are identical for males and females, but the 23rd is either XY for males or XX for females. A few people are born with three parts to their 23rd chromosome. Those with XXX are called Trisomy, and are 0.1% of females; those with XXY, called the Klinefelter syndrome, are slightly more common (as they could theoretically be YYX) and are 0.15% of males, and those born XY, Jacob's syndrome, are 0.1% of men. If these proportions applied to churchgoers, as presumably they do, that means there are some 5,000 churchgoers (2,000 women, 3,000 men) with one of these conditions, or one person in every 8 congregations.

SOURCES: Peter Brierley but based on the book by Rev Dr Paul Beasley-Murray, *The experience of retired Baptist ministers worshipping in Anglican churches*, The College of Baptist Ministers, 2019, ISBN 978-1-9165035-1-9. Available from the author at email paulbeasleymurray@gmail.com.

FutureFirst is a bimonthly bulletin for those concerned with the future of the church published by Brierley Consultancy. Editorial board: Rosemary Dowsett, Anne Coomes and Peter Brierley. The acceptance and publication of copy does not indicate editorial endorsement. Readers are welcome to quote items provided they give the source.

Established 2009. UK subscriptions £20 per annum; overseas £32 per annum. Make cheque out to 'Peter Brierley', or contact for BACS details and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: peter@brierleyres.com www.brierleyconsultancy.com

SOURCE: Note in *The Tablet*, 6th July 2019, Page 26.

☎ 01732 369 303

ISSN 2040-0268