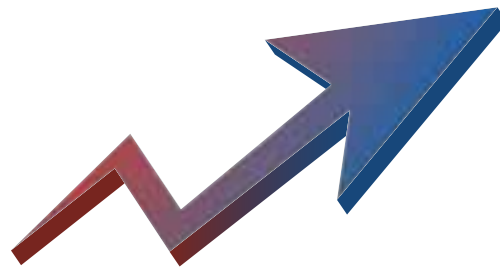


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**FUTURE  
FIRST****FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING****Making Sense of the Census****SNIPPETS**

1) Qatar is the second flattest country in the world after the Maldives. Its highest point is just 340 feet (103 metres) above sea level.

2) Of those who say they have No Religion, 27% admitted, "I don't know whether there is a God," and 14% believed in a higher power of some kind though not a personal God.

3) In 2021, 10 million residents in England and Wales, about one in 6 of the population, was born outside the UK, up from 7.5 million in the previous 2011 Census.

4) According to the United Nations, the world's population reached 8 billion on 15th November 2022, 5.5 billion more than the 2.5 billion the world had in 1952, 70 years earlier, but just 11 years after we reached 7 billion.

5) Two-fifths, 38%, of American Gen Z adults believe that Jesus wasn't sinless; another survey found that 63% of Americans felt the Bible was literally true.

6) The most popular verse in the Bible, viewed more than 55.9 million times on TikTok, and used 2.1 million times across social media is John 3:16. Joint second in 172 countries was Jer 29:11 and Phil 4:13, both having 82,000 searches.

7) A third, 32%, of teenagers (13 to 17 years of age) in an international study across 26 countries said they believed in the resurrection, and half, 47%, that Jesus was crucified.

**SOURCES:** 1) *Connected*, Frontiers Mission, Issue 18, November 2022, Page 13; 2) Theos Think-Tank Report *The Nones: Unpacking Non-religious Britain*, posted 24th November 2022; 3) Office for National Statistics, 2021 Census results on birth place; 4) Report in *The Week*, 26th November 2022, Page 9; 5) *State of the Bible 2022* survey, American Bible Society quoted in *Answers*, Oct-Dec 2022, Page 30, and Pew Research Centre but dated 2014; 6) Digital survey by World Vision via the Bible Gateway platform, reported in the *Church Times*, 4th November 2022, Page 11; 7) Barma Group study of 25,000 teenagers, sponsored by World Vision and others, reported in the *Church Times*, 11th November 2022, Page 12.

**For the third time in recent history, the UK Population Census of 2021 asked a voluntary question on religion. The initial overall results for England and Wales were released publicly by the Office of National Statistics on 29th November 2022. They showed that the percentage of Christian adherents in England and Wales has fallen from 72% in 2001 to 59% in 2011, and now to 46% in 2021, going down 13% every 10 years. If it continues at that rate it will be a very small percentage in 2050!**

The **overall figure** is probably lower than anyone expected. Prof Linda Woodhead in a lecture for the Religion Media Centre in October 2022 said she expected the figure to be under 50%, but even so, 46% is a greater rate of decline than anticipated. It is the first time the percentage of people identifying as a Christian adherent has fallen to under half the total population, and it will be interesting to see how this figure varies by other key items enumerated by the census such as age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, geographical locality, etc. The highest Christian percentage was Knowsley (67%) in Merseyside, Ribbles Valley (66%) in North Yorkshire and Copeland (65%) in Cumbria.

The 46% percentage simply confirms that **Christianity is declining** in the UK (figures of religion in Scotland and N Ireland have yet to be released, but will not change the overall UK outcome). But that is too simplistic a statement. Yes, numbers are unquestionably decreasing but equally many new churches have been started in the last 20 years, and many churches are growing. The ones which are not growing tend to be the larger institutional churches like the Church of England, Church in Wales, Presbyterians in the Church of Scotland, Roman Catholics throughout the UK, the Methodist Church, and the United Reformed Church which are all declining fast even if there are some growing congregations among them.

Church **growth** is largely seen among the Independent Churches, the Black Churches and the Diaspora Churches, most of which are Evangelical and Pentecostal or Charismatic. Some non-Evangelical churches are growing also, mostly those following an Anglo-Catholic position theologically. In addition numbers are coming to faith outside the established churches through Premier Radio and like media outlets.

The number of people in England and Wales saying they had **No Religion** has risen from 16% in 2001 to 25% in 2011 to 37% in 2021, another huge increase. This can be taken to show we are a more secularised society, but we need to be careful to get the correct meaning to this percentage. In an interesting report published the week before the Census figures, the Theos Think-tank showed that for 41% of those who say they have No Religion the words are not a totally correct statement. 27% said that they didn't know if there was a God, the typical agnostic position, and 14% believed in a higher power though not a personal God. Asked if their religion was Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, etc, those in these positions might well tick "No Religion" as their preferred category but it does not necessarily mean they are totally opposed to religion or unwilling to have a conversation about God. Indeed they may not yet have decided where they stand, or are unsure, so they are "no religion" in the interim.

The three highest percentages in Local Authorities of those ticking No Religion were all in **Wales** (Caerphilly (57%) in Gwent being the highest, with Brighton and Hove (55%) in East Sussex the highest in England). In fact Wales, as a whole, had a higher percentage of No Religion than Christian – 47% to 44%! The increase of the "Nones" (as Theos calls them) went from 19% in 2001, 32% in 2011 to 47% in Wales, while English figures were, respectively, 15%, 25%, and 37%. The National Secular Society summed up the Census as the country being "truly irreligious and multi-religious."

All the **Other Religions** have increased in numbers, and all but the Jews in percentage terms. In England and Wales in 2001, 6% of the population were Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, or "Other," with Muslims half the total. By 2011, the total was 8%, and in 2021 it was 11%, with Muslims now three-fifths of the total, although some would say they have increased less than expected given the favourable religious climate which is accorded to them (6.5% of the population in 2021, but 3% in 2001 and 5% in 2011). Some of the smaller groups are attracting more followers (of which the largest are those who say they are Pagans at 74,000, Wicca at 13,000, the Ravidassia [Indian religion] at 10,000, and others, including the Zoroastrians at 4,000, and the Satanists up 170% from 1,900 in 2011 to 5,100 now). Christianity, however, is still by far the largest religion, and strengthened by the increasing number of immigrants.

**What do these figures mean** for Christians? Well, it obviously means we are now strictly in a minority situation. The key question is "Why?" Some would blame outside factors such as secularism, humanism, the age of science, the pressures of modern living, etc. Others would look inwards and point to the uncertain and compromised message of the church, lack of confidence in and expression of the Bible, internal divisions, decline of evangelism, etc. Who have left the Christian ranks? Some of the older people especially will have died in the Covid pandemic. Fewer children are being born, and fewer are growing up in Christian households, so fewer are coming to church. Young people are in short supply! So are many of the older helpers of youth and other church activities, often in their 30s, 40s or early 50s, who have simply not come back as volunteers after the Covid lockdowns caused many Christian activities temporarily to stop. This is less true in the growing churches.

One **surprise** in this first release of religious data from the Census, given that the question is voluntary, is the percentage not answering. 8% of the population did not answer in 2001, 7% in 2011 and now 6% in 2021. More people are happy to identify themselves on a religious basis, even if they don't have a religion. The broad subject is being recognised as it were as a viable identifying indicator. As an article in the *Tablet* says, "People do 'do God' in public life and in more varied

ways than a generation or two ago." But is the church shedding tears of repentance for the current situation or merely "wringing its hands" or even resigning itself to the statistical inevitability of further decline?

The Table below gives the actual numbers and percentages for the Census question answers. The items for 2011 are slightly different from that when the figures were first published – the "not answered" numbers have been increased by 61,500 (0.1%) and the other figures reduced accordingly. The 2021 total is also reported slightly differently – in the gender analysis the English total is given as 56,489,800 whereas the religion analysis gives the total as 56,490,031.

*Religious Communities in England and Wales, 2001, 2011 and 2021*

Religion	England						Wales					
	Numbers			Percentage			Numbers			Percentage		
	2001	2011	2021	2001 %	2011 %	2021 %	2001	2011	2021	2001 %	2011 %	2021 %
<b>Christian</b>	<b>35,251,244</b>	<b>31,479,876</b>	<b>26,167,899</b>	<b>71.74</b>	<b>59.38</b>	<b>46.32</b>	<b>2,087,242</b>	<b>1,763,299</b>	<b>1,354,773</b>	<b>71.90</b>	<b>57.56</b>	<b>43.60</b>
Muslim	1,524,887	2,660,116	<b>3,801,183</b>	3.10	5.02	6.73	21,739	45,950	<b>66,950</b>	0.75	1.50	2.15
Hindu	546,982	806,199	<b>1,020,527</b>	1.11	1.52	1.81	5,439	10,434	<b>12,248</b>	0.19	0.34	0.39
Sikh	327,343	420,196	<b>520,090</b>	0.67	0.79	0.92	2,015	2,962	<b>4,050</b>	0.07	0.10	0.13
Jew	257,671	261,282	<b>269,283</b>	0.52	0.49	0.48	2,256	2,064	<b>2,044</b>	0.08	0.07	0.07
Buddhist	139,046	238,626	<b>262,433</b>	0.28	0.45	0.46	5,407	9,117	<b>10,075</b>	0.18	0.30	0.32
Other Religions	143,811	227,825	<b>332,407</b>	0.29	0.43	0.59	6,909	12,705	<b>15,927</b>	0.24	0.41	0.51
No Religion	7,171,332	13,114,232	<b>20,715,663</b>	14.6	24.74	36.67	537,935	982,997	<b>1,446,399</b>	18.53	32.09	46.55
Not Stated	3,776,515	3,804,104	<b>3,400,546</b>	7.69	7.18	6.02	234,143	233,928	<b>195,043</b>	8.06	7.63	6.28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,138,831</b>	<b>53,012,456</b>	<b>56,490,031</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,903,085</b>	<b>3,063,456</b>	<b>3,107,509</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**SOURCES:** Based on an interview with Kelly Valencia of Premier Christian Radio, 29th November 2022, but expanded by the figures released by the Office for National Statistics the same day; *UK Church Statistics* No 2: 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Table 14.0 for 2001 and 2011 figures; *The Nones – who are they and what do they believe?* Hannah Waite, Theos Thinktank, 24th November 2022; National Secular Society quotation in Religion Media Centre 5th December, 2022; *The Tablet* article Page 6, 10th December 2022.

## Service Times

As churches seek to recover from the Covid restrictions of 2022 and the years before, one question which is raised is whether church services are currently held at the most appropriate times. Surveys of times of starting services are relatively rare, but a detailed analysis of 767 churches all in Tyne and Wear was undertaken in the mid-1980s, the results of which are shown in the Table, as are the results of a survey of rural churches in East Anglia in 1989. An annual compendium of all the then-called House Churches (Charismatic) began in the 1980s, and the second edition detailed all the service times. A study of larger churches with more than 350 in their congregation took place in 2008. The results of all these are summarised in the Table.

*Times of church services in earlier English surveys, percentage by type and location of church*

Type	8.00	8.15	8.30	9.00	9.15	9.30	9.45	10.00	10.15	10.30	10.45	11.00	11.15	Afternoon	6.00	6.30	7.00	Base = 100%
Urban	8	1	2	4	2	7	1	5	1	9	10	6	3	5	18	18	0	767
Rural	13	0	4	7	1	10	2	7	0	7	2	17	5	6	6	13	0	615
House Ch's	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	12	4	23	4	10	1	9	4	15	9	402
Larger	8	1	2	5	2	8	1	5	1	8	11	9	6	10	0	26	7	495
<b>Overall</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2,279</b>

This is the era when many churches held two or more services every Sunday. The early birds with a service before ten o'clock were almost entirely either Anglican or Roman Catholic. Services from 10.00 am onwards were spread across all denominations. Methodists in East Anglia especially liked the 10.00 am start, and so did the House Churches, but the 10.30 am time was the favourite across these four studies, though 10.45 am was preferred in urban contexts. 11.00 am was also a favourite time.

Some 7% of church services took place on Sunday afternoons, some at 2.00 pm (Catholic) or later (Anglican) or towards the evening (Methodist). The House Churches and Larger churches much preferred an evening service at 6.30 pm, the overall favourite time, with 3% of these churches starting at 7.00 pm or later.

Of all these services, 36% took place in the afternoon or evening, and just under two-thirds, 64%, in the morning. Post-Covid it may well be that this last percentage is now larger, and that on-line services may have influenced timing preferences.

**SOURCES:** *Tyne and Wear Christian Directory*, edited by David Longley and Mervin Spearing, MARC Europe, 1986; *More than One Church*, Peter Brierley, MARC Monograph No 27, 1989; *Body Book*, Second edition, Team Spirit and MARC Europe, 1988; *Significance of Larger Churches*, Brierley Consultancy, 2009.

## These may be helpful - Books/papers received

*Interconnections of Asian Diaspora*, Mapping the Linkages and Discontinuities, by Sam George, Catalyst for Diasporas of the Lausanne Movement, Director of the Global Diaspora Institute, Wheaton College. Volume 2 of the Asian Diaspora Christianity Series, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2022. ISBN: 978-1-5064-7828-9. Consists of 12 essays on Asian Diasporas of different religions, including one on the Kerala Filipino nurses in Britain.

*Narnian Virtues*, Building Good Character with C S Lewis, by Mark Pike and Thomas Licking, Lutterworth Press, 2021, ISBN978-0-7188-0000-0, 268 pages. Shows how to build positive characteristics with children at home and school, from both an English and American viewpoint, based on two key books in the Narnia series. Many practical examples, even if a slightly bombastic phraseology.



## Current C of E worshippers

The Church of England (C of E) conducts a survey of all its 15,000 churches every year, and, while not all reply, the latest study for 2021 has three-quarters, 76%, replying which gives a very trustworthy picture. Several questions ask about a church's "Worshipping Community," (WorComm) which was introduced as a new topic in 2012.

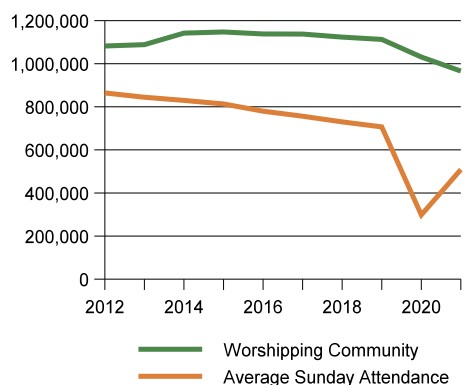
The WorComm of a church is defined as anyone who attends that church regularly, for example at least once a month, or would do so if not prevented by illness, infirmity or temporary absence. It includes fellowship groups and other activities that have a distinct act of worship or prayer. It also includes acts of worship not on church premises (for example, at a school or community centre). It includes those who come to midweek services, are ill and unable to come to church, are away on holiday or business, have home communion, are part of a regular "fresh expression" of church, live in care or residential homes and would consider themselves to be full members of their church, give regularly to the church or lead worship such as the clergy.

Details of numbers are requested in October each year, and numbers joining (and why), numbers leaving (and why), and age are also asked, thus creating a very helpful picture of church life. The WorComm is not the same as total attendance, but is larger as not everyone is necessarily able to attend each week. So in 2019, for instance, before Covid restrictions interfered with the numbers, the C of E WorComm numbered 1,112,900 people, while the Average Sunday Attendance that year was 707,000 (64%) and mid-week attendance a further 147,200 people (13%), that is, just over three-quarters of the WorComm.

### Size of Community

Worshipping Community numbers of themselves have been reducing slightly but have not been greatly affected by Covid restrictions as the first graph indicates which also shows Average Sunday Attendance (Usual Sunday Attendance was not requested in either 2020 or 2021).

Fig 1: C of E Worshipping Community and Average Sunday Attendance



The first graph also shows that the post-Covid attendance (presumably excluding live-streaming numbers) is recovering and in 2021 was at 72% of the 2019 pre-Covid attendance. It is likely that the 2022 attendance will be better still, showing that the live-streaming component could be reducing, though it is not likely to contract to zero!

## Why numbers are changing

This graph emphasises the importance of the Worshipping Community while the other questions indicate reasons for the trend. Between 2018 and 2019 the WorComm contracted by 11,000 people. At the same time the report indicated 93,000 people joining, so one would expect 104,000 to have left. (The official report, however, only mentions 65,000 leaving!). That's an 8% increase in numbers against a 9% decrease. The Church of England may be declining but it is not doing so quickly, and not all the movement is in one direction!

Of those joining, two-fifths, 40%, were coming to church for the first time, and almost half of these, 46%, were children. A third, 32%, had moved into the area, 15% more moved from another church, and the remaining 13% were returning to church, though after how long was not requested. Detailed research in the 1990s found the average to be 10 years.

Of those leaving, and ignoring those for whom no reason was given, two-fifths, 39%, had died, a third, 31%, had moved away, 14% had left for another local church, and 16% had given up church altogether for the time being. Those joining brought 29,000 children with them, while those leaving took 13,000 children away, suggesting the joiners were younger than the leavers, and that wanting to integrate their children with the church was a prime reason for joining their local church, perhaps influenced by wanting their child/children to be eligible for a place at the local C of E Primary School, such usually having a high reputation.

### Age of those in the Community

The age of those in the Community is now broken down into four groups, whereas 2012 to 2018 it was only three groups. Hence the rather odd second graph. Age of people attending Church of England churches was measured quite robustly in the 2005 English Church Attendance study, which, along with similar studies in 1989 and 1998, allows reasonable projections to be made for 2010. This question was not asked in the Covid years of 2020 or 2021.

Fig 2: Age of attenders/worshippers at C of E churches

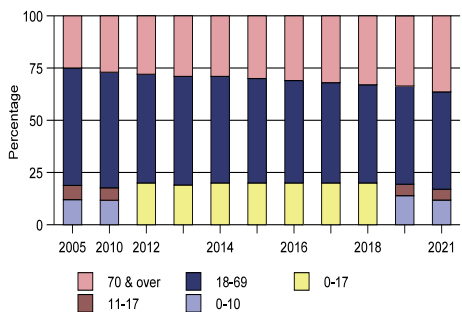


Figure 2 shows that the age-split introduced in 2019 would have been useful had it been introduced earlier, and the figures given to a decimal point (as was also introduced in 2019) rather than rounded to whole numbers. It nevertheless shows that the proportion of those 70 and over has been slowly but steadily increasing over these 16 years, and that the numbers involved under the age of 18 are getting slightly smaller.

SOURCE: Statistics for Mission 2021 and earlier similar releases, by Dr Ken Eames, Church of England Data Services team, December 2022; <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/WorshippingCommunity.pdf>.

## Switching Religions in Australia

It has been noted previously that the Australian Bureau of Statistics holds a Census every 5 years. It also does an interesting match between one Census and another, obviously keeping the results confidential, but indicating how many people answered a question one way in 2006, for example, and the same question differently in 2016, and applying that analysis to their question on Religion, voluntary in Australia as in the UK.

They found, for example, that 23% of those ticking Buddhism in 2006 ticked No Religion in 2016. Those from overseas had even higher percentages – 39% ticking "Nature Religions" (paganism, druidism, animism and wicca) in 2006 ticking No Religion a decade later, 34% ticking Chinese religions (Taoism, Confucianism and worship of ancestors) and 26% ticking Japanese religions (such as Shintoism) transferred to No Religion in 2016, causing analyst Dr Philip Hughes to comment, "it seems possible that some ... immigrants have found that the religions which were important to them in their homeland have not been important in their new Australian context."

Of the Western religions, 23% of Anglicans ticked No Religion in 2016 (the 2021 results of this comparison not yet published), 22% of Uniting Church members, 21% of Salvation Army, 20% of Lutherans, 19% of Presbyterians, 14% of Brethren, 12% of Catholics, and even 18% of Aboriginal religious members ticked No Religion. Philip Hughes notes that the change of identity is "having little or no impact on the numbers actually attending the churches of these denominations." He suggests that what it shows is "many people who have long been nominally Christian are now describing themselves as having No Religion." That might well be the case in Britain with the drop in numbers calling themselves Christian but now registering as No Religion.

There are more Catholics in Australia pro rata than in Britain. So 13% of Catholics moving to No Religion is a large number. Ex-Catholics and ex-Anglicans are the two largest groups in Australia in No Religion. If that is true in Britain as well then it means that many No-Religionites had a Christian background which may explain why the Theos think-tank found many "Christian" features when they researched what those with No Religion believed.

There is, of course, the opposite side of "switching religion." People can also move from No Religion to a Christian denomination. The Australia Census found that 22% had moved into a religious group 10 years later. The largest movements were those now ticking Anglican (7%), Catholic (6%) or Uniting Church (2%). While some of these might still be nominal, so the change in religious identity is not an impactful change, nevertheless it is still a change. Philip considers some of these "have moved because of marriage and have identified with the religion of their spouse."

The numerical movements are not great, though. Australia now has 22,600 more Baptists, but they also lost 45,800! There are 8,500 more Pentecostals to compensate for their loss of 17,000. There are 4,100 more Jehovah's Witnesses but 3,300 of these also moved to No Religion. Philip notes "how small the impact of evangelism is on the Australian population as a whole," and suggests the cultural change occurring in Australia is consistent with the Inglehart thesis.

This says "that there is a movement from a primary orientation in life to family duties (organised along gendered lines), in which religions have played a major supporting role, to personal fulfilment, in which people seek fulfilment in career and personal interests as well as family and in which the people form relationships in more diverse ways."

It is to be regretted that the British Government does not follow the example of its Australian peers both in the analysis given above and in the fundamental issue of breaking the word "Christian" on the Census form into the major denominations in England and Wales, as is done on the Scotland and N Ireland Census forms.

SOURCES: Article "Where is the Growth in 'No Religion' coming from?" by Rev Dr Philip Hughes in *Pointers*, Australian Christian Research Association, Vol 32, No 4, Dec 2022, Page 1; *Religion's Sudden Decline*: What's causing it and what comes next?, Ronald Inglehart, Oxford University Press, 2021.

# Civil Partnerships

**Marriage was a creation ordinance between one man and one woman, sadly devalued over the years. The word "cohabitation" was first used in the 16th century according to Wikipedia, coming from a Latin term meaning "dwelling together" and could be used of any number of people. In the 20th century it began to be used for couples living together who were not formally married either through a service or a Registry Office function.**

Civil partnerships are a form of civil union in the UK between couples of the same or opposite sex, and on 5th December 2005 the 2004 Civil Partnership Act came into force, initially just for same-sex couples. There was an enormous rush for these Partnerships in 2006 when nearly 15,000 couples were legally recognised. Two-thirds of them were between men, and one-third between women.

That ratio gradually reduced to about 50% over the next few years, but on 29th March 2014 same-sex marriage became legal, and the number of civil partnerships fell away from 6,600 in 2013 to 900 in 2015. Since then the ratio of male to female civil partnerships has returned to being two-thirds men and one-third women.

However, the opening of civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples began legally on 31st December 2019, when 171 couples were thus united, followed by over 7,500 in 2020. So the graph of the numbers of civil partnerships is rather strange – a huge peak in 2006, halving over the next 8 years, dropping almost away between 2014 and 2019 and then another huge upsurge in 2020 and 2021. The 2022 figures are yet to be published.

In total between 2005 and 2021, some 69,000 same-sex civil partnerships have been registered, which means some 138,000 people living in this way, 76,000 men and 62,000 women, in a ratio of 55 : 45. In addition there have been just over 13,000 opposite-sex civil partnerships which simply means 13,000 men and 13,000 women.

Why do some people prefer a civil partnership to marriage? Wikipedia suggests that some see marriage "as being steeped in patriarchal tradition, in which women are 'given away' by their fathers and promise to 'obey' their husbands." In 2020 and 2021 there were 13,258 opposite-sex civil partnerships and in 2018 and 2019 there were 435,992 opposite-sex marriages, figures for later years not yet being available. So if 2018 and 2019 numbers were replicated in 2020 and 2021 then of the 449,000 unions thus recorded, just 3% would be opposite-sex civil partnerships.

## Dissolutions

Unfortunately many marriages and civil partnerships are not permanent. They may end by divorce for those married or, for civil partnerships, a "dissolution," equivalent to a divorce in a marriage or by mutual separation. The data on civil partnership dissolutions is much less than for divorces so that far less analysis has been made of them. Numbers have risen slowly, none being recorded in 2005 or 2006 and only 40 in 2007, just 0.2% of the civil partnerships then in existence. Between 2008 and 2014 there were some 4,500 dissolutions, 7% of the then civil partnerships which had been registered. Two-fifths of these were initiated by men, indicating that on average male same-sex civil partnerships last longer than female ones.

With the opportunity in 2014 to become a same-sex marriage, numbers of civil partnerships dissolving increased, presumably to register as a same-sex marriage. For a few, marriage is better! With the advent of opposite-sex civil partnerships, numbers of same-sex dissolutions has decreased quite substantially. Additional research is needed to ascertain whether there is any correlation here. Between 2015 and 2017 there were more dissolutions than formations!

Most civil partnerships will be held either in a Registry Office or one of their Approved Premises. Few are likely to be held in a church, and, even if they were, that location may not be recorded. One presumes some civil partnerships are religious, but the number is not known. There are religious same-sex marriages, but the number is small – 0.7% against 18.7% of opposite

# SNOWFLAKES

**American Evangelicals.** The American Associated Press has undertaken a survey into the abortion vote in the 2022 Michigan and Kentucky mid-term elections which found two-thirds of white evangelical voters in both states voted against protecting abortion access, but the Catholic vote was split evenly. The results are from a survey of more than 94,000 voters across the two States.

SOURCE: Religious Media Centre briefing 15th November 2022. [? ]n

**Ukrainian Refugees.** By the end of May 2022 some 1.1 million refugees had fled from Ukraine to Poland. Of these 47% were children (0 to 18), 46% of working age adults (92% women) and 7% were adults of retirement age (86% women). That month 72 Christian leaders from 22 European countries met together to form the Christian Ukraine Collaboration to work together in (a) relief and rebuilding, (b) emotional wellbeing and families, (c) establishing community and integration within the local church, (d) empowering and equipping leadership and (e) communication and co-ordinating partnership.

SOURCE: Matt Paschal and Jim Memory in *Vista*, Issue 42, November 2022, Pages 2 and 17.

**Same-sex & American Christians.** Three-fifths, 61%, of Americans say that same-sex marriage is good for society, 36% saying it is very good. Over two-thirds, 71%, of white evangelical Protestants say it is bad though, but 62% of non-evangelicals say it is good. So do two-thirds, 66%, of Catholics and 82% of non-religious adults. Black Protestants are divided – 49% think it good; 46% bad.

SOURCE: Pew Research study report on Religion Media Centre, 17th November 2022.

**Eighteen new congregations.** Urban Expression began in 1997 and celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2022. Its slogan is "creative mission on the margins," and its foundational values are relationship, creativity and humility. In its first 25 years it has enabled the starting of 18 new churches; their report says, "All of them are small if only regular participants are counted, but most are connected relationally to large numbers in their communities. And most of those involved are new to faith. Not all of these congregations have persisted."

SOURCE: *Impact Report*, Urban Expression, www.urbanexpression.org.uk, 2022.

**Types of No Religion.** Nearly two-fifths, 37%, of those in England and Wales said in the Census they had No Religion, a group colloquially known as "Nones". A Theos Think-tank report puts these into three groups: (1) Campaigning Nones – self-consciously atheistic and hostile to religion; (2) Tolerant Nones – broadly atheistic but sometimes warm towards religion; (3) Spiritual Nones – characterised by a range of spiritual beliefs and practices.

SOURCE: *The Nones: Who they are and what do they believe*, Hannah Waite, Theos, 31st October 2022, https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/

**Half the UK in church contact!** A weighted survey of 2,073 people suggested that half the UK population is in contact with a church through attendance at weddings, baptisms and funerals (50%), worship or community services (42%), carol services (39%), food banks (14%, highest between ages of 18 and 24), parent-and-toddler groups (more women than men), etc. Half, 52%, agreed with the statement, "The Church is an important part of British society."

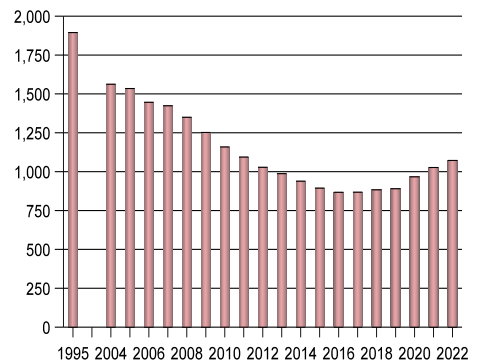
SOURCE: Comes survey of 2,073 people in July 2022, released in the Church Times, 18th November 2022, Page 7.

**Non-denominational congregations growing.** The 2020 US Religion Census identified 44,319 independent congregations, up 25% from 35,496 in 2010. They have 21 million adherents, more than any single Protestant denomination, although the Southern Baptist Convention has 7,000 more churches. The Census included Jehovah's Witnesses for the first time who have more Spanish-speaking members than English-speaking.

SOURCE: Report in *Religion Watch*, Vol 38, No 1, November 22, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion; US Religion Census data in https://www.usreligioncensus.org/

**Independent Bookshops.** The number of Independent Bookshops in the UK has increased for the sixth successive year, the Bookseller's Association reports. Some of these will probably be Christian bookshops; about a third were Christian in 2005 but many of these have closed since. The decline and increase over the last 27 years is shown in the graph:

Number of Independent Bookshops in the UK

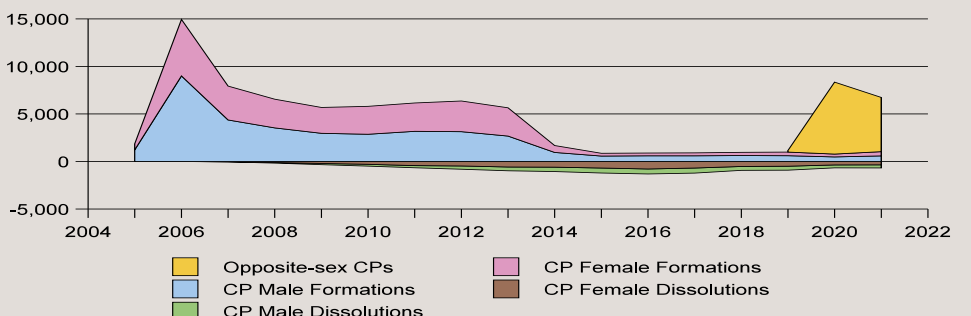


SOURCE: Bookseller's Association news website, accessed January 2023.

**Sexual orientation.** 7.5% of the population in England and Wales did not answer the voluntary question on sexual orientation in the 2021 Census. If we assume these are distributed in the same way as those who did answer the question, then the percentage of the population who are heterosexual is 96.6%, with 1.6% gay or lesbian, 1.4% bisexual, and all others 0.4%. The percentage whose gender identity was the same as the sex registered at birth was 99.4% (excluding the 6% who didn't answer this question).

SOURCE: Office for National Statistics, Sexual orientation and Gender identity, Census 2021.

sex marriages (2019 figures). In 2019 there were 6,700 same-sex marriages and 1,000 same-sex civil partnerships, so the number of religious partnerships among these would be in single digits, if any.



SOURCES: Office for National Statistics (ONS), Civil Partnerships; ONS, Marriage statistics, as given in Table 14.12 of *UK Church Statistics*, No 4 2021 Edition; Wikipedia accessed December 2022.

# Thriving missionaries

By Janet Dallman, Member Care Advisor, OMF International, Japan

**This article is based on Janet's research for her 2019 Master's studies in Member Care for Redcliffe College, which examined attrition and retention of missionaries to Japan and how these factors should influence missionaries' self-care and member care for mission agencies operating in Japan.**

I have several plants on the balcony of my flat in Japan. Some do well and some don't, usually through inadequate watering or too much Tokyo sunshine! For plants to thrive they need water, sunshine, good soil and to be protected from extremes and disease. Like my plants, my desire is to see missionaries thrive, to have sufficient water and sunshine and be protected from threats. How can this happen and how can mission agencies and churches help them? To answer these questions, we must begin by considering why missionaries left Japan.

## Why did missionaries leave Japan?

My survey (218 respondents), revealed these top ten factors about why missionaries left Japan, and in some cases failed to thrive or survive threats, the numbers being the weighted averages of the frequency the factor was chosen and how highly it was ranked:

1 God's call	2.12	6=Retirement policy	0.67
2 Retirement	1.60	7 Japanese language	0.60
3 Missionaries' parents' needs	0.96	8 Lack of children's education	0.57
4 Physical ill-health	0.94	9 Overwork [options]	0.54
5 Ministry mismatch	0.91	10=Adult children's needs	0.52
6=Stress	0.67	10=Japanese culture	0.52

God's call can comprise several factors. For example, parents may feel God is calling them to leave because their child, who has struggled with ill-health, also needs primary education, and further, that their role in the organisation is complete. These factors together can be identified as God's call to leave. Retirement and retirement policy can largely be viewed positively; a missionary fulfilling their calling and returning to their passport country.

Family issues are prevalent in this list. The longer missionaries stay in their location, the older their parents become and the more likely they will need care. Educationally, some countries don't have good options, or those options may be compromised for other reasons. I was surprised to see adult children's needs in the top ten, but it highlights the complexities of raising cross-cultural families.

Having been in Japan for about 25 years, I can attest to initial and ongoing struggles with the Japanese language. Likewise, Japanese culture is worlds apart from my own. Whatever their country of service, most missionaries struggle to a greater or lesser extent with language and culture acquisition.

Healthwise, physical ill-health, stress and overwork need to be addressed by missionaries themselves, their agencies and their supporting churches.

Finally, ministry mismatch could mean a "lack of fit" with the mission agency, and/or the assigned role or ministry. It could be due to a lack of understanding by the missionary candidate or poor application procedures by the mission agency, or a gradual "growing apart" from the ministry and/or agency.

## What helps missionaries thrive and stay in Japan?

Having considered why missionaries left Japan, what did they say helps them stay? In other words, what "growing conditions" help them thrive where they are planted?

1 God's call	4.55	6 Ongoing language study	3.62
2 Devotional life	4.22	7 Missionary colleagues	3.60
3 Initial language study	3.81	8 Ongoing culture study	3.53
4 Sending side finance	3.80	9 Seminary	3.51
5 Marriage	3.77	10 Pre-field experience	3.31

However one defines "call," a huge number of participants identified God's call as vital. Personally, had I not known God's clear call to go to Japan and stay there, I would have left within six months! Also essential is a solid devotional life, without which missionaries wither and have nothing to offer those to whom they minister.

As indicated previously, initial and ongoing language and culture study are crucial to thriving in Japan, and in any missionary endeavour in any country. Although missionaries may need to accept their limitations in this area, a lack of sufficient language competency will usually hasten departure.

Missionaries can't function without adequate finance, which is linked to supporting churches and the sending agency. However, finance alone, from either source, is insufficient; there needs to be a caring, supportive relationship.

Good relationships and community are key to thriving as a missionary. A solid marriage and helpful family relationships on the field (where these apply), supportive friendships with missionary colleagues and supportive local and sending churches are critical.

Finally, seminary or Bible College studies and pre-field church or other ministry experience is beneficial for missionaries; having learnt some principles and practice before arrival can only aid their ministry.

## Thriving Missionaries

Returning to our original questions. How can missionaries thrive and how can mission agencies and churches help them? Here are some suggestions for consideration:

### For missionaries

1. Be certain of God's call
2. Maintain and foster a flourishing spiritual life
3. Work towards a thriving personal (and family) life – balance in work, rest and play
4. Develop and prioritise Christian community (missionary, local and global)
5. Intentionally and persistently study language and culture

### For supporting churches

- 1 Walk alongside possible missionaries, helping them identify God's call on their life and agency/ agencies which might be "good fit"
- 2 Train church members how to maintain and foster their spiritual lives, individually and corporately
- 3 Encourage local and global Christian community
- 4 Provide adequate financial and prayerful support, checking missionaries' needs and reviewing regularly
- 5 Understand the need to learn language and culture, and the struggles missionaries may encounter in this
- 6 Educate yourselves about the complexities and options surrounding missionary children's education, discuss these with missionaries as appropriate and support them in their decisions
- 7 Support missionaries' adult children
- 8 Make field visits where possible
- 9 Support missionaries and their parents as they get older, financially and/or practically
- 10 Consider providing finances for a family holiday or a couples' weekend
- 11 Care for your missionaries when they leave the field for retirement, ill-health or relocation

### For mission agencies

- 1 Provide honest information about your mission agency to enquirers
- 2 Establish effective application procedures, which assess candidates' call to the country and your agency, as well as their spiritual and personal suitability to serve
- 3 Provide sufficient finance in a timely fashion
- 4 Ensure good language and culture training
- 5 Provide opportunities for spiritual refreshment, community-building and member care
- 6 Provide help and advice for families regarding children's education and upbringing
- 7 Provide ongoing support for adult children of missionaries
- 8 Establish flexible policies to help missionaries supporting older and/or aging parents
- 9 Assist missionaries needing temporary respite, due to stress, ill-health etc.
- 10 Support missionaries leaving their country of service due to retirement, ill-health or relocation

May we play our part in enabling missionaries to thrive: providing food, water and sunshine, and in guarding against threat and disease. Not just to care for them as we should, but for the sake of the gospel and the expansion of God's Kingdom in the world.

Anyone wanting a copy of Janet's dissertation can contact her at [jp.mca@omfmail.com](mailto:jp.mca@omfmail.com) or can purchase her book *Staying Well: Highlighting Hazards, Highlighting Health for Missionaries in Japan* on [Amazon.co.uk/Books/Dallman, Janet](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Books/Dallman,Janet).

# War and Church Growth

In 1977 the Oxford University Press (Clarendon) published what was to become a most useful book. It was based on the PhD thesis of the main author, Robert Currie, who had sought to prove or disprove whether “the sociological character of religious organisation” is affected by “for instance, victory in war, a good harvest, or salvation from sin.” To do this he cumulated all the available published statistics of all the main (and many minor) denominations from 1700 onwards and published them as an Appendix to his book *Churches and Churchgoers*. These have proved a rich treasure trove for all subsequently researching the history of religion.

He included details of church membership, communicants, Sunday School scholars, number of clergy, number of religious buildings (churches), marriages, births and deaths in his search for suitable data for every published year up to 1960 or 1965 in a few cases. It was a prodigious amount of work to compile such in his search for evidence of the impact of religion but he was able to conclude “the evidence assembled here suggests that the two world wars had a most adverse effect on church growth” although he noted post-war revivals of church membership “the precursors merely of new setbacks for organised religion.”

It is 77 years since the last continent-wide war on European soil, and it would be interesting to know what his reactions would be to the impact of the Ukraine war on the churches in Ukraine. While it is too early to know for sure, some initial findings suggest that the reverse is currently true in Ukraine. The Russian bombing has of course impacted church life as much as all other aspects of life in that country. Some members and ministers have been killed or seriously injured, church buildings destroyed, homes smashed to pieces, children orphaned, male members called up to serve in the army, disruption of services, the discontinuation of church meetings, impoverishment of community help, etc.

But Currie’s conclusion has not followed, although the situation is different – Britain has never actually been invaded (since 1700), whereas Ukraine has. The Ukrainian Bible Society (UBS) has reported that the number of people in Ukraine asking for Bibles has more than doubled since February 2022 when Russia invaded. In 2020 it distributed 140,000 Bibles but in the nine months since the invasion some 360,000 Bibles have been distributed, many more than double. British Christians have donated about 170,000 Bibles and other Christian books.

Anatolly Raychynets, deputy secretary of the UBS says, “I think the Bible is a point of hope to people who are living through the war.” One man coming to faith following his escape from a bombed supermarket said, “God was guiding us again and again.” He refers to Abraham – God was pushing him, an initial non-believer, to do what was right.

Many people have seen a lot of brutal Russian behaviour including torturing and killing of civilians. So Mr Raychynets said he expected people to blame God, asking why He allowed this war to happen? He acknowledges this is a difficult question, but he said people are wanting “to be close to God,” and when they are hiding in bomb shelters they read the Bible together by candlelight. “I have been reading the Bible with soldiers many times,” the *Daily Telegraph* reported him saying, “I saw many tears in the soldiers’ eyes.”

“Priests in the capital Kyiv have confirmed a resurgence in faith, saying that congregations had not dwindled despite an exodus of regular churchgoers overseas,” he continued. A Monastery Abbot said he was seeing new faces he had not encountered in his 23 years of service.

Behind this growth has gone a vast amount of preaching and prayer by David Hathaway of Eurovision Mission to Europe in Ukraine. He has been visiting the country for many years holding National Days of Prayer and on 17th September 2017 a Day of Salvation when 6,000 people attended. So much Christian teaching must have made an impact. Mission Without Borders is another Christian agency with a strong work in Ukraine.

The original research by Dr Currie did not measure attendance – statistics of such were not produced till after his book was published, so he had to look to membership and other evidence. Ukraine’s 44 million people (as in 2020) were very religious – 86% saying they were Christian and actually an affiliated member of a church. That does not mean they regularly attend, but does suggest a relatively high degree of interaction. In many ways therefore Russia’s attack is against Christian people, which some would define as persecution. While many of Ukraine’s people have left the country for neighbouring lands, the Christian ethos of the land survives.

Some 73% belong to the Orthodox Church, split almost equally between the group aligning with Moscow and the group focussing on Kiev (31% to 37%, respectively, of the population), the first group having acute difficulties because of Moscow’s “special operation” as Putin calls it. Of the 14% non-Orthodox, the Catholics form the bulk, some 11%, with the smaller Protestant denominations and Independent churches forming the rest. How these percentages will change as a result of the war remains to be seen, but many British churches are, and have been, praying earnestly for the people of Ukraine.

**SOURCES:** *Churches and Churchgoers*, Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977; *Daily Telegraph* report by Nicola Sith and Ben Farmer in Kiev, 19th December, 2022, Page13; Eurovision Mission to Europe, Mission Without Borders websites accessed December 2022; *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, edited Todd Johnson et al, EUP, 2020.

## Humour

Atheist: Do you honestly believe that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish?

Preacher: I don’t know, but when I get to heaven, I’ll ask him.

Atheist: But suppose he isn’t in heaven?

Preacher: Then you ask him.

Mick and Paddy were reading head stones at a cemetery.

Mick says, “Goodness! There’s a bloke here who was 152!”

Paddy says, “What’s his name?”

Mick replies, “Miles, from London.”

**SOURCE:** *Escape into Humour* 2017, Rotary Club of Hoddesdon.

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