

# RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES

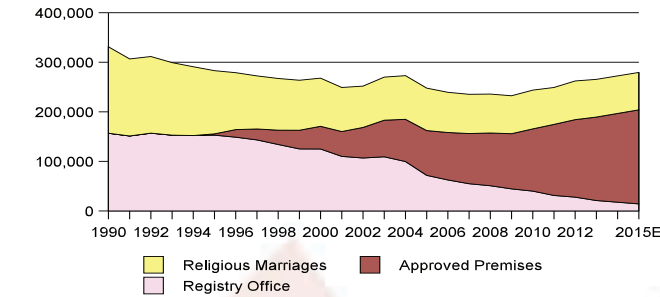
By the law of the land, marriages can only take place in a registered building. Most churches are registered in this way, as are all Registry Offices. Since the Marriage Act of 1994 a third option has become available, the so-called “Approved Premises” which may be anywhere approved by the local Registrar but usually are in particularly attractive pubs, or statley homes or National Trust properties often with beautiful views and with drink, dining and other facilities being conveniently located nearby. Weddings in Approved Premises still have to follow the rules of civil ceremonies.

Sometimes “Approved Premises” can be quite bizarre – such as exchanging your vows at the deep end of a swimming pool by microphone somehow with all the guests standing round the edges of the pool, as one couple did. Or the couple keen on aviation who each stood on the wings of a monoplane, with the clergyman on a further plane flying above the field where the service was relayed to the guests below.

The actual number of marriages has been recorded by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and its forebears since registration began in 1837, and they have always noted whether the service was held in a church (deemed a “Religious Marriage”), today modified to include marriages in synagogues, temples, mosques, etc. although many of the latter are in fact civil ceremonies followed by a religious ceremony. For the first 144 years since 1837, the number of Religious Marriages exceeded the number of Registry Office marriages, but in 1981 the proportions were equal, and since 1993 Registry Office numbers have exceeded Religious Marriages.

However, Approved Premises have proved extraordinarily popular and their numbers have grown rapidly over the last 20 years, as the graph shows. The latest official figures show that more than three in five marriages (63%) were in Approved Premises. Ever since 2005 there have again been more Religious Marriages than Registry Office ones (ignoring the Approved Premises).

Location of Marriages, England and Wales, 1990-2015E



The ONS records the denomination in which the religious ceremony is held. Over the last 5 years, the Anglicans have averaged 74% of the Religious Marriages, the Roman Catholics 11%, what they term “Non-conformist” (Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists and URC) 8%, 4% other Christian and 3% other religions.

## Reaching the “Tribes”

Tribes have been around since the start of mankind, and there are plenty in the book of Genesis! They continue today throughout the world, some very specific like the Luo tribe in Kenya, or others much more subtle in western societal terms, especially used by teenagers, like “skinheads” (in the 1970s) or “bimbos” (in the 1990s but still used). There are also many “tribal” groups within the church associated with different aspects of theological conviction.

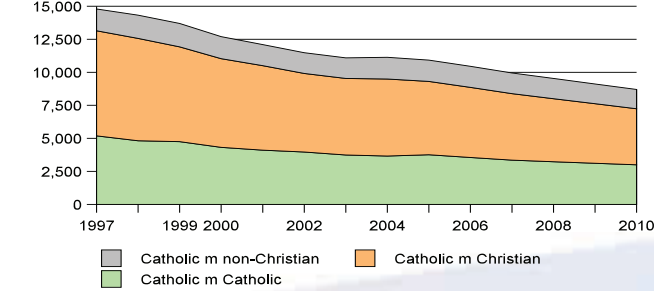
For today's youth worker, understanding these youth subcultures may go some way towards coming alongside these young adults. To generalise all these individuals as “youth” is to under-estimate the insights that might be gained from observing which teen tribe they identify with.

An interesting piece of research from Oxford and Bristol Universities, recently reported in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, had taken children born in the 1990s and regularly interviewed them from 7 years old

Some denominations record their own marriage statistics, but the Roman Catholics go further. They are concerned about the upbringing of any children resulting from the marriage, so they ask if both parties to the marriage are Catholic. For the past 15 years, that percentage has consistently been two-thirds, 66%, which have answered NO. The percentage has not varied by more than one point all that time. They go further and ask if the non-Catholic partner has been “baptised”, which Roman Catholic priests explain as being baptised in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So Anglicans christened as babies would be counted as baptised, just as a Baptist baptised as an adult by immersion. In other words, they are wanting to know if the non-Catholic party, if not a Catholic, is at least a Christian (as defined in this way).

This percentage, unlike the other, has been slowly declining, from 83% in 1997 to 74% in 2010, later figures not being available yet. But these percentages give a fascinating insight into Roman Catholic marriages and, almost certainly, to other religious marriages as well. The trend is shown in the chart.

Number of Catholic marriages when one partner is Catholic by religion of other partner



This second chart shows some interesting trends:

- The number of Roman Catholic marriages is decreasing overall (at an average rate of -4% per year)
- The number of Catholics marrying Catholics is also declining (at the same rate, -4% per year)
- The number of Catholics marrying Christians in other denominations has declined slightly faster (at an average rate of -5%), that is, fewer are doing so now
- However, the number of Catholics marrying someone who isn't a Christian has declined much less (at an average rate of just -1%). They were 11% of the total in 1997, but 17% in 2010.

What this suggests is that while it is true that the overall number of Religious Marriages is declining, the Catholic measurement would suggest that mixed marriages are becoming more common (that is, one party Christian and one party not), which inevitably means that the issue of transmission of the faith as children grow up will become more difficult.

SOURCES: *Digest of Statistics of the Catholic Community of England and Wales*, 1958 to 2005, Pastoral Research Centre, Taunton, Somerset, edited by Anthony Spencer, Russell-Spencer Ltd, 2007; *UK Church Statistics* No 2, 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, 2014.

Bimbos – Derogatory slang term for an attractive but unintelligent female (less than 10% depressed)

Another like tribal word is “Emo” which has been associated with a stereotype that includes being particularly emotional, sensitive, shy, introverted, or angst-ridden. It has also been associated with stereotypes like depression, self-harm, and suicide, but was not a term used in this research.

Others, perhaps more in the north of England, would use the term “Geeks” for the intellectuals, but again these researchers did not do so. There are in fact many other terms that could have been included but for whatever reason were not.

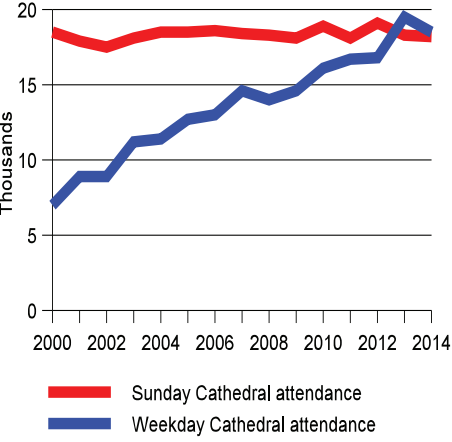
What might be the best ways for those in the church to get alongside and make friends of young people in these different subcultures? Which “tribes” might the neighbouring area to your church have and how are you reaching them?

SOURCES: Article in *The Daily Telegraph* 28th August 2015, Wikipedia, and personal conversations; [www.urbandictionary.com/define.php](http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php)

## Something about Midweek

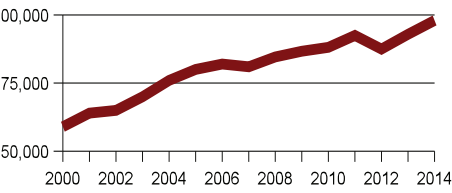
There continues to be growth in the number of people coming to worship during the week. The latest Cathedral attendance figures show that in 2014, while the overall total of worshippers is down on 2013, midweek was still slightly higher than Sunday attendance (18,500 to 18,200). The first graph shows that midweek Cathedral attendance has been continuing to grow ever since weekday figures first began to be collected in 2000, and in the last two years have exceeded Sunday numbers. This is an average annual growth of +7%, a significant percentage (2000 to 2014).

Church of England Cathedral Attendance



A similar pattern is happening in ordinary church attendance in the Church of England although the rate of growth is much slower, +2%, but the numbers are far larger and the 2014 figure is estimated in the second graph. Midweek church attendance is about a quarter, 23%, of Sunday attendance, but whereas Sunday attendance has declined on average -1.7% per year since 2000, midweek attendance has been growing.

Church of England Church Attendance midweek



The London Church Census also found midweek attendance was substantial in 2012—three-fifths, 63%, of churches having midweek services, and considerably more than the percentage of churches nationally having such (42% across all denominations in 2005). Overall numbers were also 23% of Sunday attendance, but again a growing percentage (9% in 1998 and 15% in 2005). Mid-week attenders in London were slightly older than Sunday worshippers (by about 5 years), largely because far fewer children attended midweek. Mid-week attendance was especially popular in Church of England churches, as many large Anglican churches hold special lunch-time services. About 14% of those coming midweek did not attend on a Sunday, providing a significant boost (an extra 4%) to overall numbers attending church.

SOURCES: *Cathedral Statistics* 2014, Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops' Council; *UK Church Statistics* No 2 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge; *Capital Growth*, ADBC Publishers, 2013, Pages 115-120.

## Leaving Church by Gender

The declining number of people attending church is common knowledge, but are the numbers of men leaving dropping more than the numbers of women, or vice versa? Simply subtracting numbers isn't sufficient as there are more women in church than men, so proportionately more will leave. Nor is the issue consistent over time – in the 1980s for example there were many more new people over 30 coming to church. It also varies by age, since the exodus of young people from the church is a different scenario from the exodus of older people.

The gender of English churchgoers by age is known from the 1979, 1989 and 2005 English Church Censuses, and the numbers in each decade are shown in the Table, where AAC = average annual change, across the 30 years:

The bottom lines in each Table are the key to showing what is happening. As the rate of men leaving (-1.5%) is greater than the women (-1.1%) for the overall total, it means that men have been leaving the church faster than women. For children

Numbers attending church by gender in England, 1980-2010

Men	Under 15	15 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 64	65 & over	Total	Change
1980	582,600	173,500	221,400	316,100	403,800	316,000	2,013,400	~
1990	460,000	123,700	165,400	290,900	361,600	303,300	1,704,900	308,500
2000	331,300	95,100	129,000	250,600	349,100	328,300	1,483,400	-221,500
2010	255,300	65,600	90,400	204,100	321,200	360,200	1,296,800	-186,600
AAC	-2.7%	-3.2%	-2.9%	-1.4%	-0.8%	+0.4%	-1.5%	

Women	Under 15	15 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 64	65 & over	Total	Change
1980	582,600	220,800	270,700	402,400	493,600	494,200	2,464,300	~
1990	498,300	163,900	248,100	418,600	520,400	516,300	2,365,600	-98,700
2000	369,200	100,900	166,800	329,400	482,100	522,200	1,970,600	-395,000
2010	299,700	60,600	115,000	270,600	462,200	563,400	1,771,500	-199,100
AAC	-2.2%	-4.2%	-2.8%	-1.3%	-0.2%	+0.4%	-1.1%	

under 16, for both boys and girls, the rate of leaving is almost twice the overall average rate for those leaving the church. Similarly those aged 15 to 19 of both sexes are leaving even more rapidly (women more so than men). In 2010 there were more male teenagers in church than female!

For the two groups making up those aged 20 to 44 there is no real difference in gender in the rate of leaving, and since many in these age-groups will be married the similarity between men and women suggests that it is families who are leaving, presumably taking their children with them. It should be noted that if a family moves from an Anglican church X in, say, Wiltshire to, say, a Baptist church in Suffolk, that change is not included in this Table, since the figures include church attendance across all denominations. It is only if the family do not find a church in Suffolk that they would be counted as leaving.

## This may be helpful

### Books and reports received

*How do we reach un-churched teenagers with the Gospel?*: A brief sabbatical report, Rev Chris Park, [pastaparko@parkfamily.me.uk](mailto:pastaparko@parkfamily.me.uk)

# HUMOUR

### Mistakes made on CVs:

My intensity and focus are at inordinately high levels, and my ability to complete projects on time is unspeakable.

Men aged 45 to 64 leave the church faster than women in the same age-group, although at a much lower percentage rate than in other age-groups. The numbers attending aged 65 and over, however, are increasing, both men and women.

So more men are leaving the church than women, especially if under 20, or between 45 and 64. More women are leaving the church than men if they are older teenagers, so the picture is not uniform across all ages. The overall highest rates of loss are among those under 30.

These results look across the 30 years 1980 to 2010. Working out the percentages within each decade shows little difference to the overall pattern. Women over 30 joined the church in the 1980s, and the rate of decline was less between 2005 and 2010 (when so many new churches were being started in London by and for the immigrants), but estimates for the decade beyond 2010, up to 2020, show very similar trends to those above. Unfortunately attendance by gender is not known before 1980.

Numbers attending church by gender in England, 1980-2010

Men	Under 15	15 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 64	65 & over	Total	Change
1980	582,600	173,500	221,400	316,100	403,800	316,000	2,013,400	~
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2010	255,300	65,600	90,400	204,100	321,200	360,200	1,296,800	-186,600
AAC	-2.7%	-3.2%	-2.9%	-1.4%	-0.8%	+0.4%	-1.5%	

Women	Under 15	15 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 44	45 to 64	65 & over	Total	Change
1980	582,600	220,800	270,700	402,400	493,600	494,200	2,464,300	~
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2000	369,200	100,900	166,800	329,400	482,100	522,200	1,970,600	-395,000
2010	299,700	60,600	115,000	270,600	462,200	563,400	1,771,500	-199,100
AAC	-2.2%	-4.2%	-2.8%	-1.3%	-0.2%	+0.4%	-1.1%	

What may be seen is that the rate of leaving by gender while very similar between 2000 and 2010, was not at all similar earlier. Far fewer women left between 1980 and 1990 than men (only a third as many), but they made up for it the following decade when almost twice as many women left between 1990 and 2000 than men!

The situation would appear to be different in Scotland, however, where greater proportions of women are leaving, more than the men, especially those aged 15 to 29. The overall percentages for the years 1980 to 2005 are -1.8% for men and -2.4% for women, something to be checked in the forthcoming Scottish Church Census to see if it is still the same.

SOURCE: Figures for church attendance in *UK Church Statistics* No 2, 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Tonbridge, Kent, 2014, Page 16.8 for attendance figures; *Religious Trends* No 6, Christian Research, Eltham London, 2006, Table 5.8.4 for gender percentages.

## Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midland chain store.

Personal: Married, 1992 Chevrolet.

I have an excellent track record, although I am not a horse.

I am a rabid typist.

Created a new market for pigs by processing, advertising and selling a gourmet pig mail order service on the side.

Exposure to German for two years, but many words are not appropriate for business.

Proven ability to track down and correct errors. (*sic*)

Personal interests: Donating blood. 15 gallons so far.

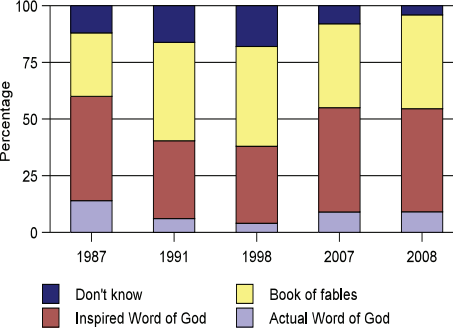
## SNOWFLAKES

**Well-being of UK Children.** The Office for National Statistics now monitors well-being routinely on request from the Prime Minister. Their 2014 report on young people aged 10 to 15 (“teenagers”) found that three-quarters rated their life satisfaction as moderate to high. 79% of boys were happy with their appearance, but only 68% of girls. Three-fifths, 61%, talked to their mothers about things that matter at least once a week, and 37% with their fathers, both percentages an increase on 10 years ago. However, one in 8 (12%) reported being frequently bullied physically. Nearly all (98%) used a computer at home, girls to complete their homework, boys to play games.

SOURCE: *Measuring National Well-being*, ONS Release, 8th November 2014.

**Authority of the Bible.** In a detailed paper looking at the public's attitudes to the Bible over many years, Clive Field cites the results of a number of surveys, summarised in the graph (the years of which are not equally spaced). “Actual Word of God” meant the Bible was to be taken literally, word for word; “Inspired Word” meant not everything should be taken literally; and “Book of fables” or legends, history and moral perceptions recorded by men meant God had no part in it.

British attitudes to the authority of the Bible



Half the population think the Bible is an ancient book of fables, but two-fifths consider it as the inspired word of God even if not 100% literal. Regular churchgoers are significantly more Bible-centric than non-churchgoers, and evangelicals the most Bible-centric, as might be expected. The paper lists details of almost 160 sample surveys conducted between 1948 and 2012 on the subject of the Bible, so gives a very valuable reference to any researcher wanting to explore this field in depth.

SOURCE: Is the Bible becoming a Closed Book? British Opinion Poll Evidence, Clive Field, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol 29, No 3, published on line 9th September 2014.

**Spiritual Children.** In her book *The Spiritual Child*, American Dr Lisa Miller found that children with a positive, active relationship with spirituality were



40% less likely to use and abuse substances, 60% less likely to be depressed as teenagers and 80% less likely to have unprotected sex. A child's innate spirituality, she says, must be fostered through parents and community. “What we do as parents does not just affect our child's sense of self ... it affects the child's sense of the entire universe, the theological, sacred and ontological.”

SOURCE: Article in *Christianity*, August 2015, Page 9.

**Sunday shopping.** George Osborne indicated in his budget that “Sunday trading laws will be relaxed”. One of the main arguments of the Keep Sunday Special campaign in the 1990s was that Sunday shopping would lead to the “erosion of family life.” But, wrote Richard Godwin in the *London Evening Standard*, “what has happened since is more subtle. Throughout the 1990s shopping simply became central to family life. In the 2000s, we more or less accepted it as our religion and profession too.”

SOURCE: Article in *The Tablet*, 18th July 2015, Page 13.

**How far to church?** A Barna survey asked a sample of Americans how far they lived from their work, their church and their family. On average adults lived 12 miles from their place of work, 10 miles from their family and 7 miles from their church – meaning they would need to use their cars for each journey. However, 20% lived within a mile of their church, 17% of their family, and 10% of their work.

SOURCE: *How far away from home is...*, [www.barna.org/barna-update/culture](http://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture), 1st August 2015.

**The non-affiliated.** “In Elizabeth Drescher's research and soon-to-be published book on the non-affiliated, or the ‘nones,’ including both atheists and agnostics as well as the ‘spiritual but not religious,’ Drescher writes that she was surprised ‘by the degree to which many of the unaffiliated continue to find Scripture—especially the parables of Jesus—spiritually meaningful and morally relevant.”

SOURCE: The Jesuit magazine *America*, 8th June 2015, as reported in *Religion Watch*, Vol 30, No 9, July 2015.

**Getting Married.** Based on current trends the Marriage Foundation reckons that 52 out of every 100 teenage girls will marry, that 34 of these will become mothers and remain married. Of the other 48 who never marry, 5 will become mothers and remain with their partner, so that only 39 of out of 100 today's teenage girls, two-fifths, will achieve stable family life. Lone parenthood is the norm among those who earn least. It would be interesting to know the comparable figures for churched teenagers.

SOURCE: *Newsletter*, Marriage Foundation, March 2015, Page 3.

Estimated number of babies born to churchgoing women, England, 1980-2010

Babies	15 to 19	20 to 29	25 to 29	30 to 34	35 to 39	40 to 44	Total	Excl 15-19
1980	6,200	14,300	17,500	9,200	2,900	700	50,800	44,600
1990	5,500	11,300	15,200	12,100	4,300	700	49,100	43,600
2000	3,000	5,800	7,900	9,700	4,500	900	31,800	28,800
2010	1,400	4,300	6,000	10,100	5,400	1,200	28,400	27,000
AAC	-4.8%	-3.9%	-3.5%	+0.3%	+2.1%	+2.1%	-1.9%	-1.6%

The Table reflects the rapidly changing fertility rates for women especially those over 30, and particularly for those 35 and over, whereby despite a declining number of churchgoers the increased fertility rates mean more children are being born to mothers aged 30 and over! Overall, however, the numbers of children being born has dropped substantially, and if one assumes that most of the teenagers becoming mothers are not likely to be churchgoing teenagers, then the overall numbers decrease from some 45,000 new children coming into the church in 1980 to 27,000 30 years later.

SOURCE: Office for National Statistics, Live births by age of mother and Age-specific fertility rates, 15th July 2015; questions by Rev Dr Patrick Richmond.

**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 £20 per annum; overseas £32 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](mailto:peter@brierleyres.com)

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ISSN 2040-0268

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Somewhere in the mix of all of this will be the Christian concept of “call” – should Christian women follow a career first or marry earlier? How far is Christian motherhood still seen as a “call” or “vocation”? Often financial considerations influence such decisions and even those who do marry in their twenties delay parenthood until financially stable.

In the last 20 years there has been a huge increase in the number of people cohabiting, something which in the main is not seen in the majority of young couples in the churches, who marry instead. So it may be that, contrary to national trend, Christian marriages are taking place more when the couple (or at least the woman) are in their 20s rather than in their 30s. Having plenty of mums in their 30s and 40s usually means lots of energy and ideas for running Sunday School, play-groups and Holiday Clubs!

### Christian births

The gender of churchgoers is known from the English Church Censuses (see article on Leaving Church by Gender in this issue of *FutureFirst*), and the fertility rates of women are published by the Office for National Statistics, which vary by age of mother and over time. Assuming that churchgoing women are likely to have children at about the same rate as non-churchgoing women then it is possible to estimate how many children have been born to churchgoing women of different ages since 1980. The results are shown in the Table, where AAC = average annual change.





## REFLECTION

Successors! This has always been a thorny problem throughout history, many kings, such as Henry VIII, having gone to desperate lengths to ensure a (male) heir. Biblically, too, succession was an important issue. At the insistence of his childless wife, Abraham took it upon himself to produce an heir. An heir to Isaac was a major concern, but this time, a God-provided one. The right successor features in the story of Jacob and Esau. Joshua was the God-chosen successor to Moses, David to Saul, Elisha to Elijah. Whether amongst royalty, in politics, in business, in the family and, not least, in the church and Christian organisations, succession is invariably a major concern.

In whatever context, succession raises major issues. For example, in the early part of this century, an above-usual number of UK Christian organisations, started 20-25 years earlier, closed when their founder approached retirement age. Was this through a lack of succession planning, the absence of any suitable follow-on leader, financial stringency or simply because that particular ministry had served its purpose and was no longer necessary in the Christian scene?

Succession in the church is particularly strategic when linked to its current uncertain situation in the UK. Should succession-seeking have a more important role in the Church's agenda and, if so, at what stage in a leader's ministry? In some situations, should a successor even be expected, or should some ministries "die a natural death"? Some successions, whether secular or religious, prove disastrous while others succeed brilliantly. Usually the latter have been carefully planned, the leader prepared both personally and in terms of his/her responsibilities, ideas, strategy and where necessary, training and wider experience.

In the context of the Church, obviously God-chosen and God-prepared successors dominate selection procedures. Church leaders sometimes talk about a "ten-year itch" and many consider moving to another church after perhaps 10 to 15 years in one ministry. Others stay on for longer, and there have been many examples of high quality long-term leadership from a specially gifted person, but then finding a suitable successor is often particularly hard in such circumstances. A Springboard survey in 2000 found that leaders in many churches are most successful between 7 and 13 years of service – hence the wisdom of moving on after 10-15 years.

In many instances, succession becomes a personal issue for the present leader. Should he/she move on? How will he/she know when to move on? Should it be, like athletes, when the peak of a career is reached and remaining years seem likely to be ones of decline? Should moving on even be considered at all or should one's call be a lifetime commitment to a specific situation? How far should the local church or organisation be involved in such a decision and what part should it play in choosing a successor? In the light of Scriptural examples it is re-assuring to know that God has a successor prepared to continue on His purposes and His people need actively to "seek" and "find".

## Is “Reverse Mission” Working?

**The number of non-white ethnic churches in Britain is not known precisely, but will almost certainly be in the thousands – probably at least 10% of the UK’s 51,000 congregations and perhaps nearer 15%. But what is an “ethnic church”? This is where the term usually adopted for black churches – Black Majority Churches (BMCs) – is so convenient, since it simply means churches where more than half the congregation is black.**

Equally, however, there are Chinese MCs, Indian MCs, Polish MCs, Russian MCs, and Iranian, Spanish, French, Congolese, and probably at least another 100 nationalities to add to the list. There are a known 54 identifiable different nationalities among London's churches alone. Part of the reason for the proliferation is, of course, the huge influx of immigrants to Britain both from inside and outside the EU in the past 15 years. About a quarter of those coming are at least nominally Christian and often wish to go to church on a Sunday, especially if their own language is spoken there.

Some denominations, like the Roman Catholics, have started congregations particularly aimed at reaching those from Catholic countries – some 35 being started in the Westminster Diocese alone in the last 10 years.

The dominant group are the Black MCs, probably over half the total of all the MCs. The largest of these, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), has started over 700 congregations throughout Britain in the last 20 years. Some of these are planted by who those who have deliberately come to Britain in what is called a “reverse mission” movement, desiring to bring the Gospel back to the British who have lost it even though they exported it to their country 200 years ago. The RCCG is one such, coming from Nigeria with the aim of winning white people to Christ, as well of course as welcoming any black people, especially Nigerians, to their congregations.

Some of these BMCs have large congregations. Exact figures are very difficult to obtain, and many of the following, being up to 10 years out-of-date, have doubtless changed. The largest, Kingsway International Christian Centre, which used to be in the East End, had 12,000 at its peak but had to move out of London because its site was required for the Olympic Park; it is now in Chatham, Kent where it is building a huge 8,000 seater church, bussing people from the station. Other large BMCs include Ruach Ministries in Brixton (5,000), Jesus House for All Nations, Brent (4,000), Glory House in London, E13 (3,000), Rhema Church in Croydon (2,000), Everlasting House, in London SE15 (2,000), the House of Praise in London, SE7 (1,000), and so on.

There are many black denominations, like the Potter's House which was featured on ITV, or Mountains of Fire Ministries, Deeper Life Bible Church (from Ghana), the Pentecostal Assemblies, the Church of Calvary, the Church of Pentecost, as well as the more familiar Elim, Assemblies of God, Apostolic Church, New Testament Church of God – with its associated Church of God Scotland, and many others. Nearly all of the BMCs are Pentecostal, though some of the congregations in the latter denominations would be white majority.

Some argue that the African churches are not attracting Europeans because of their ethnocentric style of worship, message or religious syncretism. Some will preach the “prosperity gospel”, and others are led by enthusiastic Christians but often with little Bible or theological training. self-proclaimed pastors of African independent churches who could be misleading people with their teaching.

The earliest BMCs have been, especially in London, around for 50 years or more, starting their own churches when the white congregations proved so inhospitable towards them. They will now have people in their third and fourth generation, but not all of these have acclimatised to British culture, nor do they always understand it, and see fewer successful attempts at evangelism as a consequence. Many immigrant children instead spend time in their own communities, apart from going to school, and lacking Western cultural knowledge will find effective communication of the Gospel difficult. There is also the prejudice of the average non-Christian white person who will resent being “evangelised” by a black person, regarding it as presumptuous (“we already have our own white churches and services if we want them” and “why should black people think they can teach us anything when we gave them Christianity in the first place?”).

At the same time, it is important that the traditional churches embrace the immigrant Christians, and at least catch their enthusiasm for sharing the faith. In the 1998 and 2005 English Church Censuses churches were asked what percentage of their congregation was non-white. The result, with an estimated projection to 2015, is shown in the Table:

Percentage of churches with this percentage of non-white attenders										
Year	0%	1-5%	6-10%	11-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-99%	100%	Base
1998	59%	17%	8%	6%	3%	2%	1%	1%	3%	9,830
2005	54%	19%	9%	6%	4%	2%	1%	2%	3%	10,496
2015E	47%	22%	11%	7%	5%	2%	2%	2%	2%	~

The declining percentage in the “0%” column suggests that more congregations are seeing a greater mix of nationalities among them, although the rate of change is slow, and almost half the churches in the country are still entirely white British. Perhaps more non-white Christians should be included among the leadership of the various denominations. We talk of gender-equality; should the church move more to ethnic-equality?

**SOURCE:** *Pulling out of the Nosediver*, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 2006, Table 5.10.

## Church of England Attendance

**The Research and Statistics Department of the Archbishops’ Council recently published the key findings of its latest “Diversity Audit”, first undertaken in 2007 and then repeated in 2014. It is a thorough study monitoring differences in congregations, based in this case on a return of 35,000 responses from postal and electronic contacts. The sample was planned to be representative, but inevitably actual response meant some adjustments were needed to give representative figures.**

The analysis found that nationally 41% of attenders were male and 59% female, very similar to the 40:60 ratio found in the 2005 English Church Census. The average age was 54, significantly up from the 49 average in 2005. The average adult age was 61, also up from the 58 years in 2005, the differences reflecting the falling number of young people.

Altogether some 6% were found to be in minority ethnic groups, only half the percentage of 12% found in the 2005 English Church Census, which suggests probably the difficulty of sampling ethnic groups since many of these do not join the Electoral Roll. As might be expected those in these groups were 15-20 years younger than the main white British attenders. Black or Black British was the largest minority ethnicity.

Factor	City	Con.	Town	Rural	Overall
% churches	20%	16%	28%	36%	<b>100%</b>
Number of churches	3,160	2,530	4,420	5,690	<b>15,800</b>
Average congregation	111	105	29	32	<b>59</b>
% of civic population living here	39%	36%	15%	10%	<b>100%</b>
% congregation of population	1.7%	1.4%	1.6%	3.4%	<b>1.8%</b>
Average age	53	48	58	56	<b>54</b>
% under 18	15%	20%	12%	12%	<b>14%</b>
% over 75	19%	15%	22%	21%	<b>20%</b>
% minority ethnic	8%	17%	4%	4%	<b>6%</b>

The churches were divided into four broad geographies shown in the Table (where Con abbreviates “Conurbation”). The survey indicated that only 1% of the general population lived in rural areas whereas the 2011 Census figure put it at 10%, so this latter percentage is used and the other figures adjusted accordingly.

The overall average congregation from these figures of 59 is rather high by the 2013 Usual Sunday Attendance figures (when the average would be closer to 50) or the Average Sunday Attendance numbers (when it would be 54). The overall UK population in 2011 was 53,012,000, the number used here to calculate what percentage was attending a Church of England church. Rural population attending church (3.4%) is about double the proportion anywhere else, but nevertheless the actual average attendance of 32 has shrunk appreciably from the 48 average recorded from the 2005 Census.

Likewise over the past 10 years the proportion of attenders under 18 has dropped from 19% in 2005 to 14% in 2014, but this is not exceptional to the Church of England – it’s a similar size drop that has occurred across most denominations.

At the same time the proportion attending who are 75 or over has increased from 15% in 2005 to 20% in 2014, again an increase which will be mirrored by most denominations. It prompts questions such as, “Are ministers being trained to serve the needs of congregations where older people predominate?” and “Are churches taking the necessary steps to ensure that their premises are physically suitable for older people?” Just as many churches have Youth Workers should the appointment of Ministers for Older People (or some such title) become a serious consideration?

Probably at least half of those in this senior age-group in church today would have attended Sunday School in their youth. Many will be grandparents with childcare responsibilities – how can the church best support them in this special ministry?

**SOURCE:** *Everyone Counts 2014*, Introducing the findings, Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops’ Council, [www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics/everyone-counts-2014.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics/everyone-counts-2014.aspx).

## Which church to attend?

The Association of Interchurch Families is an international organisation seeking to support, counsel and help any family from a mixed denominational background. Many of its members have one partner Anglican and the other partner Roman Catholic, which can create tensions as the children grow up – which church should they attend?

The UK branch held its 2015 annual conference, as usual, at The Hayes Conference Centre. This year, it preceded the conference with a small survey of its members, 98% of whom either attend or are members of a local church. One of the questions was, “What factors are important in deciding which church you should attend?” A five-point range was offered from very negative to strongly positive, and each answer was scored and averaged.

The top 10 factors were as follows which, while they come a from a small survey are probably applicable across a much wider range of churchgoers. One could ask how much these may be the same in your church. Issues of churchmanship and children came further down the list, so were not in the top ten items.

- 1) The people in the church are welcoming
- 2) The church has a strong sense of community
- 3) I enjoy the style of worship
- 4) Ministers are welcoming and pastorally supportive
- 5) The role of the Bible in the life of the church
- 6) The sermons are generally inspiring
- 7) The denomination of the church
- 8) Holy Communion is an important part of the service
- 9) Geographically close to where I live
- 10) I enjoy the music

In larger studies, the importance of welcome frequently comes top. One person visiting a black American church some years ago was shown to his seat by the “welcomer”, but what really touched the person was that in the five minutes before the service about half a dozen people got out of their seats, came across and said, “We’re so glad you are able to join us today.”

**SOURCE:** Membership survey of the Association of Interchurch Families, 2015; personal experience.

## Changing Your Denomination

**The movement of a person from one denomination to another is not widely studied. The Australian National Church Life Survey found, for example, that some three-quarters, 78%, of Anglicans when moving from their church went to another Anglican church, while 5% went to a Baptist, 5% to a Methodist, 4% to a Roman Catholic church, and 8% elsewhere.**

In a survey of 2,700 Anglicans in the Diocese of Rochester, two-fifths, 42%, had always been in the church they now worshipped in, while 45% had moved – but to another Anglican church. In their case a further 3% had come from a Baptist church, 3% from a Methodist church, 2% from a Catholic church, and 5% from other denominations. Often the warmth of welcome received, the nearness of the church and the liking of the worship are key factors in choosing a new church “home”. If one is moving as a family, the kinds of children’s activities in a church are often important, and the churchmanship of a church is also often key.

Another large survey of Anglican churches found that 25% of attenders had been in their present church for at least 20 years, with 58% who had previously come from other Anglican churches, 4% from Baptist, 4% from Methodist, 3% from Catholic and 6% from others. Unfortunately these results are all one-sided and results for other denominations do not seem to have been researched as much. A survey of a large Baptist church, however, found that 59% of current attenders had been coming for more than 20 years.

A survey by the US Pew Forum published earlier this year found that while 46% of Americans were in a Protestant church, 13% had moved outside Protestantism, while 9% had moved in, showing that 50% were originally Protestant. Likewise, 23% were originally Evangelical but 8% had moved away, but 10% had moved in, meaning they were 25% of the Christian scene in the United States. Black churches were much more stable, with movement in virtually equalling movement out. The Catholics had seen the greatest loss, with 13% fewer than originally, offset by only 2% gain, leaving them as 21% of American Christians.

Where did those moving out go to? They joined what the Pew researchers called the “unaffiliated”, a quarter, 23%, of Americans, who are not quite the same as those with “No Religion” but close to it. In the UK also this was the group which grew most from 2001 to 2011 in the Population Census (16% to 26%).

A fascinating study of Costa Rican Pentecostals was made in 1995. Many had left the Roman Catholic church and joined a Pentecostal one, but did not always settle down in it. The researcher, Jorge Gómez, found that if they left the Pentecostal church within 5 years of joining they would return to a Catholic church, if they left between 5 and 10 years they would move to a Protestant church of another denomination, and if they left after 10 years they would effectively “give up on church” – and join the unaffiliated.

Thinking through how we keep our existing congregation is important, and if we know someone is moving to another town, perhaps recommending to them a suitable or like-minded church before they get there would help. One couple moving in the south of England before the days of websites, wrote identical letters to 6 churches in the town to which they were going asking for details of their activities, posting all on the same day. Three churches never replied, one replied by return of post, and the other two within a week. The minister of the return-of-post church called on their moving-in day, left his card, “Welcome to XXX. God bless you in your new home; if I can help in anyway let me know” and was gone in less than minute, as he knew they were very busy. That couple with their four children became members of his church for 36 years!

**SOURCES:** Protestant Growth and Desertion in Costa Rica, Jorge Gómez, 1995; *Living the Christian Life Survey*, Langham Partnership, 2012; *Charlotte Chapel*, 2014; *Strategic Reviews in 3 Deaneries*, Diocese of Rochester, 2000-2002; *Religion and Public Life*, Pew Research Center, May 2015; personal knowledge.



## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

### SNIPPETS

1) A 2014 survey showed that 36% of 5-7 years olds did not know whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas, and 72% did not know Jesus was born in Bethlehem. 51% of adults say that the birth of Jesus is irrelevant to their Christmas.

2) If the internet went down for a day, what would happen? 196 billion emails would not be sent, 12 billion Facebook and YouTube views would not be watched, 3 billion Google searches wouldn't happen, and there would be 500 million fewer tweets!

3) In 2015, between 10 and 20% of all the Anglican clergy in the East Midlands dioceses were “clergy-couples”, that is, married to each other.

4) The probability of a union lasting 5 years in Sweden was 88% for a marriage, 67% for an opposite-sex cohabitation and 37% for a same-sex cohabitation in 2010.

5) 18% of US students are said to describe themselves as vegetarian. One sixth-form UK evangelist said that Christian complicity in cruelty to animals is one of the most common reasons he hears for rejecting the gospel.

6) In 2014, 66% of UK adults owned a Laptop, 64% a Smart phone and 41% a Tablet. Female Smart phone ownership was 89% among those aged 25 to 34, 47% among those 55 to 64, and 34% for those 65 and older.

7) Those singing in choirs proved to have a higher score in “moral dilemma” tests than others – 17% above average, and drama group students were 14% above.

**SOURCES:** 1) Real Advent advertisement, *Third Way*, October 2014; 2) Article in *The Economist*, 1st August 2015, Page 11 of supplement; 3) Letter in the *Church Times*, 7th August 2015; 4) *The Marriage Files*, Patricia Morgan, Wileforce 2014, Page 164, quoting Charles Q. Lau, in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol 74, 2012; 5) *The Curious Case of the Kind Evangelicals*, Philip Samson, *Ethics in Brief*, Vol 20, No 3, Spring 2015, Page 4; 6) *Church of England survey Research by Design*, IPSOS Media GT 2nd quarter 2014; 7) Survey of 10,000 British children by Birmingham University, *Third Way*, Vol 39, No 3, April 2015, Page 4.

ISSN 2040-0268 | Number 41, October 2015

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## CHANGING AGE OF MOTHERHOOD

**While there have always been a few first-time mothers as young as 13 or as old as 50, the average age was 28 in the 1940s and 1950s, fell to 26 in the 1970s and 1980s, has been steadily rising since and is now 30. The reasons for these changes are interesting.**

The Second World War caused many parents to delay having children so there was an increase in births in the late 1940s and 1950s, but these in the main were to older women who had simply postponed the event until safer times were assured. There was also a general increase in the number of marriages in England and Wales (from 300,000 in 1943 and 1944 to 400,000 in 1945 to 1948, some presumably new marriages among survivors of the war).

The “Swinging Sixties” and the sexual revolution that resulted saw a huge increase in teenage sex and, while the pill was available from the mid-60s, many teenagers became pregnant – more than 10% of all births were to those under 20 between 1965 and 1975. Since then the percentage of births to both teenagers and women aged 20 to 24 has declined steadily and in 2014 was just 4% and 16% respectively (against 37% in 1970 for 20 to 24 year-olds).

The turbulence of age is reflected in the rather confusing graph, where the final year is at a slightly different time interval from the rest. The top line shows the total number of births, with the 60s boom, and a fresh new boom, although much smaller, since 2005, due in part to the large number of immigrant children being born here.

The graph shows the high peak of births to younger women between the mid-60s and mid-70s, when Britain had the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe, and their subsequent reduction. Two-fifths of all births to women aged 20 to 24 in the 1960s has given place to less than a fifth in that age-group in the 21st century. The graph also shows that the numbers (and proportions) of babies born to mothers aged 25 to 29 have remained remarkably stable during this entire period, ranging from 28% to 33% of the total.

### Births to older women

In addition, the graph clearly shows the steady increase in the number of births to older women, from the mid-70s onwards, both to women in their early and late thirties, and to those 40 and over (4% of the total in 2014, more than to those under 20).

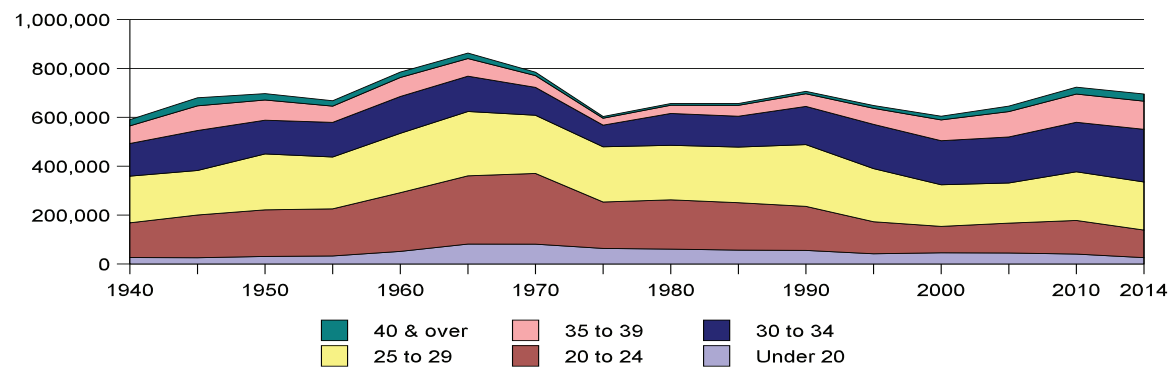
There are huge changes reflected here, evidence that society can change quite rapidly in response to current trends – the falling rate of teenage pregnancies, the huge rise of cohabitantes (many of whom are now having families), and the larger numbers of births to older women (sometimes because of divorce and remarriage). What does it mean for the church? Just as the education system has to adjust to variable birth rates, churches need to be alert to any changes needed in the structure of their activities.

### Career v family

Women giving birth in their twenties will have children in their twenties when they are in their 40s, and will have homes largely child-free when in their 50s. Some might return to work while others who have worked all through their child-bearing years may be thinking of early retirement if financial pressures have lessened.

Women having babies in their thirties means they will be in their fifties when their children are in their 20s, and likewise may return to a career many will have left behind to have a family. Volunteer years may be more limited which may be reflected in the need for churches to have more paid staff – youth workers, secretaries, administrators, and so on.

### Number of children born in England and Wales by age of mother



Continued on page 4