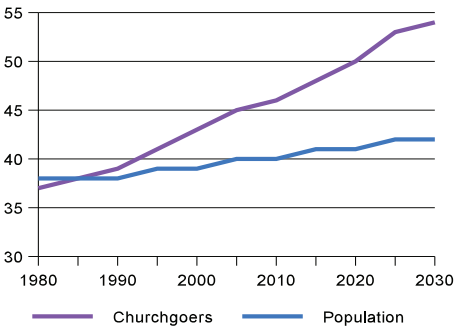


The Age of Churchgoers

What is the average age of someone going to church in Britain? In 2015 in England it is 48, whereas the average age of the population is 41. The difference between the two has been steadily increasing, as the graph shows. In 1980 when the church had many young people, the average age of a churchgoer was actually less than in the population, but by the time we get to 2030, the gap will be very considerable.

Average age of churchgoers and population, England, 1980-2025



The average ages of churchgoers also vary across the country. The maps show the variation in average age across England by county, with the same percentage range used for each colour for each of the four years 1989, 1998, 2005 and 2012. The yellow colour shows where the average age is 40 or under and the red where it is 50 or over.

Most of England is coloured yellow in 1989, but only Inner and Outer London, Bedfordshire (1998), Oxfordshire (2005) and the Channel Islands are so coloured later and in 2012 only Inner London and the Channel Islands. Red creeps into Cornwall in 1998, in several counties in 2005 and in a majority of counties by 2012.

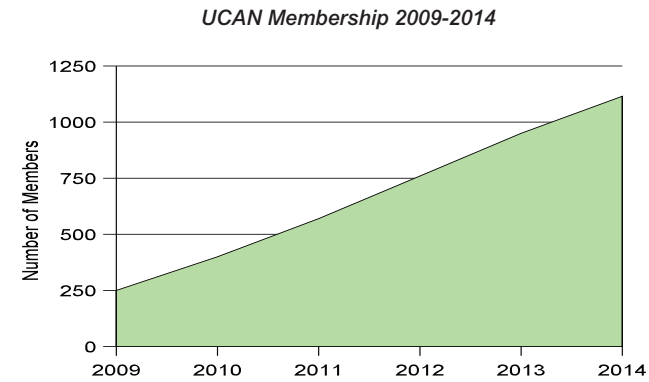
The figures are averages, so of course some areas are younger while others are older, but as the average age increases so this shows the paucity of youth on the one hand and the problems of decreasing energy levels of the elderly. Over the 23 years shown by these 4 maps, the average age of churchgoers (of all denominations) over the whole country increases by 10 years, from 38 to 48, a challenge to the church while there still is opportunity.

SOURCE: *Religious Trends* No 6, 2006/2007, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 2006, extrapolated for 2012.

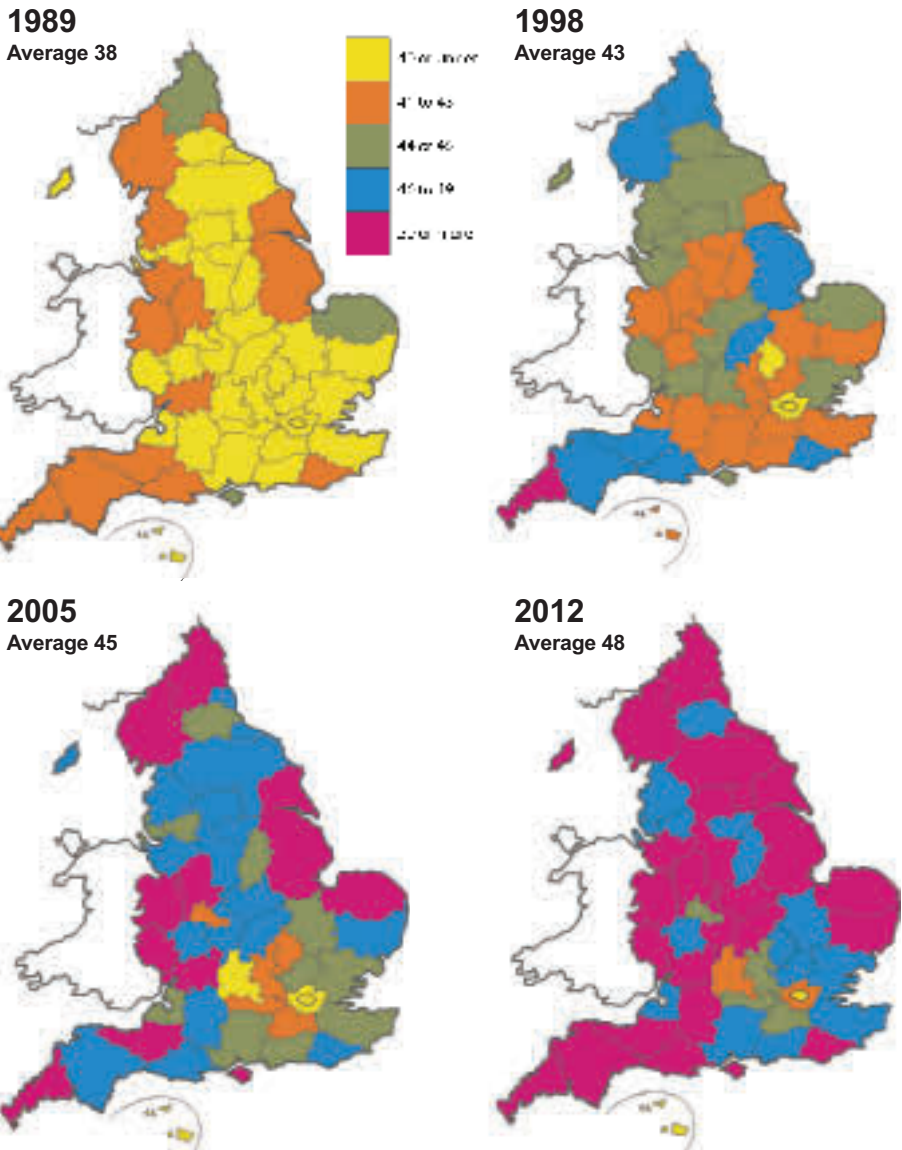
UCAN

The UK Church Administrator Network (UCAN) began in 2009, so that by the end of 2014 it had been functioning for 5 years, a reasonable time span in which to look at existing trends of membership. Founder John Truscott, church consultant and trainer, kindly supplied the data behind this brief article.

UCAN members stood at nearly 1,100 at the start of 2015, and, as the graph shows, membership has increased steadily since it began.



Average age of churchgoers by County



Five-sixths, 82%, of church administrators are female, if UCAN membership is a representative sample, and one-sixth, 18%, male – often the more senior managers. UCAN members come from many different denominations, but the majority are Anglican, perhaps because there are more Anglican administrators than in any other group. Likewise most, but not all, are evangelical, again probably because more evangelical churches are larger and growing than non-evangelical ones.

Any church administrator can become a member of UCAN, but the majority of members are in churches with an average Sunday attendance of 200 or more, including children. Of the 5,100 churches that size in Britain, a fifth, 21%, have UCAN membership. The majority of these churches are situated in a central, vertical belt in the middle of England, stretching from the south coast north through Oxford, Northampton and Leicester to Sheffield and Leeds. Greater London also has many administrators.

A few people have been church administrators for over 20 years, but the average length is 9 years, with half being in the job for under 5 years. Hence training is important and UCAN holds regular, and popular, conferences. Are church administrators here to stay? It would seem so, as churches grow larger, even while others close. Larger churches are increasingly adding more non-ordained staff to their leadership, with perhaps roughly one employee per 100 people attending, but these will include youth workers, and professionals with other responsibilities.

SOURCES: John Truscott, UCAN, www.john-truscott.uk/administrators.

Churches in Church Buildings

The number of churches in the UK in 2015 is about 51,400, a slowly increasing number as new churches are planted, albeit offset by those which have had to close. Some of the immigrant churches are started quite quickly, others take many months of planning, and a few, like a recent Anglican church built on a new housing estate in Peterborough, take many years to bring to fulfilment.

In 2005, the total number of churches in the UK was 49,500, so the net gain in churches over 10 years has been 190 per year, about 0.4% growth per annum, not very great but positive, in contrast to other communal centres such as the number of public houses which has been declining. The British Beer and Pub Association *Statistical Handbook* indicated there were 48,006 pubs in the UK in 2013, 5% fewer than the 50,666 churches given in *UK Church Statistics* No 2.

For statistical purposes, a “church” is defined as “a group of people meeting at least monthly for the purposes of worship which is open to the public.” It will therefore include Fresh Expressions, pub-churches, café churches, mission-minded churches, Churches Without Walls (in Scotland), and other groups of people meeting regularly for worship, even in an “unofficial” (that is, un-named) group. It includes school chapel services, the occasional hospital service, services in Armed Forces bases, and such like, but excludes prison services, and services held in private retreat houses (mostly Catholic).

How many of these are shared buildings, that is, a church of another denomination (usually), rents or borrows another church for a service? The 2012 London Church Census had a definitive answer to this question – 21%, because that very question was asked. The percentage was much higher in Inner London than Outer London, 26% to 16%. London by its very nature of huge numbers of immigrant churches is bound to be exceptional, so taking the more general answer of a total of 4,000 churches, that is, about 8% of the total, or just under half the London rate, is probably a reasonable guesstimate. Given the large number of rural churches, however, and assuming many of them will not be sharing, even 8% may be on the high side.

How many of these are actual buildings built as churches? That is more difficult to know since a number of regular gatherings are in schools, homes, public or village halls, and so on. Some of the Black Majority Churches are in buildings originally designed as warehouses but which they have made into churches. The numbers of Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian congregations meeting regularly in a non-church-built setting will probably be very small. While there will always be a few whose premises are being re-ordered, repaired or even re-built who temporarily gather for worship in a local college or town hall, these are discounted.

Most New Churches are different since their ethos is independence of ecclesial surroundings. A few Orthodox churches begin in the homes of their priests, and many of the new immigrant churches will not be in specifically built churches (yet). The Pentecostals, outside the long-established denominations like the Assemblies of God or Elim, will however be a complete guess. The type of location used has been researched by George Lings, of the Church Army, in his work on Fresh

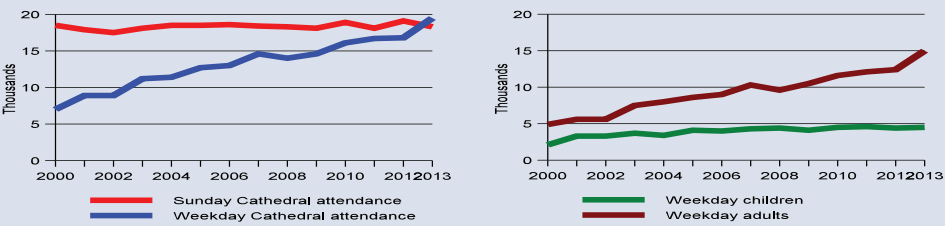
Cathedral Midweek More Popular Than Sunday

For the first time since records began in the year 2000, mid-week attendance in Anglican Cathedrals in 2013 was greater than Sunday attendance. In 2013, Sunday attendance across the nation's 42 Cathedrals dropped to 18,300 against 19,100 in 2012, a -4% drop. However, midweek services attracted 19,500 people in total in 2013 against 14,800 in 2012, an increase of almost a third, +31%.

Increasing Cathedral midweek attendance has been one of the success stories in the Church of England over the last few years as the first graph indicates. It has more or less been steadily increasing year on year.

The obvious question to ask is “Why?” The numbers exclude those coming for a major festival or a peak holiday period so they are not “special” in that sense. The second graph shows that the increase is primarily due to the number of adults attending midweek, not children, although these numbers did increase between 2000 and 2007, but have been fairly static since then. Numbers of adults and children attending on Sundays have remained almost constant over the entire period.

Midweek and Sunday Cathedral attendance, 2000-2013



Nor is the rising number of adults due to an increasing number of baptisms (often held on a Sunday) or marriages or thanksgivings, although the latter have increased slightly. Funerals also

Expressions, where he found 43% met in churches, 20% in church halls, and 37% in other places.

Adding estimates for each group together would suggest perhaps 5,000 regular congregations meet in places which were not built as a church, almost 10% of all Sunday worshipping congregations. With the 4,000 estimated renting congregations, that means that some 9,000 congregations, or 18%, one sixth, of all congregations, do not meet in a church building they own. The other five-sixths do so, something like a total of 42,000 in 2015 in the UK.

What is not definitively known is whether having an actual church building (in terms of tradition, a recognised centre in the community, etc.) helps church growth or hinders it (in terms of expense of maintenance, out-of-date appearance and facilities, etc.). The growth of Fresh Expressions (and the New Churches in the 1980s) might suggest not having a building is sometimes more fruitful. On one occasion an Ichthus church (one of the New Church streams) held a combined service for several of their churches. A huge amount of work was needed to get 800 chairs set out, a built-up platform high enough for everyone to see, etc. “Wouldn't it be easier to have your own building?” one of the organisers was asked. “No,” was the reply, “as the way we have it now means more people have to volunteer to help, and that strengthens their commitment.”

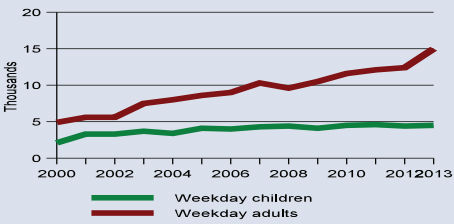
SOURCES: *UK Church Statistics*, No 2 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, 2014 Tables 1.1.1, 12.12 and Page 11.7; personal conversation; email Matthew Seward, National Churches Trust.

have remained about the same number each year. The numbers counted are those attending the normal weekly calendar of services.

While total weekday (or mid-week) attendance across churches in the Church of England as a whole has been fairly static at around the 180,000 mark for the last few years, and increasing slowly between 2003 and 2011 when it touched just over 190,000, it decreased in 2012 and again in 2013 to 160,000. This total is made up of adults and children, changes in both of which are important. Within the total, the number of adults has increased, and it is the decreasing number of children which has caused the drop. Adult mid-week increases have been from 109,000 in 2008 to 119,000 in 2013, a +9% increase. The Cathedral increase is therefore not totally exceptional.

The huge decrease in the number of children mid-week in Anglican churches from 74,000 in 2012 to 41,000 in 2013 is primarily due to a redefinition by the Research and Statistics Department, as children in school services are now excluded from the count. Since the consequential decline in child numbers is -45%, or almost a half, this suggests that school services formed a substantial proportion of child attendance in previous years.

Midweek and Sunday Cathedral attendance, 2000-2013



In London mid-week church attendance is quite common. Three-fifths (63%) of London churches had mid-week worship activities in 2012, especially Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, some of which were lunch-time services. The average attendance at these services was virtually twice those in similar services in England generally when measured in 2005 (55 to 29 people). In addition, half (45%) of the London churches had some kind of mid-week youth ministry, almost double the national percentage of 27%, and a quarter (23%) also had other mid-week activities.

The overall impact of such mid-week attendance in London was that some 308,000 people came to London churches mid-week. The 2012 London Church Census found that of these almost two-fifths (38%) came only mid-week, boosting total weekly attendance (so including Sundays) to 840,000 people, or 10% of London's population. Sunday attendance was 720,000.

The Cathedral adult change is quite striking. In 2008, 15,900 adults came to Cathedral services on a Sunday on average, and 9,600 adults came mid-week, a difference of 6,300. That difference has steadily decreased since 2008. In 2013 15,900 adults went to a Cathedral on a Sunday, the same as in 2008, but 15,000 adults came midweek, a difference of only 900.

Why then the surge in Cathedral midweek attendance? The reason is not readily apparent, but is surely helped by various ancillary facilities such as choral performances, guided tours, book/gift shops, café / tea rooms, open accessibility and perhaps even shorter, more readily understood liturgy!

The increase in visitor numbers is also quite substantial for some Cathedrals, some of these perhaps staying for a service.

SOURCES: *Cathedral Statistics* 2013, Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops' Council, 2014; *Capital Growth*, Peter Brierley, ADBC Publishers, 2013.

SNOWFLAKES

Key Bible passages. Which Bible chapters or verses are most searched for? The US organisation BibleGateway.com did a survey and the following were the top passages, showing a great degree of uniformity:

India	USA	Indonesia	Brazil
Psalms 23	Psalms 23	Genesis 1	Genesis 1
Genesis 1	1 Cor 13	John 3:16	Psalms 23
John 3:16	Genesis 1	1 Cor 13	1 Cor 13

SOURCE: *Answers in Genesis*, Oct-Dec, 2014, Page 13.

Transmission of faith. The Population Census asked for the religion of everyone in every household. Of the Christian households with at least one dependent child, 95% of their children were entered as Christian. But in Jewish households the percentage was 100%, in Hindu and Sikh 99%, in Muslim 98% and in Buddhist 97%. In other words, Christian households had somewhat fewer of their dependent children following their faith than those in any other religion!

SOURCE: Office for National Statistics, *Population Census Table LC2123EW*, released 19th October 2014.

Digital Growth. In 2006, 43% of 16 to 24-year olds in the UK accessed the internet using their mobile phone; in 2014 double that, 87%, did so. In 2012, a fifth, 19%, of 3 to 5-year olds could operate a mobile phone using an app; in 2014 three times that percentage, 57%, could do so. The speed of change is frightening and hugely challenging to the whole of society as well as the church.

SOURCE: Office for National Statistics, quoted in *The Bookseller*, 31st October, 2014, Page 19.

Celebrating Lent. In 2014, over two-thirds of Americans, 72%, were aware of Lent and a sixth, 17%, were planning to “fast” during it (63% of Catholics and 16% of Protestants). Most, 88%, reckoned on fasting from food of some kind, but a third, 31%, were also going to fast from technology (30% Catholics but 48% Protestants, 43% men and 23% women).

SOURCE: www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality, received 5th March 2014.



Bible Sales. Which translations sold best in the UK in 2014? The output of two companies (Eden and CLC) was given in the most recent issue of *Together* along with a Zondervan guide to language level (LL), where the lower the score the better. The top results were:

- 1) New International Version (NIV), average 25%, LL 7.8
- 2) New Living Translation (NLT), average 22%, LL 6.3
- 3) King James Version (KJV), average 10%, LL 12
- 4) Good News Bible (GNB), average 8%, LL 6.0
- 5) New King James Version (NKJV), average 8%, LL 9.0
- 6) English Standard Version (ESV), average 7%, LL 8.0
- 7) New Century Version (NCV), average 7%, LL 5.6

All the other versions, of which there are very many, make up the remaining 13%. The version with the lowest LL was the New International Reader's Version (NirV) at 2.9, followed by the International Children's Bible (ICV) at 3.9, and The Message (MSG) at 4.8. Should churches try to relate the language level of the version used to the approximate level of understanding of most of their congregation?

SOURCE: *Together*, Nov-Dec 2014, Pages 13 and 28.

Insight Teams. Penguin Books recently appointed someone as their “Director of Insight”, a position which is being copied in many fields other than just book publishing. Some people will gather around them a group which might be called an “Insight Team”. The Insight Thought Leader at the capability consultancy firm Brand Learning undertook research on the key skills such teams require to be effective. They were:

- 1) **Scientists**, who work with the latest techniques and sources to collect knowledge.
- 2) **Strategists**, who shape strategies focussed on the customer experience.
- 3) **Story builders**, who create stories to engage internal and external customers.
- 4) **Socialisers**, who spread the stories and evolve them, as customers engage and results are measured.

In this list, there is no suggestion of better analysis of data, which is interesting, but the researchers feel that the next step is to blend these various skills into key individuals. They would argue, however, that the teams, whatever their size, need to have all four competencies, something true whatever the type of business.

SOURCE: *Impact*, Issue 7, October 2014, Page 59.

Continued from page 1

informal in the worship. The growth since 2010 has been in the continuing planting of new churches.

The growth of the new church planting movement has been offset by the decline in the number of Brethren Assemblies (down from 2,200 in 1980 to 1,600 in 2015) and the Congregational Churches (down from 1,200 in 1980 to 800 in 2015). The FIEC has seen a small growth in its church numbers, from 420 in 1980 to 520 in 2015.

Overall Independent growth (which we cannot break down into the various sub-groups) has been especially in the Yorkshires, East and West Midlands, East Anglia and Greater London, a rather different experience (apart from Greater London) from some of the other denominational groups such as the Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists and United Reformed Church, all of which have seen many closures in these areas.

So what?

All this says that Independent church life is very much alive and kicking! In recent years there has been much church planting with a consequent growth of membership. That growth has come more from the smaller, one-off independent fellowships rather than the larger Brethren or Congregational groupings, although the FIEC has seen growth in the churches constituting it. However, the Brethren are also growing, if slowly, while the Congregational Churches, especially in Wales, continue to struggle. Smaller, often more local, fellowships are attractive to many people today, and add to the growing parts of the church, along with Pentecostal and Immigrant churches, even if overall numbers continue to decline, largely because of the big denominations being strong in rural areas where numbers are especially hard to maintain.

SOURCES: Past issues of *Religious Trends*, Christian Research, Eltham, especially Numbers 2.3, 5 and 7, *UK Church Statistics* No 2, 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, 2014.



REFLECTION

Can a child be trained to take the initiative or is this something that is inherited through their parental genes? Perhaps both. What, anyway, is “initiative”? An ability to stand outside the immediate (sometimes critical or even crisis) situation, assess future repercussions, and then to take specific if unusual action.

Initially we are not even told her name, and the names of her parents are only found in an obscure verse tucked away in a list of Levites (Numbers 26:59) as Jochebed and Amram. Nor the fact that she already had a brother. It was the third child in the family who was born under strict new government rules: “drown all newly born male babies”. But Amram saw that he-who-was-to-become Moses, probably called by another name initially, was a “fine child”, and managed to hide him for his first three suckling months.

Eventually the risk of discovery becomes too great and the parents embark on a God-inspired initiative other parents seem not to have risked – making a waterproof basket, putting the baby inside, with a cover to keep out the sun, and floating it on the river Nile near where royalty used to bathe. The king’s daughter was probably in her teens when she came to wash that day, and since teenage marriage was common, the king Pharaoh himself might have been only in his 30s. This Pharaoh, perhaps Rameses II, lived a long time (Exod 2:23). Pharaoh’s daughter sees the basket, and has it opened to reveal a speck of crying humanity who, by God’s grace, touches her heart. “A Hebrew child,” she says.

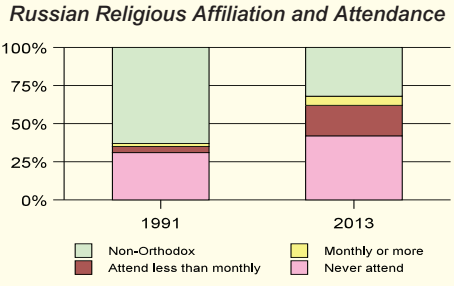
The baby’s sister, Miriam, perhaps 8 years old is standing nearby and, unafraid, takes the initiative, approaching Pharaoh’s daughter directly and asking a question, the answer to which will ensure the baby’s survival – “Shall I get a nurse for you?” Receiving an affirmative reply, Miriam goes straight to her mother Amram, who is presented to Pharaoh’s daughter and given an immediate job – with a salary! She is now paid to do publicly what hitherto she had done secretly!

Initiative clearly ran in this family. Many years later Miriam was known as a prophetess (Exod 15:20), someone who acts on the coming future she perceives. Initiative can also be completely misplaced or even involve spiritual disobedience as Miriam’s brother Aaron experienced when he asked for all the gold ear-rings to make a calf as an object of worship (Exod 35:2,4). Moses himself acted with initiative from time to time: his curiosity was kindled when he saw a bush perpetually on fire (Exod 3:3), when he commanded water to come out of a rock (Num 20:11), and when he asked to see the Lord in person (Exod 33:18), among many other examples.

Biblical initiative involves a willingness to take action, perhaps unexpected action, to respond to a need, to weigh up the future, or to alleviate the immediate situation. Perhaps Miriam was inspired by her godly parents. That God was in the situation surrounding the birth of Moses is certain, but He often uses people’s innate characteristics which he has implanted. Is more (radical) initiative needed today to alleviate the situation in many of our churches? Are not many of the church plants but such initiatives being taken? Initiative often involves an element of risk – to our reputation, to our finances, to our stability, even perhaps to our health or our safety. Initiative by itself, though, is not enough – it needs to be God-prompted, within His will. A much deeper question is how we can be alert to such God-prompted initiatives.

Russian Orthodox

When Soviet Russia collapsed, membership of the Orthodox Church was some 37% of the population. Since 1991, however, the membership has grown, in fact almost doubled, to some 68% in 2013. “The Russian Orthodox Church appears to be in agreement with a majority of Russian people, who are supporting Putin,” said the former BBC Russian Service correspondent, Konstantin von Eggert at a recent conference.



While commitment in terms of attendance at services is relatively low, it has increased; only 2% of the population attended at least once a month in 1991, and some 6% were doing so in 2013, 22 years later (the thin yellow bar in the chart). The largest area of growth, however, was those who attended occasionally, at least once a year but not as frequently as once a month. These had gone up from 4% in 1991 to 20% of the population in 2013 (the brown bar in the chart). Those who never attend (the pink parts of each column) have increased from 31% in 1991 to 42% in 2013, showing that those outside Orthodoxy was 63% in 1991 and only 32%, half as much, in 2013 (the green part of the chart).

In other words while commitment has grown slightly, a kind of overt spirituality seen in an occasional church visit has grown much more. The same may be true elsewhere also. While attendance has decreased in Britain, has a more fuzzy spirituality developed instead?

SOURCE: Religion Watch, December 2014, now web-based, www.religionwatch.com.

Church Growth

In the first issue of Christianity for 2015, Justin Brierley (no relation) gives 10 ways in which churches may grow, summarising much previously known research. None of them is earth shattering – there is no single or simple way to grow a church – but listing proven tried methods is sometimes helpful:

- 1) Make Sunday Special
- 2) Add an extra service (and maybe even an extra venue)
- 3) Work on your welcome
- 4) Encourage belonging and believing
- 5) Invest in young people (including their leadership)
- 6) Engage your community
- 7) Market yourself
- 8) Don't spread yourself too thin
- 9) Run an evangelistic course (and church)
- 10) Pray

Readers might wish to access the full article, or reply with examples of how these actions had proven helpful, or to suggest further specifics.

SOURCE: Christianity Premier, Jan 2015, Justin Brierley, Pages 30-37.

2015

As always when a year ends, predictions are made for the year ahead. In this respect, 2014 was no different from usual. Clifford Hill, of Issachar Ministries UK, in a detailed summary of recent changes simply said, “The outlook for 2015 is bleak,” and many would concur with this. However, should God in His grace, allow this planet another year to fulfil His purposes, certain trends and events are likely to occur.

The Rt Rev Libby Lane will DV become the first woman Bishop, Bishop of Stockport, on 26th January. On average, one new church will be started every day in some denomination somewhere in England during 2015, but, sadly for every 10 started 11 will close so that we end up with perhaps 40 fewer churches in the land by 2016. Church attendance will probably drop a further 1% to a grand total of about 2.9 million in England, and the average age of attenders increase to 48, up from 45 in 2005. Attendance will decline faster elsewhere (Wales, Scotland and N Ireland) – at about double this rate.

The *Economist* usually publishes a book, *The World in 2015*, for the year ahead in December the year before and it did so again in 2014. This book lists many events expected to happen in 2015:

- 2015 sees the 10th anniversary of the first YouTube video, the 25th of German re-unification, the 50th of the Premiere of *The Sound of Music*, the 50th of the death of Sir Winston Churchill, the 75th of the first McDonald’s, the 150th of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, the 175th of the Penny Black stamp, the 200th of the eruption of the Mt Tambora volcano in Indonesia, the 250th of Lloyd’s, the 800th of the signing of Magna Carta, etc. etc.
- Ireland begins using postcodes (called Eircodes)
- Kentucky Fried Chicken opens its first outlet in Myanmar (and many other economic predictions)
- The Tangier-Casablanca high-speed rail line is completed, the first of its sort in Africa
- The biggest global interfaith meeting, the Parliament of the World’s Religions, convenes in Salt Lake City (precursor of the foreseen one world religion of the end times?)
- The Cricket World Cup, the 15s Rugby World Cup and the Women’s Football World Cup all take place.
- The UN makes 2015 the International Year of Light (but not the Light of the World)
- China overtakes the US in GDP purchasing-power parity
- Global sales of tablets and hybrids exceed sales of desktops and laptops
- There are more mobile subscriptions than people in the world!
- Windows 10 re-instates the much-missed Start menu that disappeared with Windows 8
- The Swiss will attempt to fly around the world in a sun-powered-only aeroplane.
- NASA’s spacecraft *New Horizons*, launched in 2006, eventually flies past Pluto, what was the outermost planet until re-categorised in 2006
- Driverless cars will be legal on some roads in Britain
- A new, official novel of James Bond is published

... and dozens of other such facts and theories, trivia and otherwise, which will make 2015 as unique as every other year, and a year in which Christians need to continue to watch for His coming, pray for His purposes and work for His Kingdom.

SOURCES: Article in Issachar’s Winter 2014 Newsletter, *The World in 2015*, Time magazine, 5th January 2015, Page 96.

Where do Twenties go to Church?

In 2015 in England there are about 180,000 people in their twenties attending Sunday church services, about 6% of all attenders, but only about 2.5% of all in that age-group (the lowest percentage of all the decadal groups). The London Church Census showed that about 80,000 of these go to church in London (44%), a huge concentration. A seventh, 14%, of Inner London’s churchgoers are in this age-group and 9% of Outer London’s, both well above the 6% norm. Some London Boroughs attract an especially high percentage of this age-group – Camden, City of London, City of Westminster, Islington and Tower Hamlets are the top five, as the map shows, which are Boroughs where many of the larger churches are located, Anglican and others.



London does not attract anything like that high percentage of worshippers in any other age-group. It is partly because 18% of London’s population are in their 20s (against 11% in Britain as a whole), but also because London has many immigrants, many of whom are in this age-group.

Churchgoers aged 20-29, by geographical area, 2005 and 2015

Geographical area	Churchgoers in their 20s		Total churches		Aver churchgoers in 20s per church	
	2005	2015	2005	2015	2005	2015
London	64,800 (28%)	80,000 (44%)	4,100	4,800	16	17
28 Local Authorities each with >1000	46,800 (20%)	36,000 (20%)	4,600	4,900	10	7
Rest of England	119,000 (52%)	64,000 (36%)	28,800	30,300	4	2
TOTAL	230,600 (100%)	180,000 (100%)	37,500	40,000	6	5

Outside of London’s 33 Boroughs there are 313 other Local Authorities or Unitary Authorities in England. Based on the 2005 English Church Census, in only 28 of these are there more than 1,000 people in their 20s attending church across the whole Authority. Total attendance in these 28 Authorities was 47,000 people, or 20% of the then total of churchgoing twenties; it is likely to be a similar percentage still in 2015. The heaviest concentrations (over 2,000) were in Nottingham (3,200), Leeds (3,100), Liverpool (3,000), Oxford

(2,800), Manchester (2,500), Bristol (2,200), Sheffield (2,200) and Cambridge (2,100), all university cities and all with some larger churches (attendance 400+).

The total of 44% and 20% is 64%, which leaves the remaining 36% or about 64,000 churchgoing folk in their 20s in 2015 scattered across the rest of England. It is of course true that not all those in their 20s will go to “student-churches” but a majority will do so (as young people tend to follow the crowd), so while not all of this 64% of the 20s will be in larger churches, probably at least 50% will be. These numbers and the remaining 36% of the 20s are shown in the Table below.

While the average figures given in the last column don’t really mean very much of themselves (since in practice the 20s will go to the larger churches), this simple Table shows the disparity between London, other large cities and the rest of the country. The paucity reflected in the line above the total is hugely significant.

In these 10 years in the Table (2005 to 2015), churchgoing twenties have increased significantly in London, reduced in the 28 “big” Authorities and almost halved in the rest of England, largely because so many in their 20s have dropped out of church altogether. The number of churches has increased in all three sectors but the average number per church has reduced hugely in “rest of England”. If you should have a 20-year old in your congregation you are very fortunate! A keen Christian musician in the mid-1990s, then in his 20s, was worshipping in Lincoln Baptist Church, and said to his father on the phone one day, “Dad, I’m the only one here in my 20s”.

What this is saying is that churchgoers in their 20s tend to be concentrated in a very small number of cities, all of which are known to have good, large student churches. Many of the 50% not thus involved will be going to other fairly large churches in other towns and cities almost certainly where there are others there in the same age-group with whom they can make friends. A quarter, 25%, of all churchgoing twenties in England were concentrated into Inner London in 2012!

SOURCES: UK Church Statistics, No 2 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, 2014 Table 12.10; Religious Trends No 6, Christian Research, 2006; personal conversation.

Geographical area	Churchgoers in their 20s		Total churches		Aver churchgoers in 20s per church	
	2005	2015	2005	2015	2005	2015
London	64,800 (28%)	80,000 (44%)	4,100	4,800	16	17
28 Local Authorities each with >1000	46,800 (20%)	36,000 (20%)	4,600	4,900	10	7
Rest of England	119,000 (52%)	64,000 (36%)	28,800	30,300	4	2
TOTAL	230,600 (100%)	180,000 (100%)	37,500	40,000	6	5

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These may be helpful

Books and reports received

Testing Fresh Expressions, by John Walker, Ashgate, August 2014, £60. Walker confirms earlier research that Fresh Expressions congregations do not necessarily do better than established churches in attracting the unchurched, but they are more effective in drawing and involving children in church life. ISBN 978-1-4724-1184-6

Are we good neighbours? Based on a sample of 1,500 evangelicals in the “21st Century Evangelicals” series, Evangelical Alliance, 2014.

Effects of gender based violence among the women in social-economic development, A case study in Kisumu County, Kenya, by Kevin Ndede, African Institute of Research and Development Studies, October 2014.

A study on the causes of increased rate of unemployment among the youths in Kenya, A case study in Kisumu County, Kenya, by Jacob Olose, African Institute of Research and Development Studies, October 2014.

Keeping the Spiritual Home Fires Burning: Religious Belonging Britain during the First World War, Clive Field, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, in *War and Society*, Vol 33, No 4, October 2014 University of New South Wales, 2014. A detailed look at churchgoing and church membership 1914-1918.

The Good Childhood Report, 2014, The Children’s Society. The annual report about how children in the UK feel about their lives.

My Story with Governance, Tom Houston, Regnum, 2015.

AMERICANS IN 2014

The Barna Group conducts many surveys each year, and in December it listed its top findings of significance in 2014. The first five were:

- 1) A fifth, 19%, said the Bible is “just another book”, the same as the percentage who read it at least 4 times a week.
- 2) Young adults questioned whether it was worth studying for a degree; only two-fifths, 42%, said they needed a degree for the job they were doing.
- 3) Global poverty has declined from 52% in 1982 to 21% in 2012, according to the World Bank, but five-sixths, 84%, of Americans did not know this, and two-thirds, 67%, thought global poverty was increasing.
- 4) Those in their twenties want a church “to feel like a church”. By this they meant the church had to have a community (78%), a sanctuary (77%), was classic not trendy (67%), was quiet (67%), was casual (64%) and was modern (60%).
- 5) Three-fifths, 63%, of those expressing an opinion, had a favourable view of Pope Francis – he was seen as compassionate, honest and intelligent. Virtually all Catholics, 98%, were in favour, but also half (45%) of Protestants.

SOURCE: www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality, received 1st January 2015.

Humour

Sayings from Steven Wright, the comic scientist:

- 1) I’d kill for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 2) Half the people you know are below average.
- 3) OK, so what’s the speed of dark?
- 4) How do you tell when you’re out of invisible ink?
- 5) When everything is coming your way, you’re in the wrong lane.
- 6) I intend to live for ever – so far, so good.
- 7) If Barbie is so popular, why do you have to buy her friends?
- 8) My mechanic told me, “I couldn’t repair your brakes, so I made your horn louder.”
- 9) If at first you don’t succeed, skydiving is not for you.
- 10) If your car could travel at the speed of light, would your headlights work?



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) Under 1% of the general UK population are problem gamblers and only 2% are at medium risk, but 26% of prisoners said “gambling had caused problems for their families.”

2) There are 1,500 gas lamps left in London, lit by 5 lamplighters every night, including some in Buckingham Palace and Kensington Avenue Gardens.

3) 48% of 11-year olds in Britain have never been on public transport, even with an adult.

4) 50% of all Africans who make their way into Europe are already church members.

5) Queen Elizabeth II becomes England’s longest-serving monarch on September 11th 2015, passing her great-great grandmother, Queen Victoria.

6) Between 2015 and 2060 the world’s population is expected to increase from 7.2 billion to 9.5 billion. Of this increase, 220 million will be under 20, 600 million between 20 and 39, 400 million will be aged 40 to 59, and 1,100 million (almost half the total increase) will be over 60 (60 to 79).

7) At the start of 2015, the population of Israel was 8.3 million, 75% Jewish, 21% Arab and 4% others including Christians. The population grew 2% during 2014, from 180,000 babies born and 23,000 immigrants.

SOURCES: 1) Research by Prof Corinna May-Chanal, University of Lancaster, in *Society Now*, Autumn 2014, Page 8; 2) and 3) *The Week*, 6th December 2014, Pages 56 and 25; 4) *Operation World*, quoted in *Perspectives*, Partnership, No 53, Autumn 2014; 5 & 6) *The World in 2015*, The Economist, Dec 2014, Pages 97 and 98; 7) *The Carmel Alert*, New Zealand, 2nd January 2015, quoting Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics.

INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

There are nearly 300 denominations in the UK which, for simplicity, are divided into 10 major groups such as Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and so on. One of these major groups of 10 is the Independent Group of churches which has some 29 smaller denominations within that overall heading.

Independent Churches are largely those which are autonomous, self-governing, self-financing fellowships responsible for their own leadership and succession planning. Some belong to specific external groups such as the Evangelical Alliance, while others group themselves together into a particular organisation which collectively can provide legal, leadership, theological or other expertise when required. Those which belong to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC), for example, are one such group – effectively a denomination using John Adair’s definition of such: “A Christian organisation uniting a number of local congregations”. The various groups of the Christian Brethren are another such denomination (in fact, several denominations).

The largest group within the Independent sector is the Christian Brethren, collectively 88,000 members or 36% of the whole in 2015, followed by the FIEC (in total 42,000 members or 17% of the total), followed in turn by the various Congregational churches (collectively 36,000 or 15% of the total). The other third, 32%, of Independent Churches is made up of a number of small denominations (the Fellowship of Churches of Christ at 1.3% being the biggest) as well as a very large number of single stand-alone (independent) churches, collectively estimated at 26% of the overall total.

In 2015, there were just over 4,000 Independent Churches (or units) in the UK, some 8% of the UK total number of churches. Total membership was 243,000 or 4.5% of the total UK membership showing that Independent Churches on average are much smaller than others – 60 people each against 108 for all the others (87 if the Catholics who have many very large churches are excluded). Of these 4,064 churches, two-thirds, 67%, were located in England, 15% in Wales (the Union of Welsh Independents being two-thirds of these), 12% in Scotland and 6% in N Ireland.

Not all the Independent Churches have ordained leadership, the Christian Brethren being the main example, although some of their Assemblies have Full-Time Workers who act in effect in a very similar way. In total there were 2,300 ministers of Independent Churches in 2015 (which would include the Full-Time Workers), some 6% of the UK total number of ministers (38,700). Just 5% of the Independent ministers were female against 21% in the UK total as a whole, indicating a key theological difference between most Independent Churches and others.

Membership

Independent membership has been estimated, noted and published since 1970, but with the formation of the United

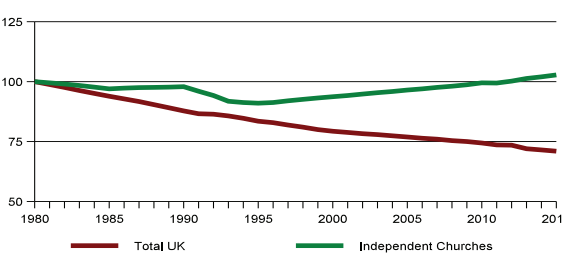
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Reformed Church in 1972 which a large proportion of the then Congregational Federation joined, with some subsequent turbulence in numbers, it is better to take membership counts from 1980 onwards. The percentage change in the 1980 total of 237,000 members is shown in the graph, along with the percentage change in total UK membership which stood at 7.6 million in 1980.

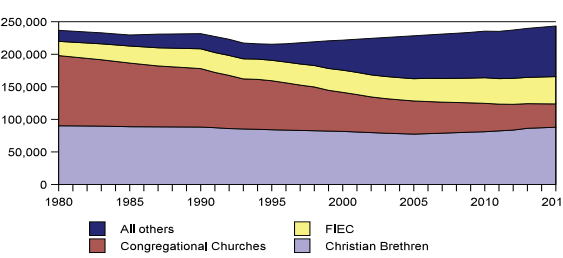
Figure 1: Change in UK and Independent Membership, 1980 to 2015



By 2015, 35 years later, Independent membership had declined slowly in the years 1980 to 1995 (especially in the early 1990s, largely because of the then Congregational Union of Scotland whose membership halved in this period), but since then has increased gradually until, in 2015, it just exceeds the number in 1980, at 243,000. The overall UK total membership, however, has steadily declined over the 35 years since 1980.

The membership of the three largest components of the Independent church group, the Christian Brethren, the Congregational Churches and the FIEC, the first two of which are composite groups themselves, and all the others are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Membership of the Independent Churches, UK, 1980 to 2015



This shows the constituent parts of “Independent Churches” which collectively have grown, just, between 1980 and 2015. The Christian Brethren have largely maintained their overall numbers, declining slightly in the early 21st century, but increasing since 2005 (up 14% between 2005 and 2015). The Congregational Churches as a group have seriously declined in this period, from being 108,000 in total in 1980 to a third of that, 36,000, in 2015 (and dropping a third, -30%, between 2005 and 2015). The FIEC has grown in this period as a proportion of the whole, virtually doubling from 22,000 in 1980 to 42,000 in 2015 (and increasing by almost a quarter, +23%, between 2005 and 2015).

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