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FUTURE FIRST

FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

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SNIPPETS

1) Covid-19 restrictions have resulted in more children aged 9 to 18 reading for pleasure – 56% in 2020 compared with 48% in 2019.

2) Half, 47%, of 16-18 year olds say they have struggled to study at home, lack of motivation being the main reason (89%). A third, 31%, of children do not have enough desk space at home.

3) A survey of publishers asked staff how many days a week they would ideally like to work at home. 5% said 1 day, 25% said 2 days, 40% said 3 days, the rest wanting more. Average was 2.8 days.

4) The two words with the highest number of use definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary are “set” and “run”, with 430 and 635 uses respectively!

5) London has more billionaires than any other global city, and a higher proportion of people in poverty than anywhere in the UK. At the start of 2021, a quarter of Londoners could not borrow or meet an unexpected expense of £500.

6) The number of Mormon temples in 2020 globally was 252, 70 being started in the previous 4 years despite a continuing decline in attendance numbers. There are 2 temples in the UK, London and Preston.

7) Nearly half, 47%, of young people have felt so stressed by their body image and appearance that they have felt overwhelmed or unable to cope.

SOURCES: 1) National Literacy Trust survey reported in *The Week*, 8th May, 2021, Page 4; 2) *The Story*, inside pages, Youthscape, Spring, 2021; 3) Report in *The Bookseller*, 30th April, 2021, Page 25; 4) *Booklaunch*, Issue 11, Spring 2021, Page 3; 5) *The London Intelligence*, February 2021, quoted by Laura Treener, Frank Analysis; 6) *Religion Watch*, Vol 36, No 7; 7) *Youth Justice Statistics 2018/19*, Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin Jan 2020, quoted in *Good News Magazine*, Summer 2021, Youth for Christ, Page 17.

Racial Diversity in Evangelical Congregations

Dr Jessamin Birdsall from Princeton University

Following the death of George Floyd and the growing momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement, organisations of all kinds have been prompted to examine their own approaches to racial diversity and racial justice. Churches are no exception.

Revelation 7:9 offers a compelling vision of every tribe, tongue, and nation worshipping God around the throne. This is a picture of unity in diversity: shared reverence for our Lord, in a context where ethnic differences are preserved and celebrated. Both the Old and New Testaments make it clear that God’s desire is for a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural people who reflect the complexity and creativity of the Trinity as well as His creation. Scripture also reveals God’s heart for justice, since each person is made in His image and therefore deserves to be treated with dignity and fairness.

But to what extent is this vision of a united, multi-ethnic community of justice reflected in the contemporary church? For evangelical congregations in Britain, what are the some of the factors that hinder or facilitate progress towards this vision?

These are the questions that motivated my doctoral research in sociology. Over a period of 18 months, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in two evangelical congregations that have a vision to be racially diverse, and interviewed 72 Christians from a range of White British, Black British, and British Asian backgrounds.

Unity in Diversity

One of the factors that can help or hinder racial integration in the church is the way that evangelicals think about racial diversity. In my research, I found that evangelicals have four main ways of thinking about how racial diversity relates to the mission of the church. I refer to these as four ‘frames’: *irrelevant*, *barrier*, *instrumental*, and *essential*.

People in the first category see race as basically *irrelevant* to the mission of the church. They tend to treat race either as non-existent, or as a secondary and therefore distracting issue for the church. Evangelicals in this category cite Galatians 3:28 to claim that spiritual unity in Christ erases racial distinctions, arguing that “God doesn’t see colour” and so Christians shouldn’t either.

People in the second category see racial diversity as a *barrier* to the mission of the church. There are two main reasons for this. Some are committed to the Homogenous Unit Principle, maintaining that church growth is more effective and efficient when churches target a particular demographic. From this perspective, trying to achieve racial diversity is counterproductive because it is difficult and slows down growth, particularly when working among first-generation immigrants. For others, the pursuit of racial diversity in church is seen as potentially harmful to racial minorities, regardless of immigrant generation. Many people in this category have personally experienced racial discrimination in white-majority churches, and assert that a focus on racial diversity is often superficial and fails to

address inequalities between groups. Racial justice is a higher priority than racial unity for people expressing this view.

A third group of evangelicals see racial diversity in the church as a good thing, but for largely *instrumental* reasons. Similar to how universities feature racial diversity on their websites to attract more students, some churches have begun to use racial diversity as a marketing tool for growth. This is particularly the case in urban contexts where evangelical churches are trying to reach a more cosmopolitan audience. The danger in this approach is that churches can reduce racial diversity to a commodity to consume, and fail to take seriously the different cultures and histories and experiences of minorities in the church. This approach often causes ethnic minorities in white-majority churches to feel that they are being used in a tokenistic fashion rather than being fully included and valued.

The fourth category of people hold to what I call an *essential* framing of racial integration in the mission of the church. These evangelicals see the cultivation of racial diversity not as a means to an end, but as fundamental to what the church is called to be. They emphasise the importance of the church on earth striving towards the Revelation 7 vision, becoming a place where people of every tribe, tongue, and nation can belong and contribute. People in this category also stress that participation in a multiracial congregation helps to expose and challenge the cultural idols within each group as they interact with each other and grapple with Scripture together, thereby facilitating repentance and growth in maturity.

While the way evangelicals *think* about racial diversity is important, whether they succeed in building a multiracial congregation depends largely on their practices. My dissertation explores some of the practices that help or hinder racial integration in greater depth, but one of the basic ideas is that culture matters.

Diversity in Unity

Church leaders sometimes speak about culture in simple binary terms (e.g. preaching that “the culture teaches us X but the Bible says Y”), suggesting that the church is somehow outside of culture, and that culture is monolithic. The reality is that Britain is made up of multiple cultures, and that our churches are part of and shaped by those cultures.

Cultivating a genuinely multiracial church requires a willingness to integrate the “cultural toolkits” of evangelicals of different ethnoraacial backgrounds. Cultural toolkits are made up of beliefs and values, but also practices, habits, styles, and narratives that provide a sense of meaning and belonging.

For example, for white middle class British evangelicals, the cultural toolkit tends to include an emphasis on individual salvation, expository sermons, and musical styles with minimal bodily or emotional expressiveness. For Black evangelicals, the toolkit often includes a greater emphasis on

Continued on page 2

God's interest in our collective material and political lives, interactive and narrative teaching styles, and more embodied and expressive gathered worship. Research in Asian-majority churches indicates that their cultural toolkit includes demonstrating deference to elders, practising hospitality, and the elevation of family responsibility and hard work as core Christian values.

For whichever group is in the majority, it is typical to assume that their culture is normal, and to expect minorities to assimilate to their culture.

If church leaders want to develop congregations that are racially diverse and racially integrated, then it is critical to have racially diverse leadership teams who understand the range of cultural toolkits in the congregation and can work together to integrate elements of those toolkits into the life

of the church. This requires considering preaching styles and illustrations, music, decision-making practices, mentorship structures, whether to have rigid or flexible timings during church services, what kind of food to serve after the service, how to address elders in the church, what topics to pray for, and many other issues.

This is not an easy process for either church leadership or congregations, as it demands humility, listening, and willingness to sacrifice and share power. However, prayerful investment in this process fosters congregations where people of diverse racial and ethnic identities can belong, contribute, challenge each other, and grow together in spiritual maturity and mission.

Dr Birdsall recently completed her PhD in Sociology and Social Policy at Princeton University, and is now working as a freelance consultant.

Number of People per Church

In 2021 with a UK population of 67,113,000 people and 45,492 churches, there is one church for about every 1,500 persons across our four countries. A recently published projection by the Office for National Statistics enables that to be broken down by the different regions in England as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of the Population per Church by English Statistical Regions

Year	North East	North West	Yorks & Humberside	East Midlands	West Midlands	East	London	South East	South West	TOTAL England
1989	1,450	1,470	1,280	1,050	1,360	1,030	1,900	1,280	800	1,250
2005	1,500	1,490	1,330	1,140	1,370	1,140	1,780	1,400	910	1,310
2020	1,840	1,870	1,630	1,430	1,560	1,390	1,800	1,620	1,180	1,570
% increase 1989-2020	27%	27%	27%	36%	15%	35%	-5%	27%	48%	26%

Earlier figures come from the various church censuses that have been undertaken. They show that with an increasing population (rising from 47.9 million in 1990 to 57.0 million in England in 2020) and a slowly declining number of churches (from 38,600 in 1989 to 36,100 in 2020) the average number of the population per church has risen from 1 to 1,250 in 1989 to 1,570 in 2020.

Although many new churches have started in the last 30 years (some 8,000) more have closed (some 10,500), so between 1989 and 2020 there was a -6% decrease in the number of churches in England. Meanwhile the English population increased between 1989 and 2020 by +19%, made up of +4% between 1989 and 2005, and by +15% between 2005 and 2020, due to the enormous numbers of immigrants that surged into the country between 2005 and 2015 especially. These two factors account for the differences in the final column of +60 persons per church between 1989 and 2005, and +260 persons between 2005 and 2020.

This broad average difference of roughly four times the rate of change between 1989 and 2005 and 2005 to 2020 is not followed, however, by some of the regions where the difference is higher. This is especially true for the North West, the Yorkshires and East Midlands which each had more than 800 churches close in the 31-year period 1989 to 2020, but also for the North East and West Midlands.

London is altogether different, partly because of the huge increase in new churches started between 2005 and 2020 (some 940!), and the large population increase it has seen between 1989 and 2020 (up +34%!).

Figures for the other countries in the UK are shown in Table 2, but are not available by region. It can be seen that similar differences occur in all countries with the increase in the number of the population per church between 2005 and 2020 much greater than the increase between 1990 and 2005. Scotland's population was very stable between 1990 and 2005, actually decreasing between 1995 and 2000.

Table 2: Number of the Population per Church by UK country

Year	England	Wales	Scotland	N Ireland	UK
1990	1,250	540	1,280	730	1,170
2005	1,310	680	1,200	790	1,260
2020	1,570	850	1,540	920	1,480
% increase 1990-2020	26%	57%	20%	26%	26%

Similar information is also available across the 20th century for the UK and is shown in Table 3. It can be seen that the number of the population per church gradually increases, although very slowly in the inter-war years 1920 to 1940, when the number of churches in the UK steadily increased from 50,700 in 1920 to 53,500 in 1940 (and thereafter declined).

Table 3: Number of the Population per Church in the UK, 1900 to 2020

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
800	840	870	880	890	950	990	1,050	1,140	1,170	1,220	1,340	1,480

Is there any practical relevance to all this? Only that in 2020, each church needs to reach 1,500 for the UK to be evangelised (the figures include children), and with an average congregation across England, Wales and Scotland of 76 people (N Ireland not known), that is about an average of 20 people per churchgoer. That shouldn't be an impossible target!

SOURCES: *Religious Trends* No 6, 2006/2007, Christian Research, Eltham, London, individual counties in Section 12; *2018-based subnational population projections*, Office for National Statistics, Table 2, February 2021; *Religious Trends* No 4, Table 2.21.1, *UK Church Statistics* No 1, 2011, ADBC Publishers, Table 1.1.1, *UK Church Statistics* No 4, Pages 12.19 and 14.21; *Religious Trends* No 2, Table 4.10.2.

Annex: Standard Statistical Regions in England 2020, with old county names where relevant, are: **North East** (Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne & Wear); **North West** (Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside); **Yorkshire and Humberside** (East Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire); **East Midlands** (Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire); **West Midlands** (Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire); **East** (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk); **Greater London**; **South East** (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex); **South West** (Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire).

Healing in Kenya

An interesting survey was undertaken about five years ago on healing in Kenya, especially as none of the main theological colleges had a curriculum that included healing. Healing is a key issue as HIV/AIDS affected 5% of the 2018 population (8% of women; 4% of men). How do churches approach this?

The survey looked at three types of healing: (a) *Faith* healing requiring the exercise of faith for a miraculous treatment of illnesses through prayer, sometimes accompanied with anointing rituals of oil or water; (b) *Traditional* healing using ethno medicine of roots, leaves, trees' bark, shrubs or herbs, sometimes using a traditional healer, and perhaps involving an animal sacrifice; (c) *Biomedical* healing which is by trained medical staff in hospitals using scientific processes of diagnosis and treatment.

This particular study had 517 respondents throughout Kenya, 53% female, 71% between 20 and 35 and 56% single. Half, 54%, always went to church, 19% very often, and the other 27% less or never. Two-fifths, 41%, attended African Instituted Churches, a quarter, 27%, Protestant churches (African Inland Church, Anglican Church of Kenya or Seventh-Day Adventists), 17% Pentecostal, and 15% Catholic.

Of the churches these people attended, 74% used faith healing (55% always and 19% very often). The frequency of "always" and "very often" was 86% for African Instituted Churches, 61% for Protestants, 75% by Pentecostals and 60% by Catholics.

These percentages are in marked contrast to the kind of treatment respondents would preferably choose to receive which were 53% medical treatment, 45% faith healing, and 2% traditional healing. Two-thirds of respondents, 68%, had always or very often sought medical treatment, three-fifths, 59%, faith healing and just 11% traditional healing (and another 10% less frequently). Had faith healing worked? Half, 49%, said YES, and half, 51%, said NO.

Did respondents know anyone who had faked or lied about being healed by a faith healing? Three-quarters, 77%, said they did. Did they know any Christians who had visited traditional healers? Again, three-quarters, 77%, said they did. This conflicts with earlier survey findings that Christians did not seek traditional healing, but the difference may be between respondents "knowing" folk were Christians or "thinking" they were. Christians might also not wish to say that some other Christians had a weak faith and so consulted traditional healers.

In reality the types of healing actually used in practice by respondents varied as shown in the Table:

Types of healing practised by Kenyan respondents

Type(s) of healing used in practice	Biomedical %	Faith %	Traditional %
Only one kind	21	17	5
Biomedical plus	~	31	5
Faith plus	31	~	0
Traditional plus	5	0	~
All three kinds	11	11	11
TOTAL	68	59	21

What does this show? Faith healing is frequently practised by Africans in general and African Christians in particular, and a large majority believe it works, even if they themselves had not as yet tried it. The high support for faith healing suggests that greater attention in theological colleges should be given to it.

SOURCE: Article by Prof Bernard Boyo, Prof Michael Bowen, Prof James Kombo and Scholastica Kariuki-Githinji, all of Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, Vol 45, Issue 2, April 2021, Page 133.

Youth Attitudes are Life-long

Several studies have found that a person's beliefs and values are generally fixed around the ages of 15 to 25, and rarely change after that. Relatively few conversions, for example, take place when folk are in their 30s or 40s, although there are always exceptions.

The same is true in other areas. The 1984 British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, for example, found that 13% of churchgoers attending every week felt that premarital sex was not at all wrong, which had increased to 23% in 2012, 28 years later. However in that period regular churchgoers had also grown older by 28 years – from 38 in 1984 to 66 in 2012.

The increase in acceptance of premarital sex is more to do with age of those accepting this than churchgoing per se. Although the BSA survey does not break the answers to this question down additionally by age of respondent, it does break it down by cohort for those saying homosexuality is wrong and for those with no religion. They both show similar trends, so the graph looks at the latter.

The graph may be read as follows. The graph gives the results of the BSA surveys in the years shown on the bottom axis. The individual lines go up and down as this is a sample survey and results can vary statistically from year to year in a normal random fashion.

between 83 and 92 in 2012. Their line varies up and down over the years but averages 22%.

All the lines wobble a bit, but the overall pattern is to increase with age from birth. So those born in the 1930s average 27%, in the 1940s 34%, in the 1950s 44%, in the 1960s 54%, in the 1970s 58% and in the 1980s 60%. This is showing that this lack of belief was acquired when people were "young and then has changed little over the course of their life."

The greatest increase between the average percentages of those with no religion is for those who were born in the 1950s and 1960s (both +10%), folk who mostly had their teenage years in the 1970s and 1980s – the decades when the church as a whole was losing people most rapidly. These are mostly people in their 60s and 70s today in 2021, and as they increase in number with age so the overall balance of those with no religion increases. The basic statement therefore that the number with No Religion is increasing is true, but it is primarily because the same people are getting older, and are not being replaced with those who believe differently. The priority of focussing on youth again emerges as a significant issue.

SOURCE: Chapter in the book *British Social Attitudes* 30, edited by Alison Park et al, NatCen, 2013 edition, Pages 27 to 30, 189 and 190.

Proportion of people with no religion by birth cohort



The bottom line is for those born in the 1910s, that is between 1910 and 1919, so they would be aged 64 to 73 in the year of the first survey in 1983. The last time this group was isolated was in 1998 when they would be 79 to 88 years old, and the graph shows that between 1983 and 1998 on average 17% of them had no religion.

The next line up, the blue line, is measured across all the years the BSA gives data. These are those who were born between 1920 and 1929 so would be between 54 and 63 in 1983 and

Humour

Mis-headings in newspapers:

Man kills self before shooting wife and daughter.

Something went wrong in jet crash, says expert.

Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers.

Miners refuse to work after death.

Juvenile court to try shooting defendant.

SOURCE: Forwarded email from Dawn Moor, 27th May 2021.

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Evolution's Divide

In November 2016, the UK Royal Society held a conference to discuss whether “evolutionary theory needed to be extended, reformed or totally overhauled to accommodate fresh ideas from new discoveries.” An article in the scientific journal *Nature* said that researchers were “divided over what processes should be considered fundamental.”

One participant, John Hands, said the conference essentially debated whether it was time to drop the theory articulated by Charles Darwin. While evolutionary theory today is vastly more sophisticated than even the more modern updates of Darwin published in the 1940s, reactions from biologists to extended synthesis often lead to “acrimony, accusations of muddle or misrepresentation.” There was little meeting of minds in the Royal Society Conference.

The basic data for looking at the whole evolutionary theory is much the same whether one supports Biblical creation, secular evolution or some half-way compromise. It is how the data is interpreted and understood which is key. The Institute of Creation Research (ICR) framework postulates “organisms were engineered with internal capabilities to track environmental changes,” while those rejecting such argue for the concept of natural selection. Natural selection is always advocated in the face of the suggestion that any cell could evolve purposefully as the former then does away with the necessity for a Divine Designer and Director.

The process of adaptation to environmental changes is therefore inconsistent with the hypothesis of undirected, random, gradual change without any purposeful product. Many examples fly in the face of such thinking as the adaptations are highly regulated, usually rapid, repeatable and with targeted goals.

As far as is known, our natural environment is unconscious, so postulating a natural selection process projects “onto nature intelligence and volition envisioned as an exercising agency.” At the Royal Society Conference the Chair, Sir Patrick Beeston, had to tell attendees that “natural selection is not an agent.” But this pseudo-agency theory is key to analysing an organism’s changes seen as emerging through the outworking of innate mechanisms.

The Conference found evolutionists deeply divided over the basic cause of evolution. Some wanted to extend the basic synthesis of natural selection, while others used supportive evidence for the need to develop a new paradigm for evolutionary biology. However, the “futility of trying to construct a theory of biological design within a framework of naturalism” may seem obvious, and many evolutionists realise this weakness is one of creationists’ strengths. The problem they face is “the avalanche of new information that is contrary to evolutionary theory.”

That same information strongly supports the theory of biological design which needs to be clearly articulated to allow the intensive and research agendas being followed by scientists. As Dr Randy Guliuza, President of ICR, says, the Biblical expectation of active, problem-solving creatures designed to track changing environmental conditions showcases “the wisdom of their Creator – the Lord Jesus Christ.”

SOURCES: The full article on which this summary is based, itself a summary of the conference and academic papers, may be found in *Acts and Facts*, June 2021, Pages 4-6, www.icr.org.

SNOWFLAKES

Does God send pandemics? An article in the Spring 2021 issue of *Plain Truth* by Gary Clayton, Editor at Mission Aviation Fellowship, identifies the type of work that Satan is involved in the Scriptures, and concludes “the Bible doesn’t appear to show the devil sending plagues.” He highlights some of the references to God sending plagues, and suggests that we “dare not rule out the possibility that perhaps God may have sent the virus currently plaguing the world.” The church often grew through previous global plagues as Christians stayed to help their neighbours while the more wealthy non-Christians fled to avoid it.

SOURCE: *Plain Truth*, Spring 2021, Page 23, www.plain-truth.org.uk

Scientology challenge. The Church of Scientology is one of the non-Trinitarian groups from which perhaps a fifth of a million people in the UK have taken one of their courses. Some who have left are now speaking against parts of its teaching, in the so-called “Free Zone” which is less a movement than a space, often online, of alternative teachings and practices.

SOURCE: *Religion Watch*, Vol 36, No 6, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, April 2021.

The new future church. “At a recent training session for predominantly black leaders considering starting new churches, four-fifths, 79%, expected their future congregations to be a good mix of nationalities. 95% planned their church to have an online presence from the start, and three-fifths, 59%, reckoned on their services being less than 2 hours long”. These figures say something about reach, which is a major emphasis of the ministry of black churches.

SOURCE: Laura Treneer, Frank Analysis Ltd. with RCCG Agreement.

Europe growing more secular. From a detailed study of statistics from the latest European Values Study it seems “secularisation is continuing and is occurring most rapidly in the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy” concludes *Vista* editor Jim Memory. David Voas explains this as “a very slow but somewhat inexorable process of generational replacement where the older more Christian segments of the population die and are replaced by younger, less religious people.”

SOURCE: *Vista*, Issue 38, May 2021, Pages 4 and 6.

Adherent decline. A Pew Research Centre found that the greatest declines in populations claiming a Christian identity between 2002 and 2014 were Finland, dropping 28% (75% to 47%), Spain dropping 13% (76% to 63%), Portugal dropping 12% (84% to 72%), Ireland and Belgium both dropping 9% (80% to 71% and 45% to 34% respectively) and the Netherlands dropping 8% (39% to 31%). The UK dropped just 3%, from 43% to 40%.

SOURCE: *Vista*, Issue 38, May 2021, Page 9.

Has the pandemic put men off the church? On a normal Sunday some 42% of those attending church are male, but 39% in Anglican churches. In a survey ascertaining the church’s response to Covid-19 only 30% of men felt the church had done well against 42% of women. 29% of men felt the church had done a good job in leading the country in prayer against 43% of women. 48% of men felt the Church should not have closed church buildings, against 31% of women. 49% of men felt online worship a great liturgical tool, but this rose to 63% of women. 59% of men liked the clergy operating from their homes but 72% of women said it was good. This could suggest a gender-gap with male worshippers perhaps more reluctant to return to worship-as-usual.

SOURCE: *Covid-19 and Church-21* survey by Leslie Francis and Andrew Village, reported in the *Church Times*, 14th May 2021, Page 12.

No job – I’m evangelical! A third, 33%, of white American Evangelicals say they don’t plan to get vaccinated, the largest group of all not wishing to do

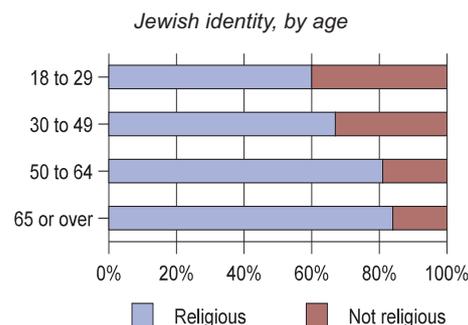
so, including other Christians and other religions. Why not? This is not clear but may be due to (falsely) thinking the vaccine continues to use aborted foetuses, or because they worry more about side effects (as one survey found), or believe it is not effective (relying on media sources for such worries), or because they follow Trump who initially suggested that Covid-19 was not serious. A seventh, 14%, of those living in Trump-voting counties socially-distance less than in other counties.

SOURCE: Report in *The Economist*, 17th April, 2021, Page 36.

Fewer Christians dying! The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published the mortality rates of those with Covid, expressed as the numbers dying out of 100,000 people, broken down by religion. Christian men were 402, those with No Religion 337, the two lowest, while Muslims were 967, Hindus 605, Sikhs 574 and Jews 513. Likewise, for Christian women the rate was 250, No Religion 218, but Muslim women were 519, Hindu 347, Sikhs 346, and Jews 295. ONS say that “pre-existing health conditions” account for some of the differences. Applying these rates to churchgoers in England in 2020 would suggest that the church saw 8,800 of its attenders die from Covid last year.

SOURCES: ONS website www.ons.gov.uk, and report in the *Church Times*, 21st May 2021, Page 4.

American Jews. In 2020 there were 7.5 million Jews, of whom 27% said they not religious, identifying as Jew by ancestry, culture or ethnically. The diagram shows that younger Jews are more likely to be non-religious, following the pattern of other religions (like Christianity) in other countries.



SOURCE: Pew Research Centre study, 11th May 2021, given in *Religion Watch*, Vol 36, No 7, June 2021.

These may be helpful Books/papers received

Churches, Covid-19 and Communities. Experiences, Needs and Supporting Recovery, Report by The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021, downloadable from <http://churchesandcovid.org>. This has 2 infographics at the end to highlight findings.

The Story. Vol 17, Spring 2021, features theological reflections on youth ministry, and many new statistics. Available from Youthscape Centre for Research, youthscape.co.uk/research.

American Worldview Inventory 2020-2021. Dr George Barna, Cultural Research Centre, Arizona Christian University, May 2021, a collection of the 12 Press Releases on the various phases of this research project, www.culturalresearchcenter.com, \$13 + postage.

Church in Action 2020/21. A survey of Churches’ Community responses to the pandemic, Church Urban Fund, Church of England, April 2021, <https://cuf.org.uk>.

Culture Wars in the UK: how the public understand the debate, Bobby Duffy and 7 others, Ipsos, The Policy Institute and Kings College, London, May 2021, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute>.

Changes in Long-term Faith Commitments. Dr George Barna surveyed 2000 American adults on their current church affiliation, and compares results with those in 1991, 2001 and 2011, especially looking at Hispanic Christians, www.culturalresearchcenter.com.

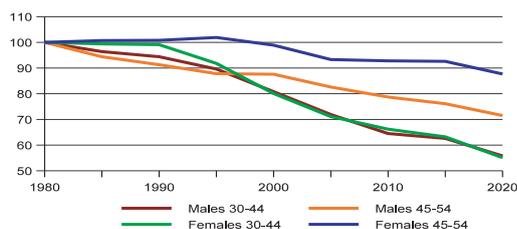
Rooting Young People in the Faith

The June issue of *Christianity* asks a vital question, “How are young people rooted in the faith?” The editor, Sam Hailes, gives answers from his own experience – personal involvement in church life (in his case with music), Christian friends, older people in the church who just cared and prayed for him. He also emphasised that his home and parental encouragement were likewise hugely important.

All these are certainly key factors which many would affirm. While childbearing is spread over a number of possible years, most of those who become parents are in the age range 25 to 50, and younger parents are often between 30 and 44. Younger parents need rooting in the faith if they are to root their children in the faith.

The graph shows the numbers of English churchgoers between 30 and 44, and between 45 and 54 broken down by sex, using a scale of how numbers have changed since first measured in 1980, based on 100 (above 100 = increase, below 100 = decrease in numbers).

English churchgoers by gender between 30 and 54



The graph shows that the two lines for men and women between the ages of 30 and 44 decline more rapidly than the two lines for those aged 45 to 54. The church is losing people between 30 and 44 much faster than between 45 and 54, so we are losing many young parents which is clearly very serious for the next generation, as if they exit church, their children almost certainly will too. Furthermore the two lines of men and women aged 30 to 44 are very similar, almost indistinguishable, in the graph. Almost certainly that implies that men and women are leaving together, which implies it is couples who are leaving, most of whom will be married with children.

The church is also losing people aged 45 to 54 (which will include many older

parents), but much less quickly, and the men in this age-group are leaving faster than the women. A seven-congregation study in 2012 showed that single women were twice as frequent in church as single men, and perhaps the graph is depicting part of this.

One point the *Christianity* editor made was that the older people in the church made a contribution which helped him stay in the faith. The graphs imply the importance of parents, but what part do the older people actually play? Another article in the same magazine suggests five ways:

- They pray for the children in their church, or simply, for a single child, and tell them they are doing so if they get the opportunity.
- They are authentic. They can show young people how you can turn to God in the ups and downs of everyday life.
- They can help them connect with God. Everyone will do this in different ways – maybe by drawing pictures, or by singing, or perhaps just by sitting still. Children connect with God in different ways also.
- They can share their stories, describing how and when God answered their prayers, or how He has guided them.
- They create a sense of belonging to the family of God, so that children know they are loved and valued.

However, before rooting can be effective, there must also be a welcoming and a watering! In one rural church (this is a true story) with only elderly people, a sense of resentment was felt when a new young family to the village came to a service and the children fidgeted and whispered. They didn't come again. One of the older people suggested they all list the names and birthdays of their grandchildren, grand nieces, etc. and then produced a master list of them all and they started to pray for each child by name in the week of their birthday. The atmosphere in the church changed and when a couple of years later another young family joined the church, their children were warmly welcomed. Prayer does change things! This experience can encourage even the smallest grey-headed congregation!

Giving priority to young people without neglecting other age-groups is going to be crucial for future generations. Over the last 40 years (1980 to 2020) the number of boys under 15 coming to church has declined by two-thirds, 65%, from 590,000 to 210,000, and girls by three-fifths, 60%, from 590,000 to 230,000. Perhaps post-Covid is an opportunity to re-think and re-plan these issues.

SOURCES: Articles in *Christianity* magazine, June 2021, by Sam Hailes and Emma Fowle, Pages 5 and 28; *UK Church Statistics* No 4, 2021 edition, Tables 13.10.1,2.

The Unpalatable but Essential Retail Price Index

The Retail Price Index (RPI) is one of government indices with a long history. Compiled by the Department of Employment (DoE) it covers a large and representative selection of more than 600 separate goods and services for which prices movements are regularly measured in more than 200 towns throughout the country. Approximately 130,000 separate price quotations are used each month in compiling the Index.

The change between one month and the same month a year earlier multiplied by 100 is usually taken as the RPI. While the statistical accuracy and representation is constantly being updated and improved, and other Indices measure other features of everyday life, the very early beginnings of the measure go back well over a century. The graph shows the change in its value since 1947, when measurements were restarted after WWII. Every so often the statisticians in DoE “re-weight” it, that is, make a certain January figure equal to 100 with subsequent months re-based on the new start. These are shown in the blue line in the graph, with the sudden dips being the year when the new re-weighting took effect.

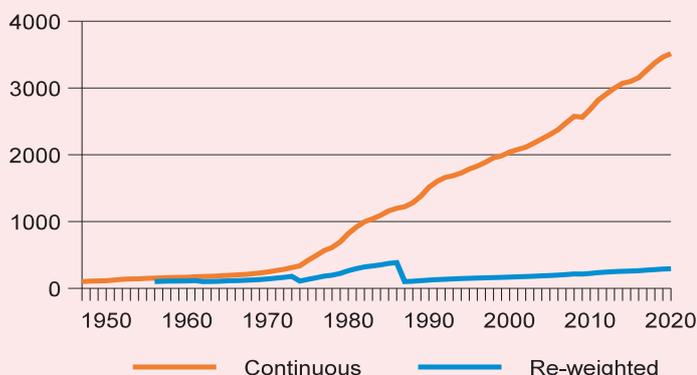
The orange line shows how the RPI has increased over time without taking these re-weights into consideration. The difference is considerable but confusing.

Between 1947 and 1970 the RPI grew at an average annual rate of 3.9%. Between 1970 and 2020 it grew

at an average annual rate of 5.5%. But this hides the dramatic increase in prices in the 1970s following the oil crisis in 1974. In the 1970s, the average annual increase in the RPI was 12.9%, in the 1980s 6.3%, in the 1990s 3.1%, in the 2000s 2.8% and in the 2010s 2.7%. So the rate of increase in prices has generally been declining, and moderately over the last 30 years, and less than immediately after WWII was over.

What value is all this to church leaders? It probably says something for the emphasis on good stewardship in the Church of England, the change in average income, the increasing number of perhaps more affluent Electoral Roll members as well as the decline in size of Electoral Roll (a drop of 40%). Had the Electoral Roll been the same size in 2017 the average giving would be £5.52 per member, still a

Retail Price Index 1947 to 2020, with and without weighting adjustments



Why should church leaders be ever remotely interested in the RPI? This article suggests there might be some, limited, relevance to understanding the church's context in our world. In 1983 the average income per week from an Electoral Roll member in a Church of England church was £1.37. That would be equivalent to £4.30 in 2017 (the latest year for which comparable figures are available) and £4.62 in 2020 according to the RPI index. The actual giving per Electoral Roll member per week in 2017 was £9.21, twice what it was in 1983.

sizeable increase. These kind of comparisons help illuminate strategies for future thinking about projects and finance. Perhaps, though, they also highlight the fact that the Church of England is still by and large the province of the so-called more prosperous “Middle Class” and that those with low or inadequate incomes are less represented on Church of England Electoral Rolls and pews.

SOURCES: *Retail Prices Indices* 1914 to 1983, Dept of Employment, HMSO, 1984; *UK Church Statistics* No 4 2021 Edition, Page 14.8; *Parish Finance Statistics* 2017, Research and Statistics, Church of England, 2019

The New World

The new world has already been coming over the last 30 years ever since Tim Berners-Lee published the first website on 6th August 1991. He was born in 1955, the same year as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, and the three of them have changed the world.

Today, technology covers every continent. Out of a global population in April 2021 of 7.85 billion people, 5.3 billion, or two-thirds, 67%, have a unique mobile phone number. Three-fifths, 60%, or 4.7 billion, are internet users, and 4.3 billion, or 55%, use the social media. These figures exclude China, whose figures are not deemed reliable, and video platforms like YouTube.

In the 12 months from April 2020, with lockdown in many places, 330 million more started using the internet, and 520 million social media – this latter figure is equivalent to 1.4 million people a day or another 17 every single second! Such is the incredible increase of current technology, literally worldwide, and equally literally creating a new world, especially seen as 93% access the internet via a mobile device.

Global social media users in billions, April 2019 to April 2021



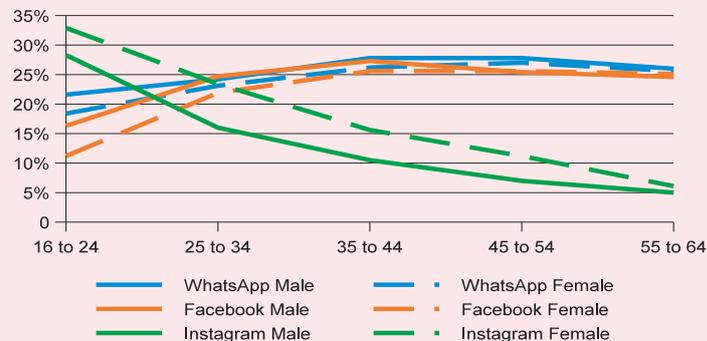
The increase is seen in the chart. Note that it does not start at zero but 3 billion people! This is to show the heightened increases between April and October 2020 when global lockdown was probably at its highest. The rate of increase is alarming – some 5% of the world's population every year! If that continues that's three-quarters of the world's population on social media by April 2025!

The average amount of time spent using social media is 2 hours 22 minutes per day, 15% of our waking time, assuming 8 hours sleeping. The favourite platforms, excluding China, for 16 to 64 year olds are WhatsApp (24%), followed by Facebook (22%) and Instagram (18%). Twitter, the next, is a long way behind, just 5%. Tiktok is 3%, LinkedIn 1%. Users on average use 6 different platforms every month. The top three vary by age and gender as the second graph shows.

The second graph looks complicated, but the solid lines are all male users of social media and the dotted lines are all female users. The different

colours reflect the top three platforms currently in greatest use. It must be remembered that Instagram (which began in 2010) is owned by Facebook. For WhatsApp (which began in 2009) and Facebook (which began in 2004) male viewers outnumber female viewers, although there are slightly more female viewers than male aged 55 to 64 of Facebook. However, women prefer Instagram to men. It is clear that Instagram is much more popular with younger people than older people, but there is little to choose age-wise between WhatsApp and Facebook once users reach age 35.

Favourite social platforms by age and gender in April 2021



The main reason for using social media is staying in touch with friends and family (50%), a percentage that shows how dominant in the lives of young people today are these social platforms. One's friends are always constantly with you, on a daily basis! The second reason given for using social media is simply "filling spare time" which 37% said was true for them in the Hootsuite Report. A third, 36%, use social media for news stories, and a third, 32%, for finding funny or entertaining content. Some of these use social media for several different reasons so percentages add to over 100%. Facebook's active users are reckoned to be 2.8 billion, and YouTube's 2.3 billion. All but 1% of users use several platforms.

The report shows that influences are followed most by women, and especially younger women.

Over half, 54%, of younger women (16 to 24) use social networks when seeking information on products and services, dropping to 30% for those 55 and over, but still representing a large and compelling opportunity for advertisers – and the church? It is clear from these figures that the world has really changed this century and mostly in the last 10 years. That new world must include the Christian scene, Christian activity and Christian organisations. What part in it will be played by the transforming news of Jesus Christ?

SOURCES: Simon Kemp's *Hootsuite's Digital Report*, April 22nd, 2021, <http://blog.hootsuite.com/simon-kemp-social-media/>, via Laura Treneer, Frank Analysis Ltd.

Questionnaires

Surveys have a long history, and have played an important part in the Biblical narratives (Moses, Joshua, David, Nehemiah, for example, in the Old Testament). Today in some form or other, they are accepted (perhaps with a groan!) as part of everyday life. Whether questions now are asked by Survey Monkey or one of the other web-based mechanisms, or the old-fashioned paper format, or something in between, we are constantly being asked to evaluate, decide, and give a response which may be anonymous or might be stored somewhere against our name for ever! "Do you like this?", "Out of 10 would you recommend ...?" are part of 21st century life. UK Census records are released publicly after 100 years, but the life of electronic recordings is somewhere locked away in the mysteries of sundry Acts of Parliament!

The issue is always the response one gets, both in terms of numbers and representation as well, as data given and opinions expressed. The co-founder of what is now the National Centre for Social Research, Sir Roger Jowell, in a 1975 seminar said there were three factors which encouraged co-operation. Nearly half a century later, they haven't changed; they were:

- The importance of the study. Potential respondents need to be persuaded the survey is worth doing.

- The importance of encouraging an individual's co-operation. "We really would like you to answer these questions because ..."

- The importance of answering quickly, preferably NOW! The longer a survey is left the less likely it is ever to be completed.

While there are numerous professional questionnaire compilers and procedures to be followed, a cheaper option is to design your own, for example, for a congregational or parish survey, a readership survey, etc though analysing the results might need some experienced input. So what are the factors which can enable an irresistible questionnaire to be drawn up? Among such overall design is important – does it look pleasant? Some have even researched the best colour on which it should be if printed on paper – the answer is light green.

Has the study got a clear (and attractive?) heading? It is very helpful to know exactly who should be completing the survey – is it Anglican churchgoers? Parents of children at XXX School? Those who have bought YYY product? Then the questions themselves are best if they follow a logical sequence, grouping together questions on the same topic.

Is there sufficient space to answer the question, if the survey is on paper? Is the "Next" button too far down the page (as in some YouGov web surveys)? Some web surveys show you how many more questions you have to go. Some Local Authority surveys have been known to go

on for 50 questions or more! Vary the style and type of question; after too many people lose concentration and interest, and either leave it uncompleted or just hurry through to finish quickly.

More basically, are the words clear in meaning? One of the problems of asking a person's churchmanship is that many do not understand what the word means! Asking "Are you an Evangelical?" may not get a good answer but asking "Are you Evangelical, Liberal or Catholic?" will mostly get a better response since the contrast in the latter is clear while the openness of the former is obscure.

Don't use double negatives. "Would you rather not use a non-medicated shampoo?" was a real question in one survey! Be as concise as possible. Only ask one thing at a time. "Did you know that St Hugh's runs a food bank and a credit advice centre?" is not very helpful.

One of the best questionnaire howlers was a Glaxo questionnaire in which the respondent was asked, "How old was your baby when it arrived?" but, to be fair, the context was clear as the preceding question was, "Did the free sample of baby milk arrive through the post?"

It's always worth trying out a questionnaire on a few people first to test it, whether on paper or screen. As one person said to a researcher, "If you make it easy for me, I might even be able to answer your questions."

SOURCE: Article in a *MARC Newsletter*, Nov 1975; article in *Management Services* in Government Vol 32, No 1, Feb 1977, Page 14; and personal experience.