

# SNOWFLAKES

**Easter Eggs.** Easter in Britain is always associated with Eggs. Chocolate eggs of every description are available for purchase, and of all sizes from packets of "mini-eggs" to monster "ostrich eggs" produced by Hotel Chocolate. Many of these eggs are wrapped up. In 2011, Britain's bin men collected 4,500 tonnes of Easter egg packaging in the fortnight after Easter! That's equivalent to 3 ounces per person for all 61 million people in Great Britain, or 11 ounces of wrapping for everyone aged 5 to 25!

**SOURCE:** *Race, Religion and Equalities: A report on the 2009/10 Citizenship Survey, Communities and Local Government, National Statistics, 2011.*

that Christians were protected too little, again the highest percentage apart from Muslims who came in at 10%!

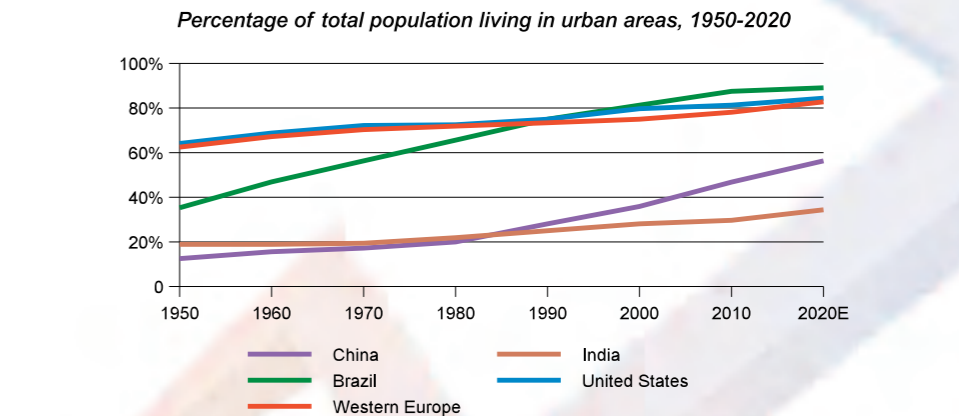
### Fatherhood and Church

Does fatherhood make a man more likely to attend church? If the new father is already a committed churchgoer (monthly or weekly) or not a churchgoer at all before the baby comes, then it makes no difference, research has found. But if the father-to-be had occasionally attended church previously, such as just a few times a year (about 15% of the fathers in the sample), then fatherhood was likely to double his church commitment.

A selection of 1,500 fathers was chosen from low-income urban families in the American Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, based on 4,900 children born between 1998 and 2000, with interviews every 2 years from birth until the child was 5 years old. This is a very reasonable sample although a specially focussed group of people.

The survey also found that for these fathers their child's church involvement was likely to be tangible, but church influence on the children would especially come from the mother.

**SOURCE:** Paper "Is Urban Fathers' Religion Important for Their Children's Behaviour?" by Richard Petts, in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 53, No 2, November 2011, Page 195.



### Child deaths

In 2008, 8.8 million children around the world died before they were 5 years old, about one child in 70 in that age-group, equivalent to 24,000 deaths per day, or 1,000 every hour. The number is reducing – it was 12.4 million in 1990 and 7.6 million in 2010. One third (35%) of these deaths are due to malnutrition, and one sixth (18%) to pneumonia.

**SOURCE:** World Health Organisation; Web; *The Economist*, 18th February, 2012.

### Religious rights

The latest citizenship survey included the question, "How much is Government doing to protect the rights of people belonging to different religions?" Two-thirds of respondents (68%) thought the Government was doing too much for Hindus, and three-fifths (60%) too much for Muslims and Sikhs. At the same time a quarter (27%) felt it was doing too little for Sikhs and for Christians.

In the same vein, one in six (18%) felt that Muslims were protected too much – a huge percentage as the next highest percentage was just 2%, equally for Hindus and Sikhs. One person in 14, 7%, felt

## Irish Medical Dictionary

Humourously, the Irish have lower stress levels because they do not take medical terminology seriously. Irish definitions for these medical terms are:

- Artery = The study of paintings
- Bacteria = Back door to cafeteria
- Benign = What you be, after you be eight
- Caesarean Section = A neighbourhood in Rome
- Cauterize = Made eye contact with her
- Coma = A punctuation mark
- Dilate = To live long
- Fibula = A small lie
- Impotent = Distinguished, well known
- Labour Pain = Getting hurt at work
- Morbid = A higher offer
- Nitrates = Rates of pay for working at night
- Outpatient = A person who has fainted
- Post operative = A letter carrier
- Recovery Room = Place to do upholstery
- Rectum = Nearly killed him
- Seizure = Roman Emperor
- Tablet = A small table
- Terminal Illness = Getting sick at the airport
- Tumour = One plus one more
- Urine = Opposite of you're out

**SOURCE:** Email, Alison Hills, February 2012.

## These may be helpful Books and reports received

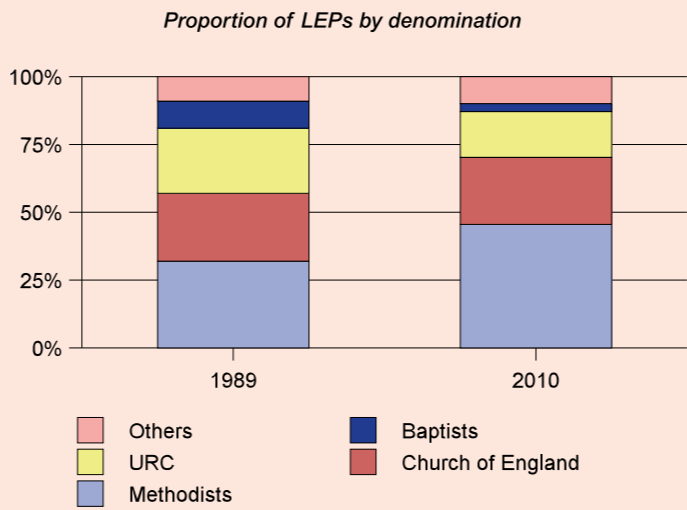
*Missions and Church Planting in Europe*, Darrell Jackson and Tim Hert, Eurochurch.net 2012, giving country profiles across Europe and details of people active in each.

*Megatrends and the persecuted Church*, Dr Ronald Boyd-MacMillan, as part of Open Doors Strategy Forum, September 2011, looking at World, Mission and Persecution Megatrends.

*Halfway to Heaven: Four Types of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe*, Ingrid Storm, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol 48, No 4, 2009, identifying four cluster groups of religious people.

Methodist involvement, find the LEP experiment attractive and worthwhile. Separate figures for other denominations are unfortunately not available.

The Methodist triennium analyses give further details on LEPs for the years 2008 to 2010. These indicate that the percentage of confirmations in Methodist LEPs is slightly greater than other Methodist churches (35% to 32%), and that the percentage of deaths is slightly less (42% to 49%). This suggests that LEPs have younger congregations than "average" Methodist churches, perhaps indicating a more youthful enthusiasm for collaboration.



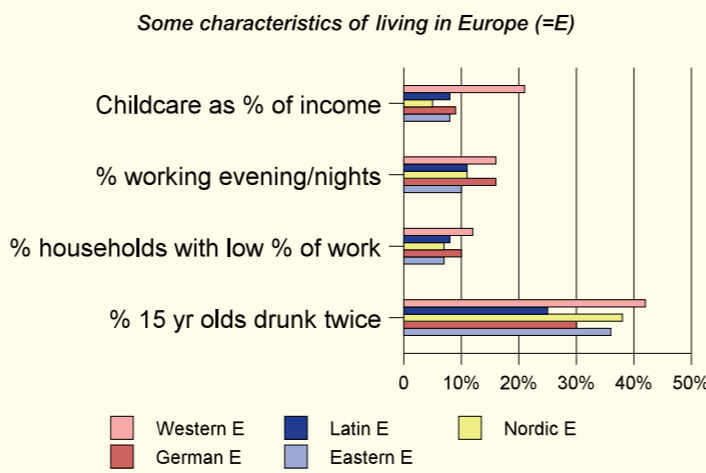
Attendance, however, is not the same as membership. In these churches in which the Methodists are one LEP partner, total Sunday congregations between 2008 and 2010 increased from 29,000 in 2008 to 30,000 in 2010, the increase coming from greater numbers of adults. The Methodist proportion of these congregations, just under half in 2010 (48%), decreased from 17,000 in 2008 to 14,000 in 2010, most of this being a decrease in adult numbers. Thus the non-Methodist component in these congregations grew from 12,000 in 2008 to 16,000 in 2010, which is a large increase in such a short time.

In 2005, LEPs accounted for 2.1% of all churchgoers, and had seen slightly faster decline than non-LEP congregations since 1989. The evidence of whether LEPs "work" therefore is mixed. In absolute numbers, there are fewer now than there were. About half of existing LEPs involve the Methodists, with the Church of England as the next most frequent partner. While collectively they are declining in overall attendance terms like other churches, it is not known whether this is primarily because of their Methodist component (whose attenders are likely to be older than others). Equally it is clear that some LEPs are thriving, perhaps because they have a more youthful congregational mix.

**SOURCES:** *Prospects for the Nineties*, MARC Europe, London, 1991, Page 17; *Pulling out of the Nosedive*, Christian Research, London, 2006, Page 42; *Statistics for Mission 2008-2010*, Methodist Church, Sections 5.6, 5.7 and 5.9.

## Family Pressure

The Relationships' Foundation recently produced a kind of barometer looking at the pressures families were under and usefully included the data they had used for their calculations. Not everyone, however, finds it easy to understand the differences in index levels, so instead we analysed some of the data they had used but for the different parts of Europe. Some of these are shown in the chart. The UK is included within "Western Europe" and, because of its population size, is the dominant member.



Western Europe had seven areas where it stood out from the rest of Europe, not all illustrated above:

**SOURCE:** *The Family Pressure Gauge*, Relationships Foundation, Autumn 2011, Summary and detailed report.

## Local Ecumenical Partnerships

**We are always grateful for suggestions from readers of ideas for articles. This article is a consequence of a comment from a long-time fellow worker. LEPs are Local Ecumenical Partnerships which usually means a combination of two or more denominations working together often in a single building and usually with just one mixed congregation. On occasions two or three churches in an area close and are merged together into a single, sometimes new, building instead. There were 1,140 LEPs in 1989, two-thirds (69%) involving two denominations, a sixth (17%) with 3 denominations, and the remaining 14% with 4 or more.**

Four-fifths (81%) of these LEPs included the Methodists as one partner, over three-fifths (64%) Anglicans, three-fifths (62%) the United Reformed Church, a quarter (25%) Baptists, a sixth (17%) Roman Catholics, plus 1% Congregational churches, 1% Moravian churches, and 3% others. The proportions these percentages represented then and as they are now is shown in the chart. Most LEPs were created in the 1970s and 1980s, and only a few in the 1990s. There were 910 LEPs in 2005.

The URC and Baptist proportions of LEPs declined between 1989 and 2010, the Church of England has remained the same, and the Methodist involvement has increased. Methodist LEPs are 10% of all Methodist churches and the LEP membership is 8% of all Methodist membership, so their LEP churches tend to be slightly smaller in Methodist terms than other Methodist churches, but these LEPs will have their membership augmented by those of the other partner congregations whose membership is not included in the Methodist figures, so very likely collectively are larger.

Of the 921 Methodist LEPs in 1989, only 540 remained 21 years later in 2010. That fairly large drop would of itself suggest that this kind of partnership has not been found in practice to be the best way forward for churches. On the other hand, total membership of these Methodist LEPs was 18,000 in 2008, growing to 19,000 by 2010 (despite a drop of 14 LEPs in the period), whereas Methodist membership as a whole declined -6% in those years. So clearly some churches, especially with a

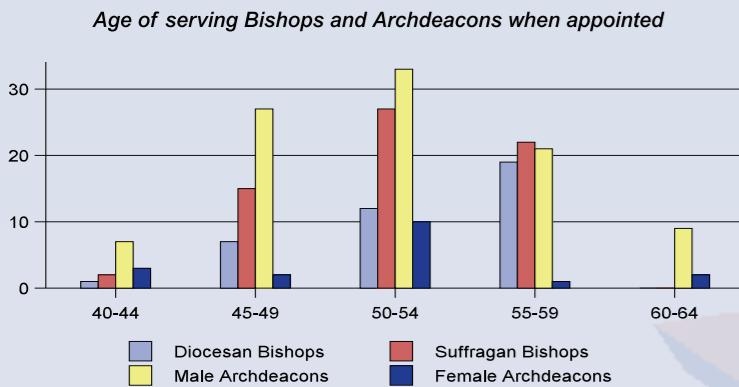
## SENIOR CHURCH LEADERS

**The Church of England is unique in regularly publishing the ages of its ministers and indicating the year they were appointed to a particular position. This is true for all their clergy, but this article looks just at the most senior leaders, the Archdeacons and Bishops in each of the 43 Dioceses in England plus the Diocese of Europe. They had 44 Diocesan Bishops in 2012, and 66 Suffragan or Area Bishops. The Diocese of London is the largest in terms of Area Bishops – it has five. The Dioceses of Bradford, Leicester, Portsmouth and Sodor and Man have no Suffragan positions at all.**

In 2012 there were 126 Archdeacons, although at the time of writing 6 of these positions were vacant. One in six of the total in post, 18%, were female in 2012, against only 11% in 2007.

In 2012, Diocesan Bishops had served for an average of 10 years, Suffragans for 7 years and Archdeacons for 5 years. The longest serving Bishop of all, however, is the Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch, now Bishop of Manchester, but previously Bishop of Wakefield, and before that Suffragan Bishop of Taunton appointed in 1986, 26 years ago – more than half his ministry has been as a Bishop!

The longest serving Archdeacons, both for 16 years, are Ven Paddy Benson, Archdeacon of Hereford, and Ven Dr William Jacob, Archdeacon of Charing Cross. Some Archdeacons become Bishops, usually Suffragan first, and nearly three-quarters (73%) of Diocesan bishops were previously Suffragan Bishops. Two current Diocesan Bishops were previously Vicars (Rt Rev Peter Foster of Chester and Rt Rev Nicholas Holtam of Salisbury).



The current average age of a Diocesan Bishop is 61, of a Suffragan Bishop 59, and of an Archdeacon 58. On average a Diocesan Bishop was appointed when he was 53, a Suffragan when 51, and an Archdeacon, male or female, when 52. Two-thirds (65%) of Archdeacons are appointed between the ages of 45 and 54; three-quarters (77%) of Bishops in their 50s. No appointments were made when a person was over 64.

The right leadership is crucial for the well-being and future of the church. Please do pray for those serving as senior leaders and that the Lord will give appointment wisdom for those to be made such this year.

**SOURCES:** Figures published by the Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops' Council.

## Leisure and Gaming

**How do people relax? Global consumer spending in 2012 on video games is likely to be, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers, £42 billion, not much less than the £50 billion normally spent on newspapers. By 2015 they say, spending on newspapers will still be £50 billion, but video games will have caught up and also be £50 bn.**

Over a quarter (29%) of that spend in 2012 will be on online games, £13 bn, and while the proportion spent this way may increase a little by 2015, put at 31%, the actual amount will go up to £19 bn. This is big money. Men play these games more than women (58% to 42%), and the average age of American players is 37. The amount of money spent in Britain on these games in 2012 is likely to be around £3.5 bn, or around an average of £60 per person in these islands!

Video games are of many types – strategy games, adventure, puzzle, sports, business games, science-fiction, flight simulators and many more. The same people play lots of different types. Hardcore gamers tend to be young men with plenty of free time and spare income, using dedicated consoles or powerful PCs, with especial attention on violent action and complicated strategy. Casual players spend less time and money on gaming and play simpler games using mobile phones as well as online. There are also "classical casual gamers" who do puzzle games with abstract brain-teasers.

Mobile phone subscriptions worldwide in 2011 were over 5 billion for such games. Some games, like the Finnish *Angry Birds* released in 2009, have sold 500 million copies, but a game is reckoned good if there are 2 million downloads. More than half, 55%, of games are played on phones.

It is also possible to become a professional gamer. Good players can make a reasonable living from salaries, sponsorship and prize money. The American company Major League Gaming organises "e-sports" events across the country. Technology has made it easier to build tightly knit fan communities for the leading players. The three biggest video game markets are America, Britain and Japan.

What are the advantages of games? Business gamification has become income fashionable over the last couple of years. "They make players want to perform difficult tasks and pay for the privilege," says Brian Burke of consultancy firm Gartner. Britain's Department of Work and Pensions offers a gamified version of a suggestion box, and suggestions taken up win points for those making them. Military training also now uses gaming techniques extensively, providing simulated battles for participants.

Games marry the insatiable human desire to play with the power of modern technology. Is there anything appropriate in such for the Christian or for the church? There are few games which are Christian, or carry Christian values. There is a Christian website, gamers4jesus, and a spokesman said they play games to learn strategy. Does that strategic learning help them in their evangelisation of the world? Not yet, it seems. Gamification is growing, and will take more of people's leisure time, and that means for Christian game players, less time available on directly Christian activities.

**SOURCE:** Special Reports in *The Economist*, 10th December, 2011, and 3rd March 2012.

**SOURCE:** Paper "A 'WalMartization' of Religion? The Ecological Impact of Megachurches" by Jason Wolfshlegler and Jeremy Porter, in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 53, No 3, December 2011, Page 295.

### Health and Faith

A study by the Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF) sought to identify specific health benefits associated with people having religious faith. Of the studies reviewed, 81% showed benefit, 15% were neutral and 4% showed harm – the latter when religion was associated with harsh and authoritarian leadership. The main benefits identified were:

- Increased well-being, happiness, life satisfaction
- Lower rates of depression
- Less anxiety and related illnesses
- Lower rates of alcohol and drug abuse
- Better adaptation to bereavement.

Outside this study, but known from an actuarial examination of the length of life seen by Anglican clergy, was the fact that Christian people live on average for at least 4 years longer than non-Christian.

**SOURCE:** Report on the CMF study in an article "Faith 'on prescription'?" in *Plain Truth*, Autumn 2011, Page 14.

*continued from page 1*

While the number of Christians among undergraduates appears to be significant (perhaps well beyond 40%), this cohort of self-identifying "Christians" does not match the image of enthusiastic mission-orientated students painted in the press and associated, sometimes unfairly, with evangelical student organisations like the Universities' and Colleges' Christian Fellowship. Only a small minority (around 10%) engage with the activities of Christian Unions during term-time, and less than 30% attend church on a weekly basis or more while at university.

Admittedly, this suggests a more religiously active population than the general population (less than 7% weekly churchgoers according to 2005 figures, while our total sample have around twice this proportion attending with this regularity). However, it remains the case that the majority of "Christian" students attend church only occasionally or never, one of a series of indicators that suggest a "silent majority" who either function as nominal Christians disengaged from church life, or who affirm their faith via other modes of social engagement, perhaps via volunteering or occasional involvement in Christian events.

Moreover, one of our most interesting findings relates to the degree to which university-based Christian identity remains rooted in experiences from pre-university life. Christian students attend church more frequently during university vacations (see chart). Most are not the only practising Christian in their family, while only a minority admit to involvement in Christian organisations and churches within the university locale. Most strikingly, the vast majority of our survey respondents (Christian and non-Christian) felt that since being at university, their perspective on religion had generally stayed the same (only 12% said they had become less religious, 10% more religious).

**SOURCE:** Paper "The Association between Religious Beliefs and Practices and End-of-Life Fears" by Nava Silton et al, in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 53, No 3, December 2011, Page 361.

### Impact of Larger Churches locally

A study looking at the impact of megachurches on the churches in their immediate vicinity found that they "increase local religious competition" and were therefore beneficial for other religious groups. The only group of churches for which this was not true was the evangelical congregations very similar to the megachurches in ethos, which found the presence of these large churches led "to a significant decline" – what some have called the "WalMart Effect" because competition is stifled by their presence.

For further information and emerging project findings, go to [www.cueproject.org.uk](http://www.cueproject.org.uk).



## REFLECTIONS

You can never really tell when tests to your faith may come. For one particular man, and his three friends, it came early. They were made refugees when still young, wrenched from their homes and kindred by a conquering invader who took them hundreds of miles away to another city, and made to realise very clearly that they would never ever return. In those types of circumstances outside your control, do you retain your faith in God, or waver in trusting in Him, His sovereignty, His promises, His love?

These young men decided to stay within the faith community. Then they had a break. They were chosen, for no obvious reason other than their looks and abilities, to do a university foreign literature course. If they passed, they could join the civil service in their country of forced adoption. There were rules attached to this selection, however, one of which was that they had to compromise their beliefs by eating food unacceptable to them.

The supervisor allowed an experiment – they could eat just vegetables for 10 days and then he would decide. God enabled them to look healthier than all the other students after those 10 days so Daniel and his friends were allowed to continue their special diet. First test of faith in their favour!

They speedily found that the Emperor they had to serve was a man of extreme arrogance and self importance. As a successful interpreter of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, Daniel rose to become Chief Wise Man and senior administrator. But success did not and does not guarantee immunity from testing. In fact, it may make the testing more severe and more intense.

His three friends also climbed through the civil service ranks and became Provincial Governors, but when they refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue, they were thrown into a specially heated furnace. The Emperor was amazed to see the three unharmed and a fourth person walking around in the flames, and was forced to acknowledge the true God and His power.

For Permanent Secretary Daniel, supreme testing came because of his long and successful track record, resulting in his colleagues becoming jealous of his abilities, and persuading a new Emperor to force him to compromise his faith or face death. But Daniel stood firm, and was thrown among the hungry lions, emerging unscathed. Emperor Darius also came to acknowledge God's power, and the lions fed on Daniel's colleagues instead!

Success in the workplace, ministry or Christian service may all lead to jealousy and even vindictiveness among colleagues. Though, in this country at least, such may not lead to a fiery furnace, lion's den, or equivalent, we may be tested by unwarranted criticism, jeopardised prospects, tarnished reputation, hurtful ostracism, when we will need every ounce of Daniel and his three friends' steadfastness and unwavering trust.

Far from home, few props for his faith, no synagogues or Temple, only a few faithful fellow believers, Daniel was sustained by his close walk with God and God's revelations to him, enabling him over a 60 year career to serve and impact an alien culture for the Sovereign God of all history.

## Marital Status and Religion

A study by Professor Leslie Francis looks at the change that has taken place in marital status by religion. He takes two periods, 1983 to 1995, and 1996 to 2005, and shows the proportion who are married in Britain has declined between these two periods, while cohabitation, divorce and those who are never married have all increased. As may be seen from the graph, these trends are part of what has been happening over a longer period.

His figures show that these general trends also apply to all faith groups, with the exception of the proportion of widows. The number of Christian widows has increased because many older male Christians are dying, a reflection of the high age profile of those who are Christian. Widowhood among those who are not Christian is less partly

**Marital Status by Faith Groups**

Marital Status	Christian		Other Faiths		No Religion		Overall	
	1983-1995 %	1996-2005 %	1983-1995 %	1996-2005 %	1983-1995 %	1996-2005 %	1983-1995 %	1996-2005 %
Married	63	51	71	61	54	43	60	48
Cohabiting	3	5	2	3	7	12	4	8
Divorced	8	12	5	9	9	13	8	12
Widowed	14	17	6	5	8	7	12	12
Never Married	12	15	16	22	22	26	16	20
Base (=100%)	17,828	17,962	579	1,029	10,014	13,914	28,421	32,905

- Religious people are more likely to be married than non-religious.
- Cohabitation is at least twice as likely among the non-religious than the religious.
- Divorce is slightly more common among the non-religious than the religious.
- Christians are less likely to marry and more likely to cohabit or divorce than those of other faiths.

SOURCES: Population Trends, No 146, Winter 2011, Page 69; Paper "Multi-Faith Britain and Family Life" by Leslie Francis et al, Journal of Contemporary Religion, Vol 26, No 1, January 2011, Page 38.

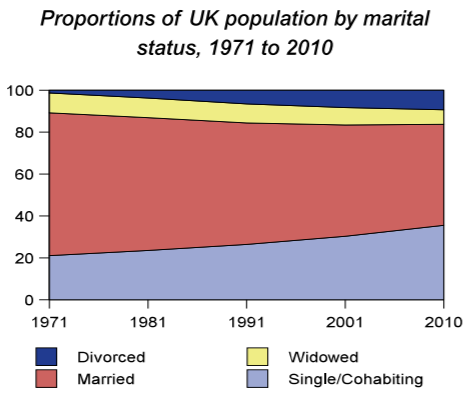
## BIBLE READING

Reading the Bible has a measureable effect on your outlook on life. Five years ago the Baylor University in America undertook a survey on the effects on Bible reading, and its findings have recently been released. They measured people's Bible reading habits on a 5-point scale, so that the more the Bible was read the higher on the scale a person scored. Those undertaking the survey also asked people's opinions on a number of issues and then analysed how much opinions differed by the scale they scored on their Bible reading.

It was found that a one point increase in the Bible reading scale accounted on average for:

- A 22% increase in seeing religion and science as incompatible
- A 35% increase in agreement that people should "Actively seek social and economic justice in order to be a good person", and
- A 45% increase in support for abolishing the death penalty.

But it is not just in America that Bible reading affects a person. At the turn of the century, almost 2,000 churchgoing Anglicans in Kent were asked if they



due to the number of divorces. However, there are other differences between the religious and general population:

## NEETS and EETS

"NEETs" are defined as those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, and EETS are the same without the initial "Not". About 9% of those aged 16 to 18 in England and Wales are NEETS, a percentage which has not varied much over the past 15 years.

A 2012 survey by the Prince's Trust found that on a score from 1 to 100 (where 1 was low and 100 high) NEETS scored 58 on the Happiness scale, while EETS scored 74. Likewise, in terms of Confidence, NEETS scored 62 against 75 for EETS. Furthermore, the survey found that the NEETS scores were 3% lower than in 2011 on these particular issues.

These differences can be seen in the following chart, where those who "always" or "often" felt the particular emotions are indicated.

The impact of not being employed or in training is clearly seen. Is there any way in which churches could help more young people in this age-group? Providing them with work, or asking them to volunteer to do something, giving them some basic training perhaps, allowing them to gain work experience, paying them for a specific job, even if only part-time or short-term?

Michelle Mone OBE, the Scottish model and CEO of Ultimo Lingerie, was asked what advice she would give young people who are thinking of

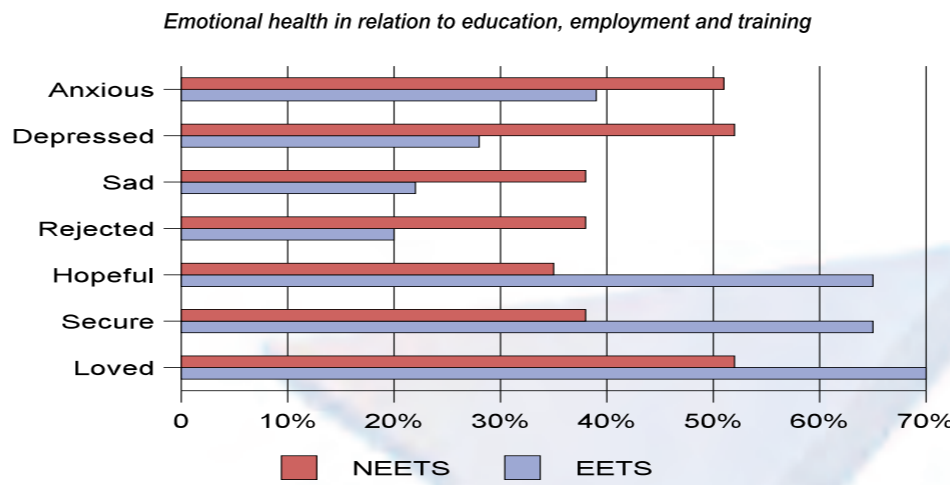
starting their own business. She replied generally but her comments could well apply to NEETS:

- Don't lose focus on your goal.
- Be prepared to take criticism along the way.

Richard Lundie, one of the team managers at Living Hope, an organisation helping people trapped in poverty or ill-health near Cape Town, South Africa, was asked what was the greatest problem of poverty. He said, "Inability to think ahead," and one of the key issues facing young people who are NEETS is precisely this. Many

churches have a culture of thinking forwards, so is it possible for their leaders to share that experience with needy youngsters somehow, especially NEETS?

Anxious to help the unemployed (not only those in the 16-18 age bracket), some enthusiasts in a church in Kent obtained a local allotment and organised volunteers from the surrounding community in successfully growing a large variety of fruit and vegetables which were then donated to the volunteers and other needy families. Any surplus was offered to church folk on a donation basis or for church activities.



SOURCES: The Prince's Trust Youth Index 2012, Prince's Trust; Statistical Release by Department for Education, February 2011; In Any Event, 2012, Page 21.

## GLOBAL CHRISTIANS

Each January the International Bulletin of Missionary Research carries an article updating the latest statistics on global Christianity. For the last 20+ years this has been compiled by Rev Dr David Barrett, who died in November 2011. Whether therefore the data for 2012 will be the last is unknown as yet.

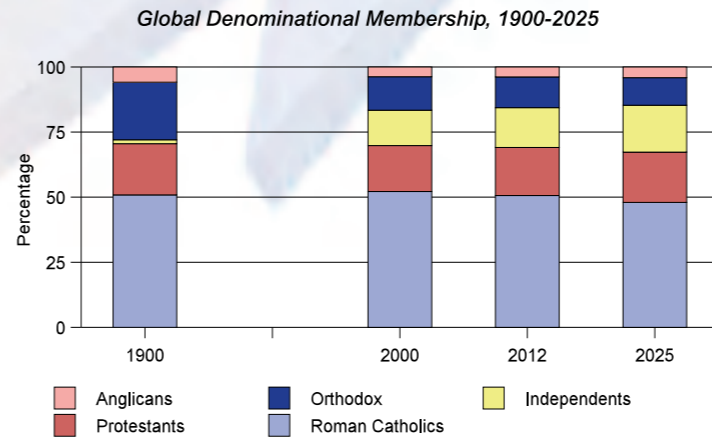
He estimates that in mid-2012 the world's population will be 7.1 billion people, 51% living in urban areas, including 505 "megacities" with a population over 1 million. Just over a quarter (27%) of the world's people will be under the age of 16. Only four-fifths (82%) of the adult population will be literate. One person in 7 (15%) will be living in slums. David reckons 41% of urban dwellers are Christian at least nominally, against 24% living in rural areas.

The number of Christians, again nominally, is estimated at 2.3 billion, a third (33%) of the total. Over a fifth, 1.6 billion or 22%, will be Muslim, and a further 14% Hindu. Thus over two-thirds of the world (69%) will belong to one of these three religions. It is reckoned one person in 9 (11%) will be agnostic or atheist. Buddhists will be 7%, and the remaining 13% made up of a variety of old and new religions.

David Barrett suggests there will be 43,000 denominations in total, with an aggregate of 4.7 million congregations, served by 12 million leaders, three-fifths (60%) of whom will be male. He puts the global mission worker force at 420,000 people.

Omitting the "marginals" (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) the proportions in the five denominational blocks he uses are shown in the bar-chart, and how they have changed with time. The main trends his figures show are an increasing number of Independents (which includes Pentecostals) and a decreasing proportion of Orthodox.

In 1900, 70% of the world's Christians were in Europe, a percentage which had collapsed to 29% by 2000, and likely to be 26% in 2012. In North America these percentages are, respectively, 11%, 11% and 10%, and Oceania's percentages are 1% in each year. Thus the growth in the global church, known to be in the Global South, has come as European Christianity has drastically reduced. In Africa, the three percentages are, respectively, 2%, 19% and 22%. In Asia they are 4%, 15% and 16%, and in Latin America 12%, 25% and 25%. These illustrate European decline mainly against African growth.



David's final challenge to us is to say that over 2 billion of the world's population, 29% of all inhabiting this planet, are unevangelised. What are we doing about it?

SOURCE: Article "Status of Global Mission 2012" by David Barrett, International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol 36, No 1, January 2012, Page 29.

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

Established 2009. UK subscriptions £18 per annum; overseas £30 per annum. Make cheque out to 'Peter Brierley', or contact for BACS details and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: peter@brierleyres.com

www.brierleyconsultancy.com

☎ 01732 369 303

ISSN 2040-0268



## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

### SNIPPETS

1) 12% of British adults are under 25, but only 4% of tea drinkers are under 25; 34% of adults are aged between 25 and 44, and they consume 46% of all the tea.

2) One child in every 150 in England in 2011 was in Local Authority care. Of these 66,000 children, three-quarters (74%) were in foster homes, and the rest in children's homes. One in 20, 5%, will be adopted, and of these 3,000 children, four-fifths (80%) were born outside marriage.

3) 35 of the Church of England's 43 Cathedrals have a Cathedral Friends' Association. These 35 Associations collectively have 45,000 members who gave on average £72 each in 2010.

4) Big Ben has moved! It is now 0.26" off the vertical – but it is estimated it will take 10,000 years before it looks like the leaning Tower of Pisa.

5) The average breakfast is eaten in just 3 minutes 15 seconds, usually standing up while getting ready for work.

6) Top leisure activities by United Reformed Church ministers – all just over a quarter each – reading, playing/watching sport and walking.

7) In 2000, 93% of UK homes had a landline telephone; in 2011 only 81% had. In 2011, 27% of adults owned a smart phone; half (47%) of teenagers owned one.

SOURCES: 1) Oakhouse Appetiser, February 2012, Page 2; 2) Adoption UK, a registered charity, web info accessed 26/2/12 and Adoptions by Age-Group, Office for National Statistics, 2010, Page 3; 3) Paper by Judith Mussett in Rural Theology, Vol 9, No 1, 2011, Page 17; 4) Saga magazine, December 2011; Page 64; 5) Report in the Daily Telegraph, 6th December 2011; 6) Paper by Jenny Ralph et al in Rural Theology, Vol 9, No 1, 2011, Page 55; 7) Christianity magazine, March 2012.

ISSN 2040-0268 | Number 20, April 2012

### CONTENTS

Christianity & University Experience	P1
Senior Leaders	P2
Local Ecumenical Partnerships	P2
Leisure and Gaming	P2
Irish Medical Dictionary	P3
Family Pressure	P3
Marital Status and Religion	P5
Bible Reading	P5
NEETS and EETS	P6
Global Christians	P6

## Christianity and the University Experience in Contemporary England

Dr Mathew Guest, Senior Lecturer in Theology and Religion, Durham University

The relationship between education and religious belief is often the subject of popular myth rather than academic research. Specifically, the assumption that higher education necessarily leads people to become less religious is as entrenched as the notion that western societies become more secular as one generation gives way to another.

There are good reasons for suggesting higher education is corrosive to religion – the apparent tension between religious belief and scientific knowledge, the requirement that students question their prior assumptions critically, the reputation that universities have as opportunities for escape from parental oversight and established obligations, the fact that they are populated by individuals who are, by virtue of their age, almost by definition in a process of identity transition, of moving away from the past and forging a new identity as adult life beckons. However, these supposed correlations are rarely examined against empirical evidence, at least not within the UK context (in large part because large scale research is a costly business and the study of religion is hardly prioritised within UK universities).

Since 2009 "Christianity and the University Experience in Contemporary England," a three year project funded by the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme, has sought to remedy this by examining orientations to religion – particularly Christianity – among undergraduates studying at universities across England. The project is being led by Dr Mathew Guest of Durham University, along with Dr Kristin Aune (University of Derby), Professor Rob Warner (University of Chester) and Dr Sonya Sharma (Durham University).

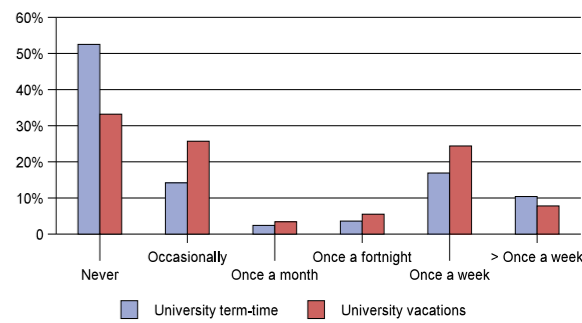
The chief aims of the project are to identify the religious beliefs and social values of Christian undergraduate students and explore how their Christian identities interact with the university



experience. As suggested above, universities are complex sites for the negotiation of identity during an important transitional stage in the lives of young people. As such, our understanding of the "university experience" incorporates not only educational but also social dimensions; our interest is not just in how the higher education learning process affects students' attitudes towards religion, but includes how the social experience of being at university fosters different orientations towards matters of faith and engenders particular forms of Christian identity.

We are now well into the final year of the project, engaged in analysis of a very large data set, including a national questionnaire survey, and around one hundred interviews with students and staff at five selected case study universities. The national survey of undergraduate students is based on a probability sample of 4,600 individuals studying at 14 universities across England, selected so as to represent a good range of institutions, from the ancient, elite Cambridge, to the inner-city diversity of Leeds and Sheffield; from the historically secular University College, London (dubbed the "godless place" when founded in the early 19th century), to the Anglican foundation universities at Chester and Canterbury Christ Church.

### Attendance at church services among self-identifying Christian undergraduates



Our survey results suggest that about a third of undergraduates view themselves as having "no religion," with the remaining majority affiliated to the major world faiths and a small proportion opting for a minority, esoteric or syncretistic orientation expressed in their own words. While difficult to pin down to a precise figure due to sampling complications, the largest cohort by some margin are the students self-identifying as Christian, a finding that echoes the official university statistics available. The practice of asking students to state their religion at the point of registration is only undertaken by a handful of universities, but based on the five willing to share their data with us, we find a mean average proportion of undergraduates self-identifying as Christian of 44%. While this is a very selective data set (roughly 6% of the English HE sector), the universities included are located in different areas of the country and span three of the categories of university used in the CUE research (and only one is a church foundation). They also cover all students in each institution, not a sample, and hence offer a complete picture for each. The mean average figure here is also matched by the 44% found by Paul Weller in his study of religion in UK higher education, undertaken around the same time as the CUE study, albeit using a non-probability sampling method.

continued on page 4