

CONTENTS

The Perceived Impact of Covid-19 on the Church of England	P1
Attitudes to Other Religions	P2
Larger Churches	P2
Attendance by Environment	P3
Census Results	P3
Opening and Closing Churches	P4
Snowflakes	P4
Adult Book Reading	P5
Children's Book Reading	P5
Female Clergy	P6



FUTURE FIRST

FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

ISSN 2040-0268 | Number 75, June 2021

SNIPPETS

1) To support their church planting work, Vineyard gave £40,000 to Newfrontiers and the Redeemed Christian Church of God in 2020.

2) Of the 12.4 million people who volunteered during the pandemic, 4.6 million were doing so for the first time. A sixth, 17%, of these were between 18 and 24.

3) 497 million young people, about 41% of the global youth population, are in the labour force. So young Christian leaders can play a crucial role in their work-place.

4) In a survey on coping through Covid, half, 54%, of those aged 18 to 29 had helped someone cope with bereavement, compared with just a quarter, 26%, of those over 60.

5) Amazon's virtual assistant Alexa became widely available in the US in June 2015. That year, 6,052 US babies were named Alexa; in 2019 that number had dropped by two-thirds, 67%, to 1,995.

6) Pope Francis has observed that "we are not living in an era of change, but in a change of era."

7) Almost three-quarters, 73%, of those aged 52 or over in the UK have at least one grandchild aged under 12. That's at least 17 million grandparents; should churches have a Grandparents Day?

SOURCES: 1) *Christianity*, March 2021, Page 12; 2) *Church Times* report, 5th March 2021, Page 3; 3) International Labour Organisation estimate, Nov 2019, quoted in YLGen survey report by Jayanthi Vuppala, March 2021; 4) Report in *Church Times*, 19th March, 2021, Page 4; 5) Article "Has Amazon ruined the name Alexa?" by Felix Richter, *Statista*, 19th February, 2021; 6) Quoted in *The Tablet*, 3rd April 2021, Page 4; 7) Office for National Statistics answering a question in 2017.

The Perceived Impact of Covid-19 on the Church of England

by Prof Leslie J Francis, Warwick and Prof Andrew Village, York St John

The Coronavirus, Church & You Survey was online from 8th May 2020 to 23rd July 2020 to capture the responses of clergy and churchgoers to the initial impact of the pandemic. In England the Government imposed a lockdown on the nation on 23rd March 2020, and the following day the Church of England imposed a lock-up on all its churches. It was clear that churches would be closed not only for public worship but also for private prayer, closed not only to lay people but also to priests. Clergy were instructed to live stream worship from their own homes.

There were two main forms of the Coronavirus, Church & You Survey, one for the Anglican Church and one for the Catholic Church. The May 2021 issue of *Rural Theology* carries two papers that report on findings from participants who identified as Anglicans living in England.

The first paper by Francis, Village, and Lawson (2021) tests the fragile church hypothesis among lay participants living in four different geographical locations: 903 in rural parishes, 771 in town parishes, 598 in suburban parishes, and 227 in inner city parishes. These new data were set alongside the findings from Church of England clergy who identified as being engaged in full-time parochial ministry: 265 in rural parishes, 211 in town parishes, 182 in urban parishes, and 87 in inner city parishes. The fragile church hypothesis, as shaped by Anne Lawson (2018, 2019, 2020), suggested that there is growing anxiety in the rural churches about running low on resources: financial resources and human resources. In the survey this hypothesis was tested by two items designed to assess the impact of Covid-19 on church life:

- 1) Our church building will not be financially viable
- 2) Key lay people will step down and be difficult to replace

Table 1: Assessing the impact of Covid-19 by location

Item	Rural %	Town %	Suburban %	Inner City %	Overall %
Clergy					
1) Our church building...	34	20	18	24	25
2) Key people will ...	29	24	23	20	25
Laity					
1) Our church building ...	22	16	15	8	17
2) Key people will ...	23	16	17	18	19

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the data presented in Table 1. The first conclusion is that Anne Lawson was right to draw our attention to the fragile church hypothesis. There is real anxiety that a number of churches will not survive the pandemic. The second conclusion is that, both among clergy and laity, the level of anxiety is highest in rural areas. One in three rural clergy feel that their church buildings will not be financially viable after the pandemic. The third conclusion is that, across all four geographical areas, the laity are less anxious than clergy about the sustainability of churches. In many ways the future of fragile churches is in the hands of the laity who will need to find the finance and the volunteers to resource them.

The second paper by Francis and Village (2021) tests the thesis that older churchgoers (those aged seventy and over) will have judged the Church's response to the pandemic less kindly than younger churchgoers. We put the spot light on churchgoers aged 70 and over for three reasons. First, in *UK Church Statistics* No 4: 2021 edition, Brierley (2020) maps the increasing importance of older people in Anglican congregations. In 1979 Brierley found 19% of Anglican churchgoers were aged 65 or over. The proportion of this age group then rose to 22% in 1989, 28% in 1999, 35% in 2005, and 40% in 2015.

Second, those aged 70 and over were thought to be particularly vulnerable to the virus. They had been advised to shield and may have been preparing for the long haul, largely avoiding group activities and human contact. In this situation, those aged 70 and over may have been reluctant to return as soon as the doors were unlocked. It is such a significant period of disengagement that may simply break a life-long habit of churchgoing. In their survey of churchleavers, *Gone for Good?*, Francis and Richter (2007) found that 69% of leavers had not left intentionally but said "I got out of the habit of going to church." Perhaps there is nothing quite so successful for breaking the habit of churchgoing as locking the door.

Third, our earlier research reported in *Fragmented Faith* (Francis, Robbins, & Astley, 2005) had found that churchgoers aged 70 and over were considerably less satisfied with their local churches than younger churchgoers. Older churchgoers were less likely to be helped in their faith by new forms of service (37% compared with 55%), were less likely to be in favour of admitting children to communion before confirmation (38% compared with 56%), were less likely to favour the ordination of women as bishops (53% compared with 71%), were less in favour of divorced people as bishops (29% compared with 57%), and were less likely to feel that they could influence their church's decisions (51% compared with 61%).

In the survey the hypothesis that older churchgoers would be less content with the Church's response to the pandemic was tested on two primary sets of items concerning:

- 1) Attitude toward church closure
- 2) Attitude toward the online future

Table 2: Attitudes towards church closure and the future

Item	Under 60%	70 or over %
1) Church closure		
a) Churches should stay open whatever the crisis	25	36
b) Clergy should always be allowed into their churches	61	68
c) Closing churches to everybody was the right thing to do	53	42
2) The online future		
a) Social media is a great pastoral tool	49	35
b) Social media is a great evangelistic tool	47	32
c) More pastoral work will be done online	38	27

In Table 2 the percentage endorsement of those aged 70 and over is set alongside the percentage endorsement of those under the age of 60. Two main conclusions can be

Continued on page 2

drawn from the data presented. First, older churchgoers were more critical of the policy to close churches to everybody including their clergy. Second, older churchgoers were less positive about the online future for their churches. In other words, older churchgoers may have grown more disgruntled with the Church during the pandemic.

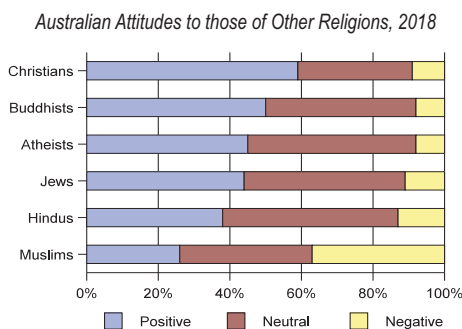
The pastoral implications arising from these findings concerns the visibility of those aged 70 and over in rebuilding an offline presence and offline ministry during the period of build back. There will be older churchgoers who have been shielding and who will have lost touch with their habit of

churchgoing and who may have lost confidence to return. There will be older churchgoers who have been shielding and who may feel neglected and uncared for. They may have effectively become church-leavers during the extended period of the pandemic. Research on church-leavers, however, indicates that there is quicker return on investment in the dechurched (those who once belonged) than in the unchurched (those who never belonged). Strategic development funding invested in reconnecting the lost to their churches may be wiser than investing in new churches.

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Attitudes to Other Religions

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes undertaken in 2018 asked several questions about people's attitudes to other religions. One of them was basically, "Were they positive or negative?" Answers were as follows, where those who didn't choose, about 12%, are spread across the other replies.



It may be seen that Christians have the most favourable overall attitude and Muslims the least. However, the same question was asked in their equivalent survey in 2009, and for all groups except Christians the percentage who were positive increased, while for Christians by 2018 it had slightly decreased. As in the UK, numbers belonging to other religions in Australia have grown over these 9 years, while numbers who are Christians have decreased.

Does this make a difference in accepting other religions? The Australian Survey asked an interesting elucidatory question – would the respondent accept a person of another religion marrying one of their relatives? The answer "definitely accept" was highest for those with no religious faith, while lowest for those who would say they were "religious but not spiritual" (which description was highest for Christians). In other words, one's own religion helped a person decide on the acceptance of other faiths, and non-Christians were generally more tolerant. The same is likely to be true in the UK also.

Looking at the percentages of those with a positive view of those in other religions analysed by age, while 52% of Christians were in their 20s, of the others shown in the chart (using data from the Australian 2016 Population Census) 56% were in their 20s. For other age-groups, the percentages of Christians and non-Christians were:

- Those in their 30s: 48% and 46% respectively
- Those in their 40s: 56% and 43%
- Those in their 50s: 61% and 41%
- Those in their 60s: 65% and 33%
- Those in their 70s: 66% and 30%,

showing that the Christians with a positive view of other religions as a whole tend to be much older than those of other religions, on average at least a generation apart, which suggests that acceptance of those in other religions is age-related also, with negatives coming from the younger groups rather than the older. Are younger Australian Christians less tolerant of other religions than older Christians? It would seem so from this evidence. How far such might be true in the UK is unknown.

SOURCE: Article by Rev Dr Philip Hughes in *Pointers*, the magazine of the Australian Christian Research Association, Volume 31, No 1, March 2021, Pages 1 to 5.

LARGER CHURCHES

Every denomination has some larger-than-average congregations. The Anglicans are well known with Holy Trinity Brompton, All Souls Langham Place and St Helen's Bishopsgate all in London, but there are also St Ebbe's in Oxford, Jesmond Parish Church, St Peter & St Paul in Edinburgh (Episcopal Church of Scotland) and others. These all have total congregations close to or above 1,000 on a normal pre-Covid Sunday, and well above in some cases – HTB is over 4,000 and All Souls over 2,000.

Many of the HTB "plants" are becoming significant churches in their particular context, like St Peter's, Brighton (four figures); St Swithun's, Bournemouth; St Swithins, Norwich; St Thomas, Norwich; Harbour Church, Portsmouth; St Matthias, Plymouth; St Luke's, Gas Street, Birmingham, and another 53 churches which are part of HTB's Network, many of which are "large" churches (defined as having regular congregations of 350 or more on a Sunday, adults and children).

Larger Baptist Churches include Philadelphia in Sheffield; Calvary Charismatic Baptist in Plaistow; Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh and others. Independent Churches include Frinton Free Church, Frinton-on-Sea; Cornerstone in Nottingham; Emmanuel Christian Centre in Walthamstow (essentially a Black Pentecostal church) and others. All these had four-figure congregations in 2019.

There are also many large Pentecostal churches, the largest being Kingsway International Christian Centre at Chatham, Kent (in five figures), followed by Ruach Ministries, Brixton, SW London; Kensington Temple (Elim), London; Glory House in East London; House of Praise in Woolwich; Jesus House of All Nations in Brent, all with 3,000 or more, and others.

There are also Abundant Life Church in Bradford; London Hillsong (both approaching or over five figures); Audacious Church, Manchester, and others like them, as well as churches started by Newfrontiers (like its original lead church Christ the King in Brighton), Vineyard (Causeway Coast, Coleraine, N Ireland has well over four figures on a Sunday for example), Pioneer and others. These are all "large" as defined above.

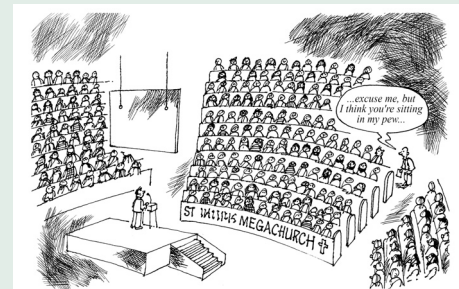
There are a few large Methodist churches like Swan Bank, Stoke-on-Trent and Wesley's Chapel, in City Road (these are the largest, both about 460 members) and others. Some Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches have large numbers (over four figures) attending on a usual Sunday, and even in denominations mostly made up of smaller churches there are often a few much larger than the others.

The number of larger Anglican churches was

about 1% of the 15,500 churches currently in the Church of England in 2019. When last estimated for all other denominations except the Catholics (in 2010) the percentage was also about 1%, with 10% for Roman Catholics who have a different philosophy on church buildings – fewer centres with several priests rather than many centres with a single priest. Overall, the percentage is about 2%.

The large majority of these, outside the Orthodox and Roman Catholic, are evangelical churches, though 5% of the Anglican larger churches are Anglo-Catholic. By far the large majority of these churches (perhaps 98%) are led by men, although most will have women in their teams. They also tend to be younger men (when appointed) than the average minister, but they stay longer at their church than most ministers.

Larger churches are a growing influence – in 1989 about 6% of total attendance in the Church of England was in larger churches, but by 2020 it was 13%, more to do with the decline of non-evangelical churches than the growth of evangelical congregations (overall, these tend to be flat). Such growth in influence is because these are outgoing churches, and while much of their growth is transfer growth rather than conversion growth, these churches are very active in their local community. Similar data for other denominations is not available.



...excuse me, but I think you're sitting in my pew...

Should larger churches become "resource" churches for others? Some have been criticised for "taking over" smaller churches. Should they seek to replicate themselves in church plants? The National Larger Anglican Churches Consultations (NLACC) began in 2005 and have been held every two years since, with the ninth being held this coming October, 2021, at the High Leigh Conference Centre. At the last several commented, "These Conferences are a great place to talk and share." Should the concept be extended to churches of other sizes?

Some might agree that the smaller churches need the opportunity "to talk and share" far more than the larger churches, and, in truth, there are scores of such informal (and formal) meetings. It's perhaps significant that God's assessment of the seven churches in Revelation seems to be based on other criteria than size!

SOURCES: *Religious Trends* No 5, 2005/2006, Table 8.12; English Church Census; reports from NLACC Conferences in odd-numbered years; websites; personal information.

Attendance by Environment

When asking about church attendance, most enquiries are focussed on analyses by denomination, churchmanship or people's age. But looking at the environment or catchment area of church attendance can also be of significance.

Such is greatly helped by a comprehensive *Digest* issued by the Government Statistical Service, the latest edition of which is dated March 2021. It compares the rural and urban populations in England. Those living in rural towns, villages and hamlets are one-sixth, 16%, of the total population, while those living in urban areas (major and minor conurbations, cities and towns) are 83% of the population, the remaining 1% living in what are called "sparse settings," mostly remote rural areas.

The churchgoing analysis doesn't follow quite the same classifications which muddies direct comparisons, but those living in commuter rural areas are 10% of all churchgoers, and those in remoter rural areas (which would include sparse areas) are a further 7%, and the total of these two is 17%, the same as the total in the general population. Urban and suburban churchgoers form the remaining 83%.

The general population proportions have not changed over the last 10 years, even though both rural and urban populations have increased. Churchgoing proportions have changed slightly, even though the number of churchgoers in both broad areas have decreased. In 2000 the rural proportion of churchgoers was 20% whereas now it is 17% – a slight difference but actually a loss of 120,000 churchgoers, almost certainly because the majority in rural areas are elderly and many will have died in those years.

In the general population the average age of those living in rural areas is 45, while in urban areas it is 39 (these are 2019 figures). For churchgoers, estimates for 2020 put the rural average age at 51, and the urban average at 50, so there is not the disparity seen in the general population. Why is that? Unlike the general population, measured by just living somewhere, churchgoers are measured by the action of going to church. In rural areas, public transport is less available, and services are held less frequently. It may be that in rural areas it isn't the case of elderly churchgoers not going to church but perhaps not being able to get to church, so it is more likely to be the under-80s who are active in rural churchgoing, those older depending on the availability of lifts.

A quarter, 24%, of the overall population in rural areas is 65 or over, and 35% in urban areas. However, for churchgoers the proportions are 37% and 35%, a very great difference for rural churchgoers. Far fewer younger people (under 65) in rural areas are churchgoers – 17% of rural churchgoers are under 20, whereas 24% of the rural population are under 20. Conversely 37% of rural churchgoers are 65 and over but only 24% of the general population. Or, to put it another way, 3% of those living in rural areas who are under 20 go to church, but 7% of those who are 65 or over. The *Digest* shows that the rural population is currently growing especially by those in their 40s and 50s, who "escape to the country" for a quieter, more peaceful life-style, and combine commuting with "working from home."

The Table shows the percentage of churchgoers in each of the different environments used for measuring church attendance (green rows) between the years 2000 and estimated for 2020, and the average size of congregation for these years also (brown rows).

Percentage attendance and pre-Covid average size of congregation, England, 2000 and 2020

Year	Environment							Base (=100%)
	City Centre	Inner City	Council Estate	Suburban	Town & Built-up	Commuter Rural	Remoter Rural	
2000	5%	11%	7%	35%	22%	11%	9%	3.5 mn
2020E	6%	13%	6%	37%	21%	10%	7%	2.8 mn
2000	106	125	107	140	117	62	33	94
2020E	97	120	75	122	94	48	23	75
% change	-8%	-4%	-30%	-13%	-20%	-23%	-30%	-20%

The bottom line shows the percentage drop in average congregation size over the past 20 years. The largest drops are in Remoter Rural attendance and on Council Estates. The smallest drop is in the Inner City areas where so many Pentecostal churches are located. The last column shows we have lost a fifth of our churchgoers in the last 20 years, an average of about 1% per year.

There are only three environments where the percentage of churchgoers in 2020 is greater than in 2000 – City Centres (growth mainly growing larger churches), Inner City (growth due to the planting of many Pentecostal churches as well as congregational growth) and Suburban areas (also where many church plants have taken place). Both types of growth are important.

One area where the *Digest* can provide information which is not readily replicated for churchgoers is the ethnic breakdown of the rural and urban population. In urban areas 81% of the population is White, and 97% in rural areas. The non-white percentages are, respectively, 9% and 1% for Asians,

Census Results

The first Census in the UK was held in 1801 and has been continued every 10 years since with the exception of 1941 when WWII was raging. It is being held on Sunday, 21st March 2021 and, for the first time, is largely digital, that is, completed on line, though for those unable to do this, a postal format is still available.

Many other countries across the world also hold a decadal census, and usually in the year ending in 1. The Australians, though, hold theirs every 5 years, and the Americans hold theirs in the year ending in 0. Doubtless there are many other variations as well. Alongside these censuses where it is legally obligatory to complete it, other, voluntary, widespread studies also take place.

In the UK annual studies include the Labour Force Survey, the Annual Population Survey both run by the Government separate to the Census, and the British Social Attitudes Survey undertaken by NatCen (National Centre for Social Research), a large charitable research organisation, as well as a host of economic, industrial and other business studies.

In the 1881 Census, taken on 29th June, residents in the UK were asked to furnish their "rank, profession or occupation." Some of the more puzzling responses, as preserved by the London Genealogical Society, included:

Maker of sand views	Count as female
Invisible net maker	Scarecrow
Colorist of artificial fish	Drowner
Knight of the Thimble	Fish-bender
Disinfector of railways	Cow-banger
Carrot and mangle salesman	Running about
Boy for general purposes	Goldfish-catcher
Electric bath attendant	Grape-dryer

One wonders just how accurate some of the conclusions drawn from national censuses really are!

SOURCE: Excerpt from Jeffrey Kacirk's 2005 calendar for 29th June, courtesy Chris Radley, North London.

2% and 1% for Mixed people, 3% and 1% for Chinese and Arabs and 5% and ½% for Blacks. Churchgoers would certainly follow these broad differences.

Other differences which are not measured by churchgoing are the distance children have to traverse in going to school. In rural areas this is 3 miles for 5-10 years old and 6 miles for 11-16 year olds, where urban children journey, respectively, 1 and 3 miles. A survey by the Office for National Statistics on loneliness found that 8.3% of urban people said they were "often" or "always" lonely, whereas only 5.7% of rural people said the same. The same survey showed that the 2-ton Range Rover SUVs were much more popular in urban areas than rural, even though they are built for rural work!

SOURCES: *Statistical Digest of Rural England*, Dept for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, March 2021 Edition; *UK Church Statistics*, No 4, 2021 Edition, Tables 13.4.1 and 13.20.1, 2; *Annual Well-being Study*, Office for National Statistics, April 2020, reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, 8th April, 2021, Page 5.

Opening and Closing Churches

There were an estimated 45,500 congregations or churches in the UK in 2020, four-fifths, 79%, in England, 8% or 3,700 in Wales, 8% or 3,500 in Scotland and 5% or 2,100 in N Ireland. New congregations are being started or having to close all the time, and in the fifteen years since 2005 it is estimated that collectively some 3,100 new congregations have started while some 5,800 have closed, a net drop of 2,700 across the UK.

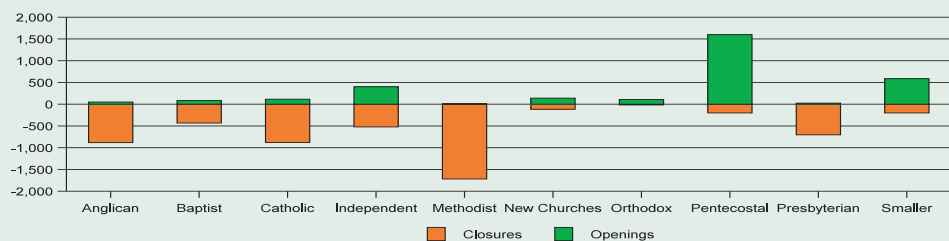
The chart (where "Smaller" = Smaller Denominations) shows how these changes occur in the various denominational groups. Congregations have been started in every single group; the Methodists with the least have started at least 9, while the Pentecostals lead the way with 1,600 – over 200 a year on average.

Opening Churches

Most of the Anglican new congregations are Church of England, many of which are planted by the larger churches. In a survey in 2009 of the largest Church of England, Baptist and Independent churches, 35% had planted at least one congregation in the previous 5 years. The New Churches growth was largely in the 1980s and 1990s and so not reflected in this graph, but some of the impetus of their work has continued this century although these congregations will now be part of the Independent sector, which is always active across many different locations and environments.

Much of the Pentecostal growth is seen in BAME (Black, Asian and Middle East) Churches, all of which have benefited from immigration growth. The Pentecostal churches are invariably Charismatic churches. They have grown especially in London, both Inner and Outer – particularly in the Boroughs of Hackney and Lewisham (both 23 new congregations between 2005 and 2012), Greenwich and Haringey (both 28), Brent (30), Lambeth (39), Newham (42) and Southwark (48).

Openings and Closures of UK congregations by denomination, 2005 to 2020



The non-Charismatic congregations are seen more among the AME part of BAME and are included among the Diaspora Churches in the Smaller Denominations group. Their growth is especially seen in the Chinese churches outside London (the central large Chinese Church in London has an increasing congregation), but the number of Asian, Iranian and Tamil churches have especially grown in the last few years.

The Roman Catholics have been very energetic in starting numerous Chaplaincies for the different language groups coming from Europe and elsewhere, with at least 35 different languages available through these Chaplaincies.

Closing Churches

A third, 30%, of all the churches which have closed in the last 15 years have been Methodist, followed by the Anglicans and Roman Catholics (both 15%) and the Presbyterians (9%). The institutional churches somehow seem to lack the vibrancy to prevent decline although parts of each of these groups are seeing growth. The Baptists (7% of all closures) have also

SNOWFLAKES

American attendance. For the first time since it began collecting data on church membership in the 1930s, Gallup Poll has now found that less than half the population, 47%, say they belong to a religious congregation. That is down from 70% in the 1990s and 50% in 2019. It is feared that something similar may be seen to be true when the March 2021 UK Population Census results are published, down from 72% in 2001 to 59% in 2011, and perhaps less than 50% in 2021.

SOURCE: Gallup, as given in *Religion Watch*, Baynor Institute for Studies of Religion, Vol 36, No 5, March 2021.

Gen Z privacy. Gen Z are 36% more likely than the average to watch a vlog (a personal website or social media account where a person regularly posts short videos) and 26% more likely to use streaming services on mobile. As privacy issues have become a growing concern among generations, three-fifths, 60%, of Gen Z users have previously used a private browsing window. Half, 52%, are also using an ad blocker and 50% have deleted cookies.

SOURCE: Web on Gen Z.

Population change. How has the UK population changed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic? The Office for National Statistics has made its first estimates, and reckons that the population of the UK in 2020 has grown by 700,000 people since 2019, just 1% up, to 67,113,000, some 37,000 less than previously estimated. This includes immigrants and emigrants, births and, of course, deaths, including the pandemic ones. Numbers in their 80s are especially down, not all due to the pandemic, while numbers in their 20s and 30s have increased quite substantially, due to students and those seeking work after Brexit. There is also a slight increase in the number of women, an extra 180,000.

SOURCE: Release by the Office for National Statistics, Early indicators of age and sex, 16th April, 2021.

President's Religion. A Pew Research Centre study found 63% of Republican voters found Democrat President Joe Biden "not too" or "not at all religious," with 37% finding him "somewhat religious or very religious." In contrast, 88% of Democrats, more than double, found him "somewhat or very religious." 55% of Republican Catholics say he should be denied Communion because he favours abortion.

SOURCE: Report in *The Tablet*, 10th April, 2021, Page 24.

Black Churches (1). A Barna survey issued in April 2021 found that the proportion of American Black adults saying church involvement was "desirable" had declined from 90% in 1996 to 74% in 2021, a drop of less than 1% per year. Two-thirds of those in their 20s and 30s, 66%, claim they are Christian, but a quarter, 24%, of this age-group say they have no religion. Two-fifths, 40%, had attended church pre-Covid in 2020, down from an average of 47% this century, but 51% said they attended during lockdown. Attendance with their family has halved, however, although half, 50%, read their Bible outside church at least once a week. Similar trends may be true in the UK.

SOURCE: *Trends in the Black Church*, Barna Group Organisation, Report summary, 16th April 2021.

Black Churches (2). Another major survey of American Black churchgoers corroborated the above findings, with half, 48%, of those in their 20s and 30s ever attending a church service. Far fewer of Black African immigrants are not connected to a church, just 6%, and these immigrants make up 5% of the Black adult population. Half, 49%, of Black churches services include speaking in tongues. A fifth, 22%, have heard a sermon on abortion in the past year. Mostly Black Protestants attend Black churches, 67%, or a multiracial, 22%, congregation, though those in their 20s and 30s are more likely to go to white congregations.

SOURCE: *Faith among Black Americans*, Pew Research Centre report, 16th February, 2021.

Covid gains. An interesting UK poll by Savanta ComRes across 2,065 people over Easter showed that among those aged 18-34, 46% said they had prayed more during lockdown, 29% had "attended" church more frequently, 23% had given more to their church, and 15% said they had read the Bible more often.

Source: Report in the *Church Times*, 16th April, 2021, Page 7.

The Trans Craze. Under this heading Social Credit reported figures from the NHS Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) that their number of referrals had increased from 77 in 2009/10 to 2,728 in 2019/2020 (an average increase of 43% per year). In 2009/10 half the referrals were of girls, but this had increased to about three-quarters 10 years later. Most referrals are teenagers, and this trend is echoed across the Western world.

SOURCE: *Social Credit International* No 84, Autumn 2021, Page 4, taken from Christian.org.uk. (BCM SOCREd, London WC1N 3XX).

UK Belief in God. 1001 young people across the UK, average age 14 years, were asked in January 2020 if they believed in any form of supernatural being or power greater than themselves. Half, 51%, said YES, a third, 33% said NO, and the rest didn't know. Those who said YES were asked which, if any, of these did they believe in? (A) God, 63%, (B) Ghosts/Spirits, 65%, (C) Aliens, 2%. If the sample was representative, that means that only a third, 32%, of our young people believe in God. Why don't others believe? (A) Because so many bad things happen, 18%, (B) Lack of evidence or proof, 12%, (C) Science proves otherwise, 8%, were answers given but the main response was "Don't know", 29%.

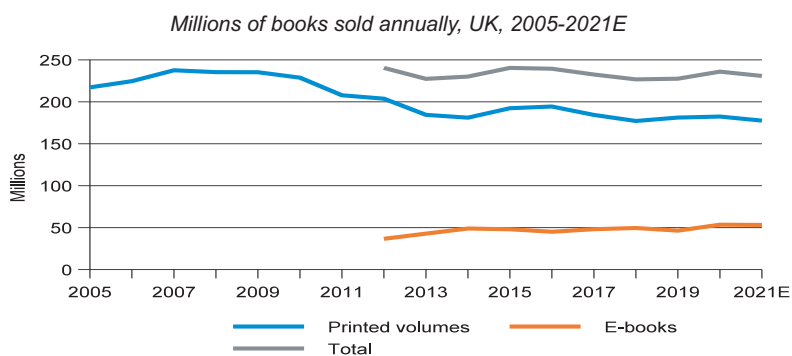
SOURCE: *Z-A of Faith and Spirituality*, Youth for Christ, 2020.

SOURCES: *The Significance of Larger Churches*, Brierley Consultancy, 2009; *UK Church Statistics* Nos 1-4, ADBC Publishers, Table 1.1.1 in each.

ADULT BOOK READING

Adults read books in a variety of ways, not only by the printed page but also by e-books, audio books, Braille and other means. In the UK the number of printed books sold in 2020 (not the same as the number printed) is difficult to estimate because of the lockdowns and closure of “non-essential” shops which bookshops were deemed to be. A firmer figure is for 2019, when it was officially 181 million books sold, or about 3.4 printed books per adult. The 2020 figure is estimated as to what it might have been had bookshops been open for 12 months rather than just 9 months.

A longer term trend is depicted in the graph, which shows that the peak year this century was in 2007 when some 238 millions were sold or 5.0 books per UK adult.



During the course of the last 20 years reading has been revolutionised by the coming of electronic books, known as e-books, which enables people to read books on their smart phones, tablets or other like devices. Nielsen collect book sales by counting actual numbers from a sample of bookshops electronically every day, but they cannot collect e-book sales in the same way, and so rely on the numbers sold by publishers. Even this isn't 100% accurate, since anyone can publish a book on the web if they wish without notifying anyone.

The largest five publishers which have been producing e-books, counted since 2012, are Hachette, PRH (Penguin Random House), HarperCollins, Pan Macmillan and Simon & Schuster. Their combined sales of millions of e-books are also shown in the graph.

Interestingly, the graph shows that the overall number of books sold, print plus e-book, has not changed greatly over the last 14 or 15 years. The number in 2011 would probably have been higher had the number of e-books sold in the UK been available, but they only started being collectively counted in 2012. Amazon released its Kindle DX International Edition in January 2010, and this was when e-books started to become popular.

The graph shows that the sales of printed books have been hit by e-book availability, and a determined effort to challenge that in 2015 and 2016 didn't last. The bestselling novel in 2015 was the erotic *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E L James, selling over a million copies that year, while J K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* published on 1st August 2016 sold 680,000 copies in three days!

2021 has of course been hit by a further lockdown, so inevitably potential sales will need to be estimated, but the graph suggests perhaps a slight dip in printed books, offset by the easy availability of e-books in lockdown conditions, which perhaps also provide greater time and opportunity to read. In the years 2012 to 2020 inclusive, the average number of books sold was 233.4 million per year, 4.4 books per adult, of which one-fifth, 20%, were e-books. This is fewer than in 2007 but the population has increased by +12% in the interim while book sales have remained virtually flat.

The average price of a printed book in the UK has increased marginally over the last 10 years, from £11.05 in 2010 to £11.28 in 2019, but the actual selling price has increased quite substantially from £7.51 in 2010 to £8.64 in 2019, as the discounts being given have decreased. In 2010, the average discount was 32%, but by 2019 this had decreased to 23%. In 2019 total UK sales of printed books was £1.57 billion, of which 21% was fiction, 23% children's, and 56% non-fiction.

The number of Bibles sold will be included in these figures, but is not known specifically across all publishers. What is known is the number of languages into which the Bible has been translated. In 2019 this was 3,384 different languages, of which a fifth, 21%, were complete Bibles (698 languages), 46% were just the New Testament (1,548 languages), and the remaining third, 33%, were smaller portions.

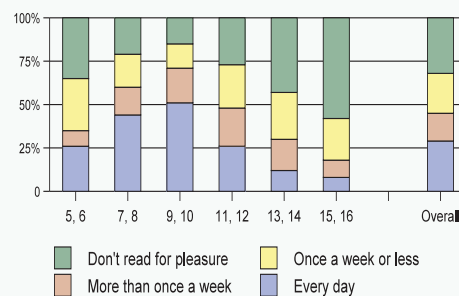
SOURCES: *The Bookseller*, 5th February, 2021, Pages 6 and 7; *UK Church Statistics* No 4, 2021 Edition, ADBC Publishers, Tables 14.1.1, 3, 14.2.1 and 14.21.1.

Children's Book Reading

2020 was a difficult year to measure book sales via bookshops as so many were closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. Nielsen, which routinely collects book statistics, only published numbers sold for 9 months in 2020 and only began again in the last week of March 2021. Nevertheless estimates show that more books, whether on line, in bookshops or in other sales areas, were sold in 2020 than in 2019, perhaps even because of the pandemic.

A survey by Childwise asked 2000 children in 2020 aged 5 to 16 how frequently they read for pleasure, the results being shown in the graph.

Frequency of reading books by children aged 5 to 16



The graph shows 9 and 10-year olds read most, followed by the 7 and 8 year olds. Girls tend to read more than boys, across all ages, whether it's books, magazines or comics. Overall the survey found that a third, 32%, of children never read for pleasure. The results were much the same in 2020 as they had been for 2019.

A fifth, 20%, of the children said they bought books with their own money, and almost a third, 30%, said they were bought books by others, a percentage less in 2020 than in 2019 when it was 50%, almost certainly because of Covid restrictions. Half of those aged 9 to 16 said they only read online, whether that was blogs, fan fiction or other material.

How do churches encourage children to read, especially the Bible? This survey indicates that age of reader is significant. The English Church Survey of 2005 showed that both girls and women in churches also read the Bible more than boys and men. A fifth, 20%, of children under 11 said they read the Bible at least weekly, and 21% of those aged 11 to 14, overall it being 27%. Non-White churchgoers read the Bible more than White churchgoers, but these results need updating with a fresh church census.

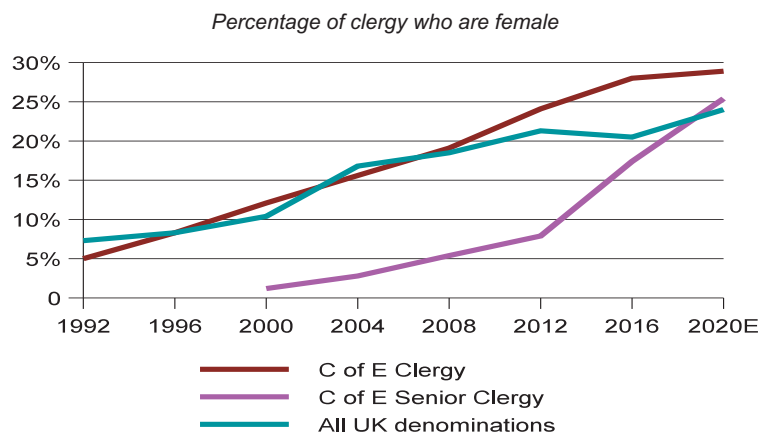
SOURCES: *The Bookseller*, 12th February, 2021, Page 19; *Religious Trends* No 6, Christian Research, Page 5.9.

FutureFirst is a bimonthly bulletin for those concerned with the future of the church. 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. Subscriptions free via website www.brierleyconsultancy.com. Published by Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1, Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 4PW, United Kingdom. Email: peter@brierleyres.com.

Female Clergy

There were female Deaconesses in the Church of England before the historic vote in 1992 to allow ordination of women. Since 2014 they have also been able to become Bishops. There were female Archdeacons and Cathedral Deans before then, however. The growth in the proportions of female clergy and female senior clergy can be seen in the graph:



The percentage of female clergy across all denominations in the UK in 1992, the first year it was counted, was 7% (of which 5% was Church of England). By the year 2000 it was 10% for all denominations, by 2008 19%, by 2016 21% and in 2019, the latest year available, it is 24% (but 29% for Church of England and 23% for their senior clergy).

The Salvation Army has long had the largest proportion of female Officers – between 1992 and 2012 more than half were female, but this proportion slipped just below 50% to 48% in 2016 and an estimated 49% in 2020. The United Reformed Church (URC) has also had a high percentage of female ministers – 22% in 2000, 31% in 2010 and 36% in 2020. Likewise the Methodist Church of Great Britain with respective percentages of 19%, 37% and 36%, and the Church of Scotland with percentages of 15%, 22% and 28%.

Other denominations have far fewer female leaders. The Roman Catholics and the Orthodox have no women priests at all. Across the three years, 2000, 2010 and 2020, the Baptists had 5%, 12% and 15% respectively, New Churches (especially Vineyard, Newfrontiers and Pioneer) 8%, 12%, and 16%, and Pentecostals 6%, 14% and 15%.

It is the Independent churches as a group which have the smallest proportions – 2%, 4% and 5% for the same years, and other Presbyterian churches in Scotland where the percentages are 3%, 4% and 5%. It will be seen that the proportion of women leaders is in fact growing across virtually every denominational group. The third line in the graph shows the percentage across all denominations in the UK (excluding the Catholics, Orthodox and Messy Church leaders but including the Church of England), the dip in 2016 reflecting a small decline in URC, Pentecostal and Salvation Army numbers between 2012 and 2016.

It might be asked how these percentages compare with female leadership generally. Globally there are 21 women serving as the head of state or government in 193 countries, which is 11%. In the UK, of the top FTSE 100 companies only 5% of the CEOs are women. Of the MPs returned in the 2019 general election, 34% were women. In the UK regular Armed Forces, 11% are women. One can always make other comparisons, but by these few examples, the percentage of female ministers is at least comparable to, if not better than, other sections of British society.

A separate but highly relevant question, is “In what areas are women clergy better than male clergy or vice versa?” Christian Research undertook more than one survey to identify their differences. One in 1999 was for the organisation WATCH (Women And The CHurch) which was formed after the 1992 vote to admit women as priests. A survey of some 1,200 active churchgoers was undertaken, 86% of whom had experienced a female minister, 89% of whom felt women were as capable as male priests. Women were especially seen to be better than men in bereavement counselling and dealing with personal issues, but men were definitely preferred for chairing the Parochial Church Council meetings!

Another survey was undertaken in 2002 for Cost of Conscience which was a survey across a representative selection of Church of England clergy of whom 1,800 replied (46% of those approached) and 6,500 lay people (76% response). Three-quarters, 72%, of both groups expected “female Bishops eventually.” One question asked about the beliefs of clergy. This revealed some sharp differences between male and female clergy. Overall, the study showed that at least three-quarters of clergy believed God the Father created the world, that the three persons of the Trinity are all equally God, and that the Holy Spirit empowers Christians today.

However, while 58% of male clergy believed Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, only 33% of female clergy did, and while 53% of male clergy believed that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way by which we can be saved, only 39% of female priests did. Since 2002 many more (male and female) clergy have been ordained who have an evangelical background, so if the survey was repeated today it is very likely these percentages (male and female) would be higher, as these two statements are more likely to be agreed by evangelical priests. Whether the disparity between some of the beliefs of male and female clergy would still be apparent is a matter for conjecture.

SOURCE: UK Church Statistics No 4 2021 Edition, ADBC Publishers, Table 1.1.1; various websites; *Women Priests in the Church of England*, Report by Peter Brierley, Christian Research, 2000; *Believe it or not!* Report by Robbie Low and Francis Gardom, Christian Research, London, 2003.

These may be helpful

Books/papers received

Ecumenism in Retreat, How the United Reformed Church failed to break the Mould, Martin Camroux. Foreword by David Cormick. “This is the first serious study of the URC and of the failure of the hopes for organic unity. It includes ground-breaking analysis of the mixed fortunes of LEPs ...” Available from Amazon at £21 or at a special price of £17 from 4, Sorrel Close, Colchester, Essex CO4 5UL, including postage.

Racial Diversity in British Evangelicalism: Frames, Barriers and Practices, PhD Thesis by Jessamin Birdsall, Sociology and Social Policy, Princeton University, January 2021.

Humour

A group of 40 year old girlfriends discussed where they should meet for their annual get together dinner. Finally, it was agreed they should meet at the Ocean View restaurant, because the waiters there were good looking and had great bodies.

10 years later at 50, the group again discussed where they should meet. Finally, it was agreed they should meet at the Ocean View Restaurant, because the food was very good and the service pleasant.

10 years later at 60, the group discussed where they should meet for dinner. Finally, they agreed on the Ocean View Restaurant, because it wasn't noisy and the restaurant had a beautiful view of the ocean.

10 years later at 70 years, the group once again discussed where they should meet for dinner. Finally, agreeing on the Ocean View Restaurant, because the restaurant was wheel chair accessible and it even had a lift.

10 years later at 80 years of age, the group came together to discuss where they should meet for dinner. Finally, it was agreed they should meet at the Ocean View Restaurant, because they had never been there before.