

Percentage of different Religions in the population by Continent, 2000 and 2020

Religion	Year	Global South Global North %					Global North %			WORLD TOTAL
		Latin America	Africa	Asia	Oceania	TOTAL	Europe	North America	TOTAL	
Christianity	2000	92.5	46.8	7.5	78.0	23.0	77.3	81.2	78.5	32.4
	2020	92.1	49.3	8.2	65.1	25.2	76.1	72.6	74.2	32.3
Islam	2000	0.3	42.3	24.1	1.3	24.4	5.6	1.3	4.3	21.0
	2020	0.3	41.5	27.4	2.2	27.4	7.2	1.7	4.1	24.3
Hinduism	2000	0.1	0.3	21.9	1.2	16.1	0.1	0.5	0.2	13.4
	2020	0.1	0.3	22.8	1.9	15.8	0.2	0.6	0.4	13.6
All other religions	2000	3.6	9.9	30.1	3.9	24.0	0.9	4.5	2.0	20.2
	2020	3.4	8.2	27.8	5.5	21.3	0.9	4.6	3.0	20.4
Non-religious	2000	3.5	0.7	16.4	15.6	12.5	16.1	12.5	15.0	13.0
	2020	4.1	0.7	13.8	25.3	10.3	15.6	20.5	18.3	9.4

The Table shows that Islam is growing fastest in Asia, Oceania and Europe, and Hinduism in Asia and Oceania. The Non-religious are growing everywhere except in Europe and Africa. Other religions are growing in Oceania but declining in Asia. The largest changes in these two decades are in Christianity, growing in Africa and Asia only.

A global overview is significant and tells you what is exceptional, like the African growth. It doesn't explain why such changes are happening, although in Africa it is associated with the fast-growing population (the average number of children per woman is twice what it is elsewhere), the general Christian ambience, and the strength of Pentecostal and evangelical outreach. What effect the coronavirus will have on these global figures, particularly in relation to Christianity, is, of course, unpredictable, but what is certain are the sovereign purposes of God in the world He created.

SOURCE: Figures from the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Edited by Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, Edinburgh University Press, 2020, Pages 918 to 932.

Is Chinese Christianity Growing?

A better formulation of the question would be, "Is the Chinese Church still growing in 2020 at a similar explosive rate as it was several decades ago?" The Church in China has had a tough time. In 1949 when missionaries from the China Inland Mission and other groups were all facing expulsion by the newly Communist regime, there were, it was estimated, perhaps a million Protestant Christians in the country and a further three million Roman Catholics.

Despite ruthless persecution under Chairman Mao Zedong when Christianity was effectively banned during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), it survived and flourished in the country regardless. Officially the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) catered for a registered 44 million Christians in 2018 according to the Chinese Government (including those in the Catholic Patriotic Movement), but hidden, unregistered house churches have blossomed throughout China during the second half of the 20th century.

The third edition of the new *World Christian Encyclopedia* (WCE) divides these into various groups:

- One of these is the "emerging urban church networks" which it puts at 15 million strong in 2015, including the churches in Shanghai (1.88 mn), Beijing (0.75 mn), Wuhan (0.32 mn), Chengdu (0.32 mn) etc.
- Another is the "Big Five house churches" at 19.5 million in 2015.
- A third is the "traditional house churches" estimated at 20 million.

In 2015, these three groups were respectively 27%, 36% and 37% of the overall House Church total. The WCE puts the TSPM at 30 million and the Catholic Church at 10 million, giving a total of 94.5 million out of a grand total in 2015 of 98.75 million Christians in a population of 1,400 million people. This number has increased from 80 million in 2000, a growth rate of +1.42% per year. The WCE anticipates the number of Christians in China in 2020 as 106 million, a growth rate also of +1.43%, a marginally faster rate than between 2000 and 2015.

The growth rate of the various groups is shown in the first Table:

Growth rate per annum of various Christian groups

Group	Growth 1970 to 2000pa	Growth 2000 to 2015pa	Growth 2015 to 2020pa
House Church networks	26.3%	0.7%	} 2.1%
Three-Self Patriotic Movement	15.7%	4.3%	
Other Protestant Christians	9.6%	1.0%	
Catholics	11.7%	-1.9%	2.3%
All Christians	16.2%	4.3%	2.1%
Other religions	5.1%	0.6%	0.8%
Non-religious	0.8%	0.4%	-0.4%
TOTAL population	1.5%	0.6%	0.4%

The percentages in the Table are on a per annum (pa) basis so are comparable to each other. They reflect the incredible growth of Christianity in China in the last 30 years of the 20th century, led primarily by the House Church movements but also many joining the TSPM churches. They also show that numbers in China have continued to increase in the 21st century, albeit at a lesser rate (4.3% per annum instead of 16.2%), and faster outside the House Church movement than inside it. This last is primarily due to the fact that numbers attending the rural House Churches are contracting (the urban House Churches grew at 3.8% per annum between 2000 and 2015).

The Table also shows that Christian numbers over the past 5 years (2015 to 2020) are continuing to increase, although much more slowly (2.1% per annum instead of 4.3%). What is interesting, however, is that all these percentages are well above the increase in the population. The WCE confirms what another book, *The Atlas of Global Christianity*, gives for Chinese Christianity in 2050, and shows that growth is expected to continue in the future – at a rate of +2.1% per annum against a population decline of -0.2% between 2020 and 2050.

So how important is China's growth in global Christianity? The next Table indicates the percentage Chinese and African Christians are of global Christians in various years.

Percentage of World Christians by various Regions

Region	1970	2000	2015	2020	2050
China	0.1%	4.0%	4.2%	4.2%	5.8%
Rest of Asia	7.7%	10.1%	10.7%	10.8%	10.9%
Africa	11.4%	19.2%	24.4%	26.5%	38.7%
Rest of World	80.8%	66.7%	60.7%	58.5%	44.6%

The huge growth in China between 1970 and 2000 made a real impact globally, and these percentage increases exceeded the increase seen in the rest of Asia, which includes India and Indonesia. However, the rate of increase has slowed in China, though not elsewhere in Asia, between 2000 and 2020, although the long-term increase outside China is relatively small by comparison with the expected increase in China.

Compared with Africa, however, the proportions in Asia are changing much less. In the year 2000, 14% of the world's Christians were in Asia, 19% in Africa. If these trends become true, then by 2050 those proportions will be 17% and 39%, and the dominance of Africa, and its importance to global Christianity, will be clearly seen.

SOURCES: Wikipedia; *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, edited by Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, and *The Atlas of Global Christianity* edited by Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, both Edinburgh University Press, 2020 and 2009 respectively.

Older People Cliff Edge

This is a quotation from a recently published book, *The Ageing of Great Britain*, using data from the Office for National Statistics, and written in the year 2019:

“Britain is already on the cliff edge of becoming an ageing society in which the old, or at least the older age groups, begin to outnumber the young:

“By 2035, there will be:

- Over 21 million people aged 60 and over in the UK; over 40% more than today (2019).
- Over 3 million pensioners aged 85 and over; double the number today and tripling by 2066.
- Nearly 100,000 centenarians aged 100 years plus; nearly 8 times the number today.

“By 2050, over a quarter of the UK population will be aged 65 and over, and the dependency ratio – the ratio of old-age dependents to working population – will have fallen from 4:1 today to less than 3:1, with potentially catastrophic effects on the UK economy and welfare spending.

“By 2083, it is estimated that one in three of the UK population will be over 60 years old, and nearly one in five people, 20% of the British population, will live to 100 years plus.

“Phenomenal predictions in themselves, but what is astonishing is the sheer speed of this demographic shift and how it has and will transform the life of each and every one of us hereafter. In 1919, men in Great Britain lived, on average, 53 years and women 56 years. Today, in 2019, average life expectancy for men in the UK is 80 years and 83 years for women: a phenomenal increase of 27 years of extra life in less than 100 years. Truly one of the Great Wonders of the Modern World.”

If this is all true for the general population, what might it mean for church leadership?

- More live-streamed worship from churches with more of the congregation in their homes?
- Less energy to participate in community activities and support for the needy?
- Some structural changes to allow easier access to, and use of, buildings?
- More “Ministers for the Elderly”?
- A change in retirement age for the clergy?
- More professional training for serving personnel?
- A financial re-think if income drops drastically?
- Who would take the initiative in answering such questions?

Question: Is the preponderance of elderly people dying from Covid-19 likely to alter the 2019 average life expectancy figures? If so, these “phenomenal predictions” and their speed might also need adjusting for Covid.

SOURCE for quotation: *The Ageing of Great Britain*, A Grey Nightmare or Agenda for a Silver Age? by Martin Slattery, Matador Publishing, Leicestershire, 2019, Page xvi.

TWENTY FIRST CENTURY IMMIGRANTS

There are some countries to which, if we are describing them in religious terms, we will readily add a word like “Catholic Spain” or “Catholic Italy.” In similar vein we might associate the word “Orthodox” with Russia, Romania, Greece, Serbia, Armenia and other Near and Middle eastern countries. Such countries often have a notional attachment to the Orthodox Church, frequently with 75% or more of their population technically adherents.

Like so many such descriptions and measurements, as in the designation of the UK as “Christian”, the percentages are usually misrepresentative of actual personal commitment. However, in this twenty first century, when we have seen as a country so many tens of thousands of immigrants from some of these countries, their religious impact may be more real than at first apparent.

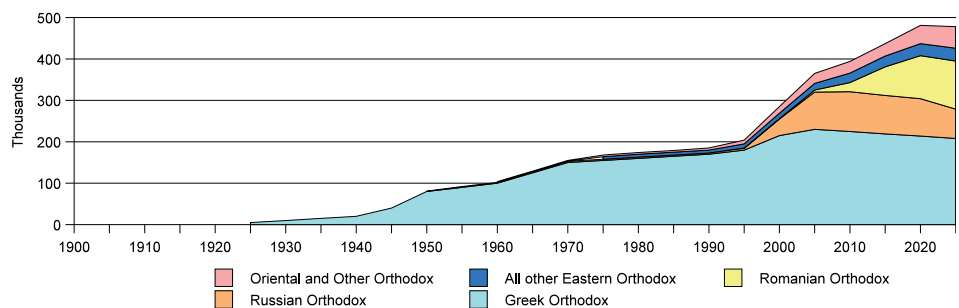
Take the Poles for instance who have come to the UK in hundreds of thousands over the last 10 or 15 years, encouraged by the EU agreement that borders can be crossed by those from any member country. A large number of Polish men have moved to Scotland to work with the oil industry in and around Aberdeen or with the UK military establishments on its north coast. Many of these are active Roman Catholics – so many in fact that the Roman Catholic Church has started 27 Polish churches in Scotland – 25 in and around Aberdeen, one in Dundee, one in Edinburgh and with one Glasgow church holding a Polish service.

Something similar has happened with Russians and Romanians. Wikipedia estimates that there were probably about 300,000 Russians in the country in 2005, and the Population Censuses in 2001 and 2011 show that numbers more than doubled in this initial decade. The Office for National Statistics indicates their numbers have stayed at roughly the same level since. Numbers joining a church have been high also. There were some 75,000 Russian Orthodox Church members in the UK, mostly (88%) in England, in 2015.

With the collapse of Communism in Russia in 1990, the subsequent decade was a strained time for the Church, especially for those of its members in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) which formally united with the Russian Orthodox Church on 17th May 2007 at a service which President Vladimir Putin attended.

Likewise the number of Romanians coming to the UK has increased dramatically. The 2001 Census recorded just under 8,000 which rose tenfold to 83,000 by 2011. The EU allowed many in from 2007 and a transitional cap on numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians expired in 2014. The number has increased further to over a quarter of a million by 2025 and 450,000 in 2019, making them the second largest group of non-British nationals in the UK (after the Poles).

Numbers of Orthodox Church members in the UK over the last 100 years



Why come? According to Eurostat, the EU statistical agency, more than a third of Romanians are at risk of poverty and social exclusion and almost half of the country’s children are borderline poor. So they come to the UK for work such as fruit picking and vegetable harvesting, sometimes being housed in appalling conditions by people traffickers and subject to human slavery. The graph shows that many are at least nominal members of the Romanian Orthodox church.

There are three broad groups of Orthodox Church members represented in the UK. The Eastern Orthodox, which includes the Greeks, Russians and Romanians, is by far the largest component, 90% in 2020 in the UK. The smaller Oriental Orthodox makes up the large majority of the remainder in Britain, the difference between the two being that the Oriental is “monophysite”, that is they do not believe in the two natures of Christ (human and spiritual). The Other Orthodox is just 0.1% of the UK total, of which the Kiev Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the largest component.

The graph shows that the Greek Orthodox Church is the largest in the UK, and has been here since before the Second World War, growing steadily during the second half of the twentieth century. The Russians and the Romanians, however, have between them doubled the number of Orthodox believers in the UK, with a grand total of some 480,000 in 2020, about a tenth of all church members in the UK. The graph also shows that the Oriental Orthodox has been growing in the last few years. These are especially the Armenians and the rapidly growing number of Syrian refugees. There were 9,000 in the UK at the 2011 Census and some 47,000 in 2019.

Hospitality and a welcome to strangers is part of the Christian faith, difficult during these days of coronavirus but even more essential for those desperate for security and employment.

SOURCES: *Non-British Population in the UK*, and Population Censuses, Office for National Statistics, and country website accessed June 2020.

Visiting Churches

People visit churches for a variety of reasons. Researchers in Germany asked tourists going to nine different cathedrals to complete a form asking why they had gone. Their answers are interesting and shown below, the score being on a scale from 1 = Not important to 5 = Very important.

Popularity of Site (average 3.44)

- (a) This church is a tourist attraction 3.87;
- (b) I heard this is a great church building 3.35;
- (c) I want to say I had been there 3.11.

Learning and Interest (average 3.06)

- (a) To broaden my horizons 3.20;
- (b) To learn something new 3.16;
- (c) To be better informed 3.05;
- (d) To deepen my areas of interest 2.82.

Religious Dimension (average 2.88)

- (a) To remember God 3.05;
- (b) To feel God's presence 2.81;
- (c) To pray 2.77.

Relaxation and Recreation (average 2.87)

- (a) To switch off for a while 3.15;
- (b) To relax 2.79;
- (c) To recuperate 2.68.

Social Learning (average 2.09)

- (a) My family learn things here they can't elsewhere 2.16;
- (b) To support my children and their learning 2.01.

Social Contact (average 1.48)

- (a) To connect with others 1.50;
- (b) To meet new people 1.46;

The overall average score is 2.64, virtually half-way between the two extremes, and perhaps not really indicating any driving reason for their visit. The major motivation seemed to be the renown of the building itself, and not dependent on any entertainment extra such as the crazy golf and helter-skelter in UK Cathedrals in the summer of 2019.

Intellectual interest and religious desire did play their part as well, but in that order. Is this an example of feeding the mind before one feeds the spirit? The research was conducted on cathedral visitors; would similar results come from, say, village churches, or city centre churches? In what ways might casual cathedral/church visitors be encouraged to join an actual service?

SOURCE: Article "Visit Motivation of Tourists in Church Buildings" by Ulrich Riegel and Konstantin Lindner in *Rural Theology*, Volume 18, Number 1, 2020, Page 45.

SNOWFLAKES

Watching video services. A Barna report of May 2020 indicated that over the previous 4 weeks nearly half of American churchgoers hadn't watched an online service, and among those who had, only 40% said they had been watching services from their regular home church. Equivalent figures are not known for the UK, though one poll reported that 24% of the population had watched an on-line service. Many elderly churchgoers may not have the technology to watch such a service, and they are over a third of churchgoers, so a similar percentage to the Americans, perhaps almost 50% of churchgoers not watching a church service, might be true in the UK also.

SOURCE: *Christian Post* website, CP Church and Ministries, 26th May 2020.

Parish Magazines. A poll of *Parish Pump* subscribers early in 2020 showed that a quarter of (Church of England) parish magazines have ceased publication (because of lockdown). But around two-thirds went digital or are now producing both printed and digital versions. Anne Coomes, the editor, commented, "We know that of the hundreds of church magazine editors who have gone digital, many are even attracting new readers at this time."

SOURCE: *Christian Today*, 9th June 2020.

Coronavirus gains. One result from a survey of Irish faith leaders found people (a) praying more and (b) those previously uninterested in religion turning to prayer. Another finding was that before the pandemic 44% of church communities did not provide online worship opportunities; now that percentage is just 13%, and 70% of respondents agreed that such should be retained when restrictions are lifted. Half, 46%, of leaders said their ministry had been more stressful in lockdown mostly because of inability to give pastoral care in bereavements.

SOURCE: Survey by Dr Gladys Daniel of Queen's University, Belfast and the Irish Council of Churches, reported in *The Tablet*, 6th June 2020, Page 29.

Coronavirus and church. During the lockdown months of April to June 2020, over two-thirds, 70%, of church leaders said they had more people attending their services than before, albeit online. Three-fifths, 59%, of them also said they had more people enquiring about the Christian faith.

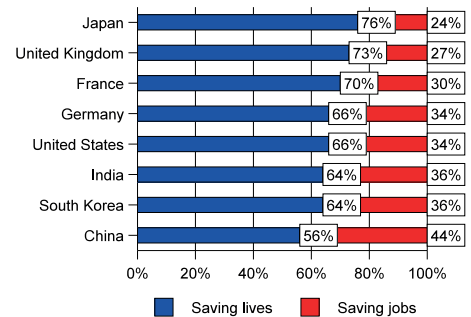
SOURCE: *Church Covid Survey*, by Evangelical Alliance, June 2020.

Religious London. A new Theos report shows the religiosity of London not just by numbers of attenders but by the intensity of their practice. The consequence is that London is "a more civically minded, neighbourly and resilient place." Regular attendance at religious services is "paradoxical: a

secular, liberal and cosmopolitan city in which religion is becoming more visible and significant."

SOURCE: *Religious London*, by Paul Bickley and Natan Ladin, Theos 2020, talking with Janet Daby (Labour MP for Lewisham East), Tony Travers (Director, The Institute of Public Affairs at the LSE) and Mustafa Field (Director, Faiths Forum for London).

Priorities of Government. Should the priority of government during the coronavirus pandemic be to save lives or save jobs? This survey was asked of a sample of people in various countries and the results are shown in the chart, where **RED** is to save jobs and restart the economy instead of taking precautions and **BLUE** is to save lives even if it means more economic damage and slower recovery:

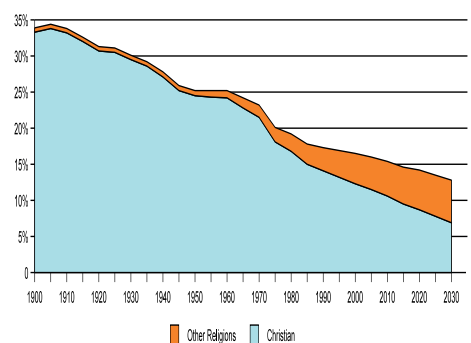


SOURCE: Niall McCarthy, Statistica, based on April 2020 survey of 11,000 people globally.

Ethnic Integration in Churches. How far are different congregations ethnically mixed? While most congregations, especially in rural areas, are White-only, and a few congregations are BAME-only, many UK congregations have at least some ethnic diversity. In 2010 it was estimated that some 3,500, 9%, of England's 38,500 congregations were mixed (meaning in practice that at least 10% were from different countries). It was also estimated that that number would rise to perhaps 4,600 by 2020, a huge 30%+ increase. The latest figures suggest that these predictions are about right.

SOURCES: *Does the Future have a Church?* and *UK Church Statistics No 4*, ADBC Publishers, 2020.

Percentage of the UK adult population in either a church or religious membership, 1900-2030E



These may be helpful - Books/papers received

Learning to Preach, Biblical Preaching in the Local Church, by Jeremy McQuoid and Stephen McQuoid, Opal and Partnership, 2020, ISBN 978-1-9160130-0-1. RRP £8.99, available through <http://partnership.org/preach>.

Who's In and Who's Out? Reflections on our Biblical Understanding of the Gospel, a superb article by Phill Butler, founder of visionSynergy in the USA, in the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, OMSC. Looks at membership, mastery (knowledge required for the Kingdom) and method (presenting the Gospel appropriately). Email: pbutler@visionsynergy.net

Faith in Numbers: Can we trust Quantitative Data on Religious Affiliation and Religious Freedom? An excellent paper by Judd Birdsall and Lori Beaman, in *Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion & Diplomacy*, 22nd June 2020, Cambridge Institute on Religion and International Studies, www.CIRIS.org.uk/ReligionandDiplomacy.org.uk.

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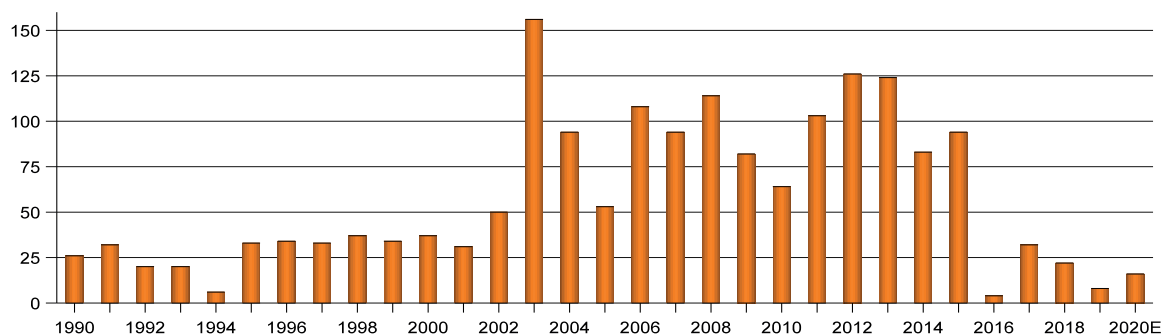
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Pentecostal Churches

The Pentecostal group of churches are probably the most active group in the UK today in terms of planting new congregations, evangelism and reaching out to new people, especially the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) community. In terms of membership it is not the largest; that variance belongs to the Catholic group of churches (1.3 million in 2020), followed closely by the Anglicans (1.2 mn), then the Presbyterians (0.6 mn), the Orthodox (0.5 mn) and then the Pentecostals (0.4 mn).

The Pentecostal group is, however, growing the fastest. Between 2000 and 2020 the Catholics declined -25%, the Anglicans -31%, the Presbyterians -40%, the Orthodox grew +69%, and the Pentecostals +74%. If that spurt is impressive, they doubled over the previous 20 years, 1980 to 2000, +101%! The obvious question is "Why?" The growth has not been consistent over these years, as the graph makes clear (individual annual changes in the 1980s are not known), though this shows the number of new churches as opposed to membership, though the two are closely linked:

Number of new Pentecostal churches starting per year in UK 1990-2020



In the 13 years 1990 to 2002, some 393 congregations were started by the Pentecostals, an average of 30 per year, or one every two weeks. Between 2003 and 2015, the next 13 years, a total of 1,295 churches were started or an average of 100 per year, or two every week. Almost exactly half of these were started by one denomination, the Redeemed Christian Church of God. In the last 5 years, 2016 to 2020, 82 Pentecostal congregations have been initiated, an average of 16 every year, or one every three weeks.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) began in 1952 in Nigeria with Pastor Josiah Akindayomi. When he died in 1981, the General Overseer leadership passed to Pastor E Adeboye. Under his leadership the church has seen a tremendous explosion in outreach both in Nigeria and in some 180 countries throughout the world.

The Church came to the UK as a kind of "reverse mission" in 1993 and since then has seen nearly 900 churches started. The RCCG aim is to start "a church within 5 minutes walking distance in developing countries or 5 minutes driving distance in developed countries" (so its website). 5 minutes is a walking circle of about ¼ mile radius. RCCG has been especially prominent in the more urban parts of the country. Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Head of the UK Executive Council of the Church is Pastor Agu Irukwu, also leader of the Jesus House for All Nations Church in Brent, London.

Planting so many churches made its own "image" impact on the many other black churches in the London capital, who have started at least 73 different "mini-denominations" in the UK (all with at least two independent congregations, and a few with dozens), many in the 1960s and many in the 1980s, but not in the 1970s (all having been researched on the web). Of the additional 189 individual congregations known in 2005 (for the English Church Census), all but 18 were in London. The RCCG has over 200 of its churches in London – if they can do it, why can't others? So other Black (mostly) leaders tried, and many succeeded.

During the early part of this century, London became a focus for immigrants. The number of Armenians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Syrians and Ukrainians have all doubled, while there are also 350,000 Indians currently in the UK. The number of Black Africans more than doubled between 2001 and 2011, and Asians have tripled from 240,000 to 820,000 in the same years. So there were many people who were footloose, needing friendship and cultural support, who were very open to being invited to come to a Christian church for food and fellowship with others from their own background and language. Pentecostal churches grew.

Their culture is also attractive – often warm, enthusiastic, with a love of singing, noise and exuberance. Sincerity is there also, with a very deep spirituality for example if they came from East Africa where memories of the revival were still real. The challenge of example, the reality of numbers, the presence of inherent belief has helped make Pentecostal churches very important.

That movement continues today, and has moved beyond London. Nine-tenths of Pentecostals in the UK live and work in England. In 2012 three-fifths of these, 60%, were in London, but by 2020 only 54% of Pentecostal Christians lived there. So the balance and the presence is changing, expanding to other communities in other parts of the country.

SOURCES: Non-British Population in the UK, and Population Censuses, Office for National Statistics, and country websites accessed June 2020; UK Church Statistics No 4, 2015-2025, ADABC Publishers, forthcoming.

Humour

Notice from the association of Psychiatrists: Dear citizens, During the quarantine it is considered normal to talk to your plants and pets. Kindly contact us only if they reply. Thank you.

Never in my whole life would I imagine my hands would consume more alcohol than my mouth.

It's been such a joy being home with my wife the past weeks. We've caught up on all the things I've done wrong the past 30 years.

To all the grandparents who are missing their grandchildren: When this is over you can them for a month. Promise.

Breaking News: Wearing masks inside your home is now highly recommended. Not so much to prevent Covid-19 but to stop eating.

SOURCE: Email from Margaret Price, New Zealand.

Rural Ministry

The Church of England has more churches in rural areas than any other denomination. Of all its churches, two-thirds, 66%, are in rural locations, but three-fifths, 58%, of its clergy serve in its urban parishes.

A research project, evaluating rural ministry, led by the Church of England's National Rural Officer, Canon Dr Jill Hopkinson, was undertaken some years ago, and although published in 2015, it is still relevant now.

Item	Rural %	Urban %	Base (=100%)
Leadership			
Incumbents	43	57	5,933
%female	26	19	22
Assistant Curates	31	69	1,457
%female	40	37	38
Self-supporting priests	47	53	2,969
%female	56	52	54
All clergy	42	58	10,359
%female	37	31	33
Attendance			
Average attendance	367,700	549,200	916,900
%of total	40	60	100
Christmas attendance	1,101,600	1,139,300	2,240,900
%of total	49	51	100
Number of parishes	8,394	4,378	12,772
%of total	66	34	100
Average attendance per parish	44	125	72
Christmas attendance per parish	131	260	175
Change in numbers over 10 years			
		<u>Average</u>	
Growth	18	19	19
Single parish benefice	18	20	20
Multi-parish benefice	18	12	17
Static	56	51	54
Single parish benefice	55	53	53
Multi-parish benefice	56	46	55
Decline	26	30	27
Single parish benefice	28	28	28
Multi-parish benefice	25	33	26

This Table illustrates a number of key features. In terms of leadership, more female clergy (of all types) serve pro rata in rural parishes than urban ones. More than two-thirds of curates, 69%, serve in urban parishes.

While attendance is less in rural churches, nevertheless the sheer number of rural parishes means they account for two-fifths of total Church of England usual Sunday worshippers, and half of those coming at Christmas. Average rural Christmas attendance is three times the normal, but in urban parishes it is only double.

Growth is difficult throughout the Church of England, but one-sixth, 19%, of churches had grown in the 10 years at the start of the 21st century (2003 to 2012), a percentage much reduced if there was more than one parish in its benefice, something true of two-fifths, 40%, of benefices.

However, decline was slightly more likely in urban parishes than rural (30% to 26%), and again more so if benefices were multi-parish (33% to 25%). The majority of parishes, 54%, are simply "static" (or where growth or decline is defined as "inconclusive").

Numbers across the board have decreased by about a third since these counts were first made (in 2003), but the overall viability of many rural churches remains a key issue. The number of churches per benefice is clearly a key issue of difficulty, although essential if a reducing number of leaders has to be spread throughout an un-reducing area of responsibility. The Report showed that one benefice in six, 19%, has between 5 and 10 parishes within it, and 4% have 11 or more parishes. Other research has shown that not only is this an impossible number to cope with, without abnormal stress, but growth is extremely unlikely in such circumstances. This would seem to suggest an alternative leadership method or profile is essential (such as giving legal responsibilities to lay people).

SOURCE: *Released for Mission*, Growing the Rural Church, Rt Revd James Bell, Bishop of Knebborough, Chair, Rural Affairs Group of General Synod, January 2015.

The Diaspora Churches

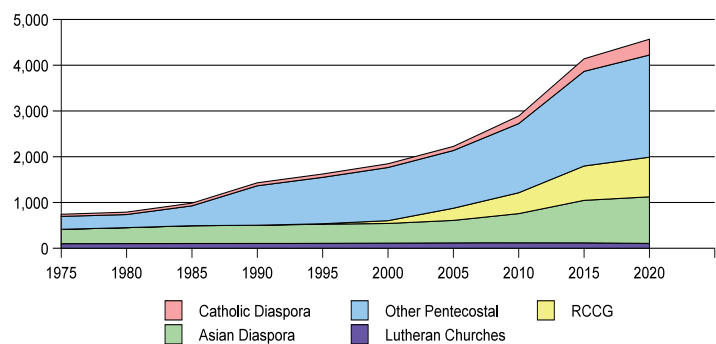
There have been Chinese Churches in the UK for many years, as well as others from an Asian background. In addition many have sprung up from European and African countries. In summarising these many denominations in earlier books they were collectively referred to as "Overseas National Churches (Protestant)," where the word "Protestant" was included to distinguish them from the many similar Catholic Churches. Global Connections, and others, are now using a new and better name for these – Diaspora Churches.

There are dozens of different denominations which could be included under such a head. The forthcoming new edition of *UK Church Statistics* lists 33 different national Catholic Churches in the Diocese of Westminster alone, as well as others serving wider afield. It lists 16 different Lutheran denominations, mostly based in England, but some, like the Finnish, German, Latvian, Norwegian and Polish, have work in other parts of the UK as well. There are at least 26 nationalities represented by Asian or non-British White countries, and of course there are huge numbers of black congregations from many African and Caribbean countries.

When in non-pandemic times the congregations in the UK are worshipping God on a Sunday, His praise is being extolled in well over a hundred different languages here in the UK, and this may well be true in pandemic times in online services. All of this normally gives a wonderful opportunity to reach the many students, visitors, casual workers and others we have from overseas coming to this our country. Many of these denominations have more than one congregation. Black Pentecostal congregations, together with numerous diaspora others, total well over 4,000 different congregations, out of a total of 45,000 in the UK in 2020.

The growth is significant and is illustrated in the graph, although it is not possible always strictly to distinguish a diaspora congregation from a native British one, where RCCG = the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Diaspora congregations in the UK, 1975 to 2020



It may be seen that the bulk of this expansion has occurred in the 21st century, and it is the Pentecostal churches which dominate the scene. What are the actual numbers? In 2020 the Lutheran churches had 106 congregations between them, with an average membership of 120 (note membership does not usually equal attendance; with most Lutheran churches membership well exceeds attendance). The Asian Diaspora had just over 1,000 churches with an average membership of 70.

The RCCG is aiming for almost 900 churches by the end of the year (they would like to touch 1,000), with an average membership of just over 80, but attendance much more than that, perhaps double. Their largest church, the Jesus House for All the Nations in Brent, had attendances of up to 4,000 on a Sunday in pre-coronavirus times. There are many much smaller Pentecostal churches, however, over 2,200 in 2020 also with an average membership of about 85 but attendance much higher. The Catholic Chaplaincies are smaller, some 345 congregations, but with a theoretical average membership of over 250, though average attendance is probably only perhaps 10% of that figure. For some Catholic countries "membership" is taken as a proportion of adherents in the country of origin.

The graph omits the Orthodox congregations entirely, totalling some 360 units with a huge average membership, but very, very small actual attendance.

The congregations shown in the graph represent over 460,000 church members, little short of a tenth of the total UK church membership (9.6%). This is dramatically different from twenty years previously, in the millennium year of 2000, when there were perhaps some 1,850 diaspora congregations with a total membership of 170,000 or 3% of the total UK church membership at that time.

The increase represents some of the colossal number of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, workers and others coming to the UK, mostly (four-fifths) from Europe. Some will undoubtedly return when Brexit is finally completed, but others may well take their place.

The above comments reflect the Christian position which while increasing for these congregations, is generally seeing decline. In the year 2000, some 12.3% of the adult population of the UK was in some way Christian, but by 2020 that had dropped to 8.7%. In 2000 some 4.2% of the population adhered to a non-Christian religion, only a third of the Christian percentage. By 2020 that percentage had increased to 5.5%, about two-thirds of the Christian proportion (see graph on Page 4).

As a result of the pandemic, the Church in the UK is perhaps in an unprecedented position; through its social and community contribution such as food banks it has established a certain amount of goodwill; through its live services and other resources it has been there for those searching spiritually. Will the Church now ride the wave and be a prophetic voice calling our country to repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, or will it sink again into the ebb of insignificance and irrelevance?

SOURCES: *UK Church Statistics* No 4, 2015 to 2025, edited Peter Brierley, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, forthcoming.

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FUTURE FIRST

FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

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SNIPPETS

1) 24% of adults said they watched or listened to a religious service since lockdown. Of those aged 18 to 34 that is 34%. Of those tuning in, 5% have never been to church.

2) 24% of Irish 18-24 year olds are praying more than usual, they say, and 27% have watched at least one religious service since lockdown.

3) St Mary's Church, Nantwich, held 4 online services on Easter Day 2020. The most popular was their 6.00 am dawn service watched by 43 people at the time but some further 3,500 people afterwards! Average viewing time for the 25 minute event – just one minute!

4) Almost half, 45%, of the 549 books planned for publication in May were rescheduled for later in the year, together with 48% of June's 463 and 23% of July's 472, because of the coronavirus lockdown.

5) Two-fifths of UK adults were reading more during lockdown, and 25% of people were buying more books.

6) There are about 40 million slaves in the world today, 70% female, 25% children. In the UK the number is between 10,000 and 136,000.

7) Some 50 million people follow Pope Francis on his Twitter/Facebook statements, 0.7% of the world's 7.6 billion people. Donald Trump has twice as many!

SOURCES: 1) ComRes survey in *The Guardian*, reported in *The Week*, 9th May 2020, Page 4; 2) Iona Institute poll undertaken by Amárah Research, detailed in *The Tablet*, 2nd May 2020, Page 30; 3) Report in the *Church Times* 8th May 2020; 4) and 5) *The Bookseller*, 22nd May, 2020, Pages 7 and 8 respectively; 6) *Christianity*, June 2020, Page 51; 7) Niall McCarthy, *Statista*, 8th June 2020.

THINKING GLOBALLY

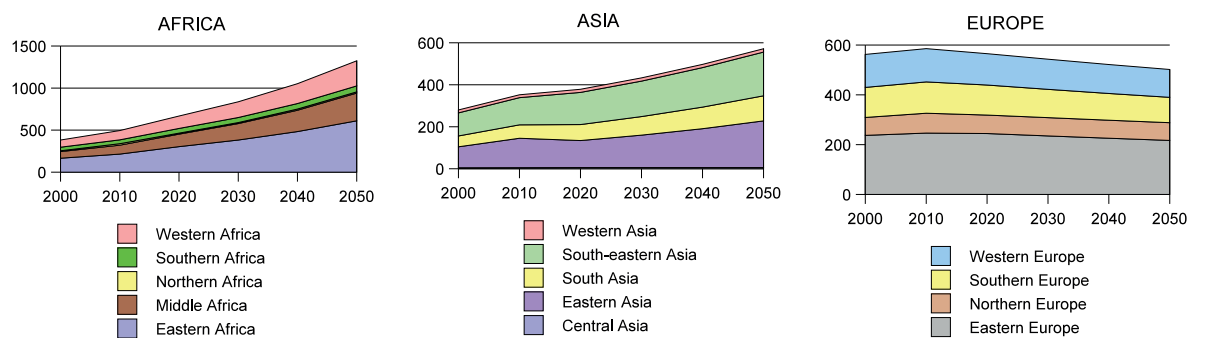
The daily reports on the coronavirus focussed initially on China, then Italy, then other countries like South Korea, Iran and Spain, as well as the UK. Eventually reports accumulated the total global impact on 160 or more countries with worldwide totals of cases and deaths. Such expansive thinking is helpful in identifying the key features of what is happening.

The article in the previous issue of *FutureFirst* looking at the results of the newly published *World Christian Encyclopaedia* sought to do just that: a brief overview of Christianity, the salient features of which were continuing European decline but African growth, and the static situation of Christianity compared with Muslim growth. This article looks at some of the other features of that same (massive) book.

UN Regions

The *Encyclopaedia* gives the number of Christians broken down by each of the 22 UN Regions into which the world is divided. So the numbers for three key continents are shown below (note that the vertical axes differ):

Number of Christians, in millions, in three Continents, 2000 to 2050



These graphs show that the growth in Africa and Asia is not uniform across those continents. While African Christianity as a whole grew at +2.8% per annum between 2000 and 2020, Western African Christians (30% of Africa's population) grew at +2.8%, Eastern Africa (34%) at +3.0% and Middle Africa (13%) at +3.3%. But Northern Africa (18%) only managed +0.9%, and Southern Africa (5%) +1.3%. The fastest Christian components of Africa's growth are the Catholics (+3.0%), the Evangelicals (+2.9%) and the Pentecostals (+2.8%).

Total Asian Christianity between 2000 and 2020 grew at + 1.3% per annum, while Eastern Asia Christians (36% of the population) also grew at +1.3%, although they are expected to grow at +1.8% per annum between 2020 and 2050, reflecting the changes projected for parts of central China and South Korea. South-eastern Asia (14%) grew at +1.7%, while South Asia (42%) grew at +2.0%. Western and Central Asian Christians (8%) grew at just +0.5%. The fastest parts of the Christian groups growing in Asia are the Protestants (+2.3%) and the Pentecostals (+1.8%).

European Christianity is declining, with the increase shown between 2000 and 2010 due to the massive influx of immigrants across much of Europe in that decade being offset almost exactly by their return or absorption between 2010 and 2020. Between 2020 and 2050 European Christians as a whole are likely to drop -0.4% per annum, with those in Northern Europe declining less (-0.1%) and those in Southern Europe more (-0.6%).

North American Christians are also declining, dropping from 81% of the population in 2000 to an anticipated 66% by 2050. It is their Protestants who are declining most. Latin American Christians are also declining, though at a much slower pace, from 93% of the population to an anticipated 90% in 2050. There is multiple switching from Roman Catholicism to other groups, especially the Independents.

Christianity in Oceania is declining as well, especially in Australia and New Zealand where it falls from 73% of the population in 2000 to 54% by 2020 and an expected 45% by 2050. Christians in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia are all growing (+2.1%, +0.4% and +0.7% per annum between 2000 and 2020 respectively).

Other Religions

While Christianity may be the largest religion in the world (32% of the population in 2020), others which are also important include Muslims (24%), Hindus (14%), Buddhist (7%), 12 others (totalling 12%) and the Non-religious (11%).

Continued on page 2