

TRANSFORMING SCOTLAND

This was the imaginative title given to a project produced in partnership with the Maclellan Foundation, and undertaken by the well-known Barna Research Group in California – the first substantive piece of research they have conducted outside the United States. They first reviewed existing research, then did a series of 29 in-depth interviews with Christian leaders, then an online survey of 1,000 Scottish adults, and another of 200 Protestant ministers, followed by three smaller studies of evangelical churches either “baseline” or “growing”, and a small number of churchgoing Scots aged 18 to 24. The whole is published in the book *Transforming Scotland*, available from the Scottish Bible Society, whose Chief Executive was part of the Steering Group.

Scottish Christianity

The survey found overall that “spiritual transformation in Scotland is possible.” Half, 55%, of the population had a favourable view of Christianity, with three-fifths, 61%, saying it has good values and principles. 15% said they had been to church in the past month, and another 16% in the past year. But half, 50%, had never been to church at all as (61%) “the church really does not have anything to offer me.” Only a quarter (26%) think the Bible is inspired, and more than half of these (16%) say it has some errors. However, 11% read it at least once a month. Just 12% consider Jesus was God and 10% that He heals people today.

Nevertheless, a third of adults (31%) affirm Scotland as a Christian nation (mostly those over 55), but half as many (17%) think that it is now a post-Christian nation, with a fifth (19%) saying it is a secular nation. However, a sixth (17%) said they had accepted Jesus as their Saviour, but only 5% would be defined as evangelical (using the Bebbington rubric of accepting the Bible, accepting Christ, believing they should share their faith and that conversion is imperative). The proportion saying they are Christian increases with age. Less than half of young adults not going to church now went to church as a child.

There is no question that Scottish Christianity is declining. Why? It is not seen as relevant (42%), not accepting of other faiths (27%), too involved with politics (24%), not compatible with science (23%) and judgemental (21%). But, nevertheless, Christianity is seen as very (24%) or fairly (59%) favourable to a community. Why? It gives the opportunity for people to meet others (70%), to find out more about God (61%), and for children to receive religious teaching (58%). Less than half those aged 18 to 24 (48%) felt they had nothing to learn from the Bible, against 69% of adults generally.

Growing Churches

Three-quarters of Protestant ministers (75%) were optimistic about their ministry. They saw a key driver for the future, however, was the raising up of leaders from the younger generations. What were the main differences between growing and static congregations?

- Growing churches had a team of ministry leaders with complementary leadership skills (70% to 19% in non-growing churches) [so regular training is hugely important]
- They had an expository approach to teach the Bible (92% to 36%) [offering both Biblical principles and life application]
- Those who are not Christian “feel welcome at this church” (65% to 19%)
- The church teaches that evangelism is more than just an event (87% to 30%)
- They serve local schools (91% to 55%).

Does growth depend on social justice activities? Yes, but not distinctively so. On prayer habits? Yes, but not distinctively so. On styles of worship? Again, yes, but not especially. On the theology of the church? Not especially (something supported by other surveys). Attitudes on stewardship and vocation? Not especially, either. These are important findings with wider significance than just for Scotland.

Those aged 18 to 24

This is a key group for the future, and Barna especially interviewed them. They found this age group, which they call the “Millennials” wanted (a) meaningful and authentic relationships, (b) a deep understanding of their faith, and (c) opportunities to serve others. The Report gives suggestions on how each of these might be developed.

So what for the future?

Rev Colin Sinclair, convener of the Mission and Discipleship Council of the Church of Scotland said of the Report, “its numbers indicate a trend where people are less keen to publicly identify with an institution, but that doesn’t mean they are less interested in faith.” The Report concludes with the following recommendations to church leaders:

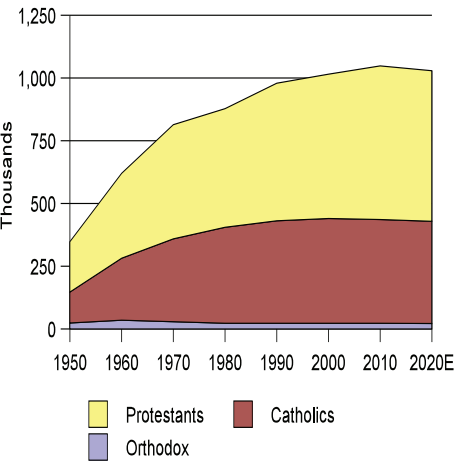
- Multiply leaders
- Lead through strategic, mutually accountable teams
- Embrace risk by releasing entrepreneurial leaders to innovate mission
- Teach the whole Bible for whole-life transformation
- Create communities of Jesus followers where people know they belong
- Equip and release every Christian as a missionary-disciple
- Pray missionally and make prayer a mission
- Leverage the surprising trends among Millennials
- Collaborate in unity for the sake of the Gospel

SOURCE: *Transforming Scotland*, a Barna Report, conducted by Barna Global, UK, 2015, www.barna.org; article in *Christianity* October 20d15, Page 12.



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JAPANESE CHRISTIANITY



Japan's population of 127 million people in 2014 is expected to fall by about 400,000 during 2015. However, less than 1% claim Christian belief or affiliation. While Shinto is the ethnic religion, fewer than 4% identify with it, but a third, 34% of the population say they are Buddhist.

Sadly, the number of Christians in Japan is declining slightly. The overall number of Protestants outnumber Roman Catholics by roughly 1.5 to one, but both share an almost identical pattern since World War II, that is strong growth in the 1950s and 60s, less in the 70s and 80s, little growth in the 90s, and slight decline in the new century.

However, the pattern is not the same for all Protestant denominations. Though the responsiveness of the population today is less than in early post-war times, which affects all denominations, it is the larger, theologically liberal, denominations (the United Church, Episcopal and Lutherans) which have been declining (about 15% down since 1995), while the smaller, more evangelical, denominations have continued to grow, though at a slower pace than before. The growth of these smaller denominations is encouraging, and has limited (but not eliminated) the overall Protestant loss.

Among the Protestants there are many denominations of which the largest in membership terms in 1950 was the United Church (about 60%), followed by the Episcopal (15%), the Presbyterians (4%) and the Evangelical Lutherans (3%). In the 21st century, the United Church is still the largest group (in 2010) at 42%, but are now followed by the Episcopal (9%), the Southern Baptists (6%) and the Evangelical Lutherans (4%) and a plethora of smaller denominations.

Actual Sunday attendance is, as elsewhere, much less than church membership. The United Church again have the most, at about 6,500, followed by the Pentecostals with 4,000 and the Holiness Churches with 3,400 in 2010.

In terms of actual number of churches, the United Church say they have 2,020 in 2010 (which would make their attendance per church very small), followed by the Independent churches with about 1,250, and the Baptists with 950.

The latest Japanese statistics show that Christian leaders in Japan will need all the help and encouragement and prayer they can get from elsewhere.

SOURCE: *Japanese Church Statistics*, provided and translated by Hugh Trevor; Wikipedia.



English Evangelism

The American research company, Barna Group, has been busy researching Christian issues in Britain this year. As well as their **Scottish Study**, reported in another article, they have also researched **perceptions of Christians and evangelism in England**, sponsored by the Church of England, HOPE, and the Evangelical Alliance (EA).

They conducted an online survey across some 2,500 English adults (who might or might not be Christians) and 1,600 practising Christians. Their response rate was not given in the subsequent press release. They found that three-fifths, 57%, of adults identified as “Christian”, very close to the 59% recorded in the 2011 Population Census, 21% as Atheist or agnostic (25% in the Census), 11% as belonging to other religions (9% in the Census), and 11% not stating what they were (7% in the Census). These results are close enough to the Census to authenticate Barna’s other findings.

They found that 44% of English adults had a degree or equivalent, but 81% of the Christians, showing the well-known difference that churchgoers tend to be “middle class”. A third of English adults (32%) were retired or unemployed, something only true of 18% of Christians (because of a younger sampling frame?). Just 7% of adults were employed in the education sector, but three times as many, 19%, of Christians were so employed. There are “white fields” to be reached outside the comfortable middle class, employed, in today’s church.

Who is Jesus?

Six out of every 10 English adults, 60%, believed that Jesus was a real person, slightly more older people than younger (62%to 57%). A fifth, 22%, thought Jesus was a mythical or fictional character, and another fifth, 18%, didn’t know. A third of English adults, 30%, thought Jesus was a prophet, not God, a view held by 44% of those from an ethnic minority. A fifth, 21%, felt Jesus was God, and another fifth, 17%, that Jesus was a normal human being.

Like many other surveys which have asked the question, this study found less than half, 43%, of adults believed that Jesus rose from the dead, something that black people believed much more strongly (73%), a strong pillar in the explosive black church growth. Most Christians, 93%, described Jesus as loving, which was also the description used by a majority of non-practising Christians, but a much smaller percentage, 58%.

Impressions of Christians

Interestingly, two-thirds of English non-Christians said they knew a Christian, often as family members or friends, and most (60%) said they enjoyed their company. The third who didn’t know a Christian were more likely to be between 35 and 44, Asian (especially Pakistani), or live in the east of England or London. How can Christians be motivated to use the opportunities they apparently already have with non-Christians?

Non-Christians knowing a Christian described them as friendly (65%), caring (51%), good-humoured (46%), generous (38%), encouraging (26%), hopeful (24%), but also narrow-minded (13%), hypocritical (10%), uptight (8%), homophobic (7%), foolish (6%) or selfish (5%). More than half, 58%, of English non-Christians knowing a Christian have had a conversation with them about Jesus – but after the conversation three-fifths (59%) said they didn’t want to know more, although a fifth (19%) did!

Hospitality

If the practising Christian sample used came from the EA database that could explain why the survey found that 72% of Christians felt confident about talking with non-Christians, a high percentage true of many of those attending evangelical churches, but not true of non-evangelicals. Younger Christians were more willing to talk about their faith than older Christians and had done so in the previous month (31% to 17%). Practising Christians share their faith most often with their family and friends, but half (48%) had shared their faith with a workmate, a stranger (45%) or neighbour (43%) in the previous 5 years.

During such conversations the Christian had offered to pray for the non-Christian (27%), something that the non-Christians remembered subsequently, or they had been invited to a church event (20%) or service (15%). Non-Christians, in recounting such conversations, said they wanted to experience the love of Jesus for themselves (20%), or requested prayer (19%), or wanted to look more broadly into Christianity (18%), or expressed an interest in going to church (17%). The last reflects a similar finding in a Tearfund survey some years ago.

All this suggests an openness among non-Christians to listen to Christian people in ordinary conversations. Hence perhaps the increasing popularity of church cafés, and opportunities simply to socialise naturally in a relaxing environment. Ordinary hospitality can provide many openings for the gospel. The survey did not ask any specific question, however, about leading someone to Christ, which is not the same as having a conversation about Him.

Faith journeys

Two-fifths (42%) of the practising Christians interviewed had grown up in a Christian home, and three-quarters (73%) of non-Christians said the same. The importance of transmission of the faith comes again in these findings. Another two-fifths (41%) of practising Christians said it had taken them some time to make their decision, while one in seven (15%) said it was a single sudden decision. A quarter, 28%, said that a church service had led to their conversion.

Some of these percentages have changed considerably over time. In 1970 some two-thirds of Christians had come to faith through a one-off decision, and fewer had grown up in a Christian home. Perhaps this was helped then by the Billy Graham, Luis Palau and other like crusades which encouraged a decision that night or whenever. The percentage finding faith in a church service has changed little. Personal friendship also was identified in earlier studies as being of crucial importance in many instances, and was so in a quarter of conversions (27%) in this study. Over two-fifths (44%) of practising Christians credit their friends for a conversation which led them to become a Christian.

The Barna survey identified reading the Bible (27%) as being important in the journey to faith, having an experience of Christ’s love (24%), an unexplained spiritual experience (17%), a life event (positive or negative) (16%), a casual conversation with a Christian (9%), a Christian Union or other University programme (6%), as well as other less significant factors.

There is an enormous amount here to encourage the personal ongoing witness of practising Christians in just sharing their faith with friends, family, workmates and others. Such may not produce results immediately but, as two-fifths (41%) indicated, their faith journey took some time. On average such took 4 years when measured in surveys in the 1990s, and it may be longer now.

SOURCE: *Perceptions of Jesus, Christians & Evangelism in England*, Executive Report, Barna Group, 2015.

Urban Life

Why do we live where we do? Is it because of the family ties we have? Convenience of travel to work? Schools for our children? There will be lots of different reasons, and the Barna group researched why people lived where they did. While the results were based on American responses the likelihood is that something very similar will be true in the UK also. The essential results are given in the Table:

What do you like about your town?						
Feature	15 to 30	31 to 49	50 to 69	70 & over	Overall	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Employment	22	19	17	15	21	
Friendships	27	16	18	17	19	
Nature/Recreation	10	15	12	10	12	
Like-minded people	9	11	15	17	12	
Church	3	11	12	15	10	
Job opportunities	15	14	7	4	10	
Weather	4	8	12	17	9	
Food/Entertainment	10	6	7	5	7	

The main reason why people lived where they did was work related. Presumably most people wish to have a reasonable commute, whether that be by train or car, or cycle or walking. Friendships, and presumably family, came next – there are obvious reasons for living near others that you already know and appreciate. The younger a person was the more important were these two factors.

Then came four reasons all quite close to each other. Nature and recreational reasons were much the same across all ages, but living near like-minded people and a suitable church increased with age, with these being the most important factors for the elderly, along with other features. Job opportunities were also important, but these declined with age.

The final two factors considered were relatively low overall – just 9% of people were concerned with the weather, though this increased quite markedly by age. On the other hand food and entertainment was overall quite low, but still important for the younger members of the community.

A tenth, 10%, of Americans loved where they lived because of the church they attended. While the other factors might be similar for Britons, how far would this be true? To what extent does proximity to a local church influence Christian choices when a move is necessary?

SOURCE: *Friendships are the Top Thing People love most about their cities*, Barna Group, www.barna.org/barna-update/culture, 1st August 2015.

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These may be helpful

Books and reports received



Living out the Call, Rev Dr Paul Beasley-Murray, a four-volume guide for pastors, combining a lifetime’s experience of ministry with Biblical exposition and views of other thinkers. “An anthology to be regularly consulted,” David Coffey, former President of the Baptist World Alliance. “The most comprehensive practical introduction to ministry currently available,” Dr Derek Tidball, former Principal of the London School of Theology.

A New Model of Social Class? Findings from the BBC’s Great British Class Survey Experiment, *Sociology*, Vol 47 No 2, 2013, downloadable, Mike Savage, LSE, et al.

Millennium Cohort Study, Initial findings from the Age 11 survey, Institute of Education, University of London, edited by Lucinda Platt, November 2014, downloadable www.cls.ioe.ac.uk.

SANTA CLAUS

1) No known species of reindeer can fly. There are 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified, and while most are insects and germs, this may not completely rule out flying reindeer.

2) There are 2 billion children worldwide. Assuming Santa doesn’t handle the Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish children, the workload reduces to 380 million. At an average rate of 3.5 children per household, that’s 92 million homes.

3) Santa has 31 hours to work with, thanks to the different time zones and earth’s rotation. This works out at 820 visits per second meaning that Santa’s sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second, 3,000 times faster than the speed of sound.

4) Assuming that each child gets a 2lb gift, the sleigh is carrying 320,000 tons, not counting Santa, whom we know to be pretty cuddly. Even allowing that “flying” reindeer can pull at 10 times the normal weight, the job needs 210,000 reindeer, making the total weight per sleigh 350,000 tons.

5) 350,000 tons travelling at 650 miles per hour will heat the reindeer up like spacecraft entering the earth’s atmosphere. In short, the lead pair will combust almost instantaneously, creating sonic booms – the entire reindeer team will be vaporized in under 5 thousandths of a second. Santa meanwhile will be subjected to centrifugal forces that will pin him to the back of his sleigh by 4.3 million pounds of force.

Conclusion – If Santa ever DID deliver presents on Christmas Eve, he’s dead now!

SOURCE: Originally sirius@wam.umd.edu (L Harden), and taken from Kim Tainio’s Christmas 2014 newsletter.

SNOWFLAKES

Driving to Church. Public transport is used more by those in their 70s than it is by those in their 60s or those in their 80s. Nearly four-fifths, 78%, of men 70 and over have a full car driving licence as do two-fifths, 41% of women who, while able to drive, are more likely to use public transport as well than those who are older. It would seem likely, therefore, that as churchgoers get older there will be an increasing tendency to drive to church (as public transport is often far less frequent on a Sunday). That suggests that churches will need larger car parks. Or perhaps churches need to encourage people to use mobility scooters instead and thus provide mobility scooter parking areas!

SOURCE: *The Future of Transport in an Ageing Society*, G Holley-Moore and H Creighton, ILC-UK and Age UK, June 2015.

Korean Missions. In 2014, the 162 Korean Mission Agencies had 20,467 mission workers in 163 countries across the world. Two-thirds, 72%, of these agencies were sending agencies, 116 in total with an average of 176 workers in each. Just over half, 54%, were in interdenominational agencies (73 workers each), and 46% were in denominational agencies (620 in each). While the number of mission workers is growing at the rate of +1.9% per annum, they also had an attrition rate of -1.5%.

SOURCE: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, OMSC, Connecticut, USA, Vol 39, No 2, April 2015, Page 85.

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• “Who am I?”, which includes, “Who do I have to be to be accepted here?” If this question is not answered a woman may remain hesitant, fearful of committing herself, and find it difficult to trust herself to the others.

• “Who are you?”, not only what is your name, but where have you come from? What is your personal story? Where are you on the journey of faith? If this is unanswered it will be hard for a woman to get involved in joint action.

• “What are we here for?” For example, home groups meet for different purposes in different churches. If the purpose of a group is unclear it can either become very competitive, with everyone battling to get their own ideas listened to, or apathetic as people opt out.

• “How are we going to do it?”, or “What are the rules round here?” A common part of this is that new people may wonder who is really the leader – is it the person who introduced themselves as the leader, or does someone else usually get their suggestions accepted? If this question remains unanswered a woman may make up her own rules, or use rules she has experienced elsewhere.

Stress - Produces urgency and hyperactivity
Burnout - Produces helplessness and hopelessness

Stress - Loss of energy
Burnout - Loss of motivation, ideals and hope

Stress - Leads to anxiety disorders
Burnout - Leads to detachment and depression

Stress - Emotions are over-reactive
Burnout - Emotions are blunted

Stress - Produces urgency and hyperactivity
Burnout - Produces helplessness and hopelessness

Stress - Primary damage is physical
Burnout - Primary damage is emotional

Stress - May kill you prematurely
Burnout - May make life seem not worth living

SOURCE: *Stress and Burnout in Ministry*, quoted in *The Plain Truth*, Summer/Autumn 2015, Page 17.

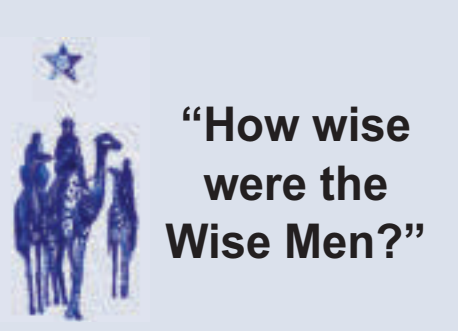
British Sexuality. In a survey of sexuality, 92% of the British public described themselves as heterosexual, 6% as gay or lesbian, and 2% as bisexual. Women were more heterosexual than men (96% to 88%), and those 60 or over (98%) than those aged 18 to 24 (87%).

SOURCE: *Sexuality Survey* by Yougov, September, 2015.

Nationalist Parties. So far 16 countries out of the 28 member states of the European Union (representing between them 48% of the 751 seats in the European Parliament) have seen Eurosceptic or anti-immigrant parties stand for election. Collectively they account for 80 or 22% of the seats

Above all, women don’t just want a friendly church, they want a church where they can make friends, which arguably grows more important as other dimensions of community disappear.

SOURCES: *Eve’s Glue*, Paternoster & Christian Research, 2001; *Living at the Edge*, Penny Jamieson, Mowbray, 1997; *Believing in Grace* Davies, paper by Chris Ducker; www.redcliff.org.



From the Faroe Islands to Bethlehem! A strange Christmas journey – but no stranger than the original journey from the East that is now part of our Christmas celebration. The truth-seeking journey of the Magi is powerfully illustrated for Christmas 2015 by a special set of Faroe Islands stamps with a perceptive message from Faroes scholar Róland í Skorini.

Undoubtedly, the Magi were wise both in their physical provision for their arduous journey and in their spiritual search for a Universal King of Peace. Travel by camel, for example, was far-sighted but essential, because camels provided milk, wool, meat, hides, clothes, transport and power. Not only did they offer protection from the sun, but they could also carry enormous weights, drink brine if necessary, manage without water for 40 days and drink 130 litres of water in 15 minutes!

How wise the magi were spiritually, too. Prompted by their own researches and studies, these rich men left their comfort zone, probably in Persia or Southern Arabia, and travelled many arduous, and no doubt dangerous, miles looking for the truth, not personal gain but in order to worship. Perhaps we too often emphasise personal blessing to the detriment of worship in our presentation of gospel truth.

It's sometimes said that the ultimate goal is irrelevant and it's the journey that counts. Not so with the magi! The journey is only meaningful, achievable and even enduring because it has a goal. Without a goal, a journey is absurd. While respecting people's sometimes hesitant, sometimes prolonged, sometimes wavering, sometimes even unacknowledged search for truth, perhaps we need to be clearer in our presentation of the goal and less entangled with the minutiae of the journey.

The Wise Men's encounter with King Herod was a confrontation with both personal and political violence. This evil man killed his wife, his three sons, his mother-in-law, uncle and many others as well as all the baby boys in Bethlehem. Unfazed and undecieved by Herod's apparent diligent piety, in their spiritual perception the Magi knew the King they were searching for would rule, not just a political Kingdom but a divine one, above and beyond any earthly might and power. This is the Kingdom for which we are so much less prepared than our fellow believers in other parts of the world to suffer for, lose our freedom for and even to die for.

The Wise Men's search began with the star in the East – and it ends with the star in Bethlehem, over the exact spot their long wandering had been seeking (more reliable than any modern sat-nav!). The end of their search is in the Presence of the incarnate Son of God, where all true seekers both end and begin their journey, and the end and beginning of our evangelism needs to be nothing less than this. And the glorious experience of this encounter, initially and continually, results in joy, wonder, worship and sacrifice.

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced... When they saw the young Child... they fell down and worshipped Him. When they opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold (for His Kingship), frankincense (for His deity) and myrrh (for His suffering)."

Amid the trappings of Christmas, this is our story, both for our special day and for every day – King, God and Saviour. We rejoice, worship and present the only gift we have – ourselves.

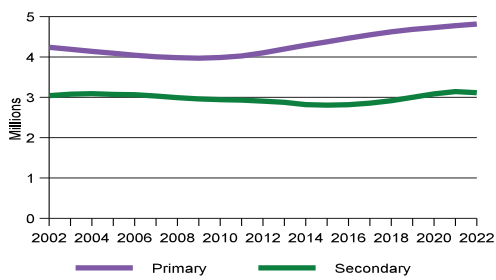
SOURCE: Adapted from article in *Posta Stamps*, by Róland í Skorini, Faroe Islands, No 24, April 2015, Pages 12-14.

Changing numbers of children

There has been a miniature “baby-boom” in the number of women having babies in the last few years, although the number is declining now. There were 604,000 births in England and Wales in 2000, 646,000 in 2005 and 723,000 in 2010, but in 2014 it had dropped slightly to 695,000. That means that the number of children at primary school five years later will increase and at secondary school 11 years or so afterwards.

Just as schools have to adjust to the number of children needing education, so too do the churches have to adjust, even though the numbers involved are much smaller. The school numbers are shown in the chart, the forecasts coming from the Dept of Education, and the rise in the numbers of primary places from 2014 onwards is clearly seen, with a subsequent rise in secondary places a few years later.

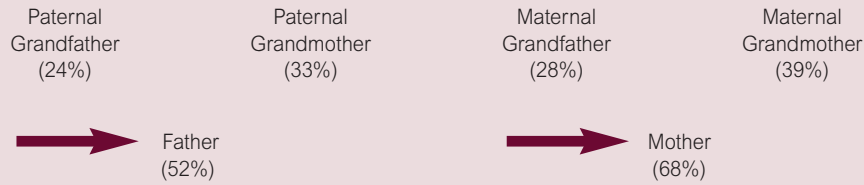
Number of school children, England and Wales



Church numbers would follow a similar pattern – more primary children in creches and Sunday School over the next few years, but reduced numbers of teenagers until we get to 2018 and onwards. So it might be more important for a church to employ a Children's Worker in 2015 rather than a Youth Worker, though both such appointments are significant in reaching a largely unchurched generation of younger people.

SOURCE: *State-funded schools, number of pupils*, Dept of Education Statistics, downloaded 14th September 2015.

Generational Christianity



A survey of those attending New Wine in 2015 asked those present, presumably all adult Christians, if (a) their parents and (b) their grandparents had been Christians – questions not very often asked. The results are shown in the diagram above. Half of those responding had Christian fathers, two-thirds Christian mothers. More mothers than fathers, and more grandmothers than grandfathers were Christians, but the proportion of fathers and mothers who were Christians exceeded the proportion of grandparents who were Christians.

The survey asked at what age the respondent had become a Christian. As with many other surveys asking something similar, 21% came to Christ before they were 10, and a further 47%, half, between 11 and 20, making a total of two-thirds becoming Christians before they were 21. Just 6% had become Christians after turning 40.

Asked “How important to you is it that your children have their own faith in Jesus?”, a massive 93% replied, “Very important”, in stark contrast to the Church of England study which found only 28% of “active” Anglicans found faith was important for their children. Likewise, asked to rate the importance of various factors for their children, the highest proportion at New Wine put “faith” first, followed by “family.”

Who is responsible for “ensuring your children have an active faith”? Almost half, 45%, said it was themselves, and slightly more, 54%, felt it was “an equal partnership between home and church.” Only 1% felt it was the church's responsibility.

How influential was their child's school or education in their faith development? A quarter, 29%, felt it was of some importance, but three-fifths, 61%, of their children did not attend a faith school. Did their child find/have Christian friends in their peer group? Yes, said three-quarters, 76%, of parents, re-inforcing the findings of other studies that peer relationships are key.

What does this survey, briefly summarised above, indicate? Firstly that evangelicals are deeply concerned in seeing their children come to faith. Most perceive that as being their personal responsibility. While Christian grandparents or even great-grandparents may be an additional blessing for children, primarily faith transmission was incumbent upon parents especially during the formative childhood and teenage years during which peer group influence is at its strongest. Testing times might lie ahead but building a foundation while still at home was key. This picture of what some would see as a traditional Christian home is of course getting less and less common, so it is vitally important that organisations like New Wine seek to strengthen and re-inforce it.

SOURCE: *New Wine Kids Work Survey*, August 2015.

Non-churchgoing Christians

The very useful manual *Operation World* has gone through many editions. In its 1993 edition it estimated that the percentage of evangelicals in the UK was 7% of the population, that is about three times the percentage of actual evangelical churchgoers as measured by the 1989 English Church Census. When this figure was queried, Patrick Johnstone, the editor, replied that many evangelicals had simply stopped going to church, even though they had not given up their faith. His printed figure was one of the first in trying to estimate how many former evangelical churchgoers there were.

The 2001 edition put the percentage at 8.5%, and the latest, 2010, edition, puts it at 8.8%, when at best only perhaps 2.5% of the population are churchgoing evangelicals. The editors of *Operation World* are some of the very few who have tried to guesstimate how many evangelicals have effectively dropped out of church. By 2015 the 8.8% could be up to 9.2%. This is not counting those who are ill or who are on holiday and can't go one Sunday, but those who were regular churchgoers and now no longer hardly ever attend, if at all.

Some evangelicals have simply changed their frequency of attending, from weekly to fortnightly or monthly. Across the whole of England in 2005, the English Church Census showed that 6.3% of the general English population attended weekly and another 1.0% monthly (this total of 7.3% would include the 2.5% who are evangelical). By 2015, the 7.3% is likely to be down to 6.0%.

The *Operation World* percentages are based on evangelicals. Assuming that non-evangelicals have been dropping out of church attendance at the same rate as evangelicals, then extrapolating to 2015 would suggest in addition to the 6.0% of the general population who do attend church at least once a month, there is perhaps a further 17% of the population who used to be regular churchgoers but are no longer, some 9 million people.

That is a distressing number. Some of these are unable to attend because they now live in care homes or are too unwell to make a weekly journey. It is not known how many these might be, but assuming most will be say 75 or over, then those too frail to go out might amount to perhaps 0.5% of the population (which is based on the actual numbers of churchgoers 75 and over). That leaves 16.5% ex-churchgoers, which if added to the 6% actual goers would give 22.5% of the population who would say they were definitely Christian. (See also “Who are the Christians?” article in this issue).

“Why should 17% of the population stop going to church?” Two surveys in the Anglican Diocese of Rochester in 1998 and 2003 asked churchwardens to indicate why those leaving the Electoral Roll (effectively the membership roll) had done so. Both years gave the same estimate that 44% had left because they had moved away. If that percentage applies across all England and all denominations then some 2.3% of the population who are churchgoers move every year, over a million people.

How many of these don't join a local church in their new location? Making a pure guess, say a quarter [of the 2.3%], or 0.6%. How long do these ex-churchgoers live before they die? An impossible question, but suppose 25 years. But 0.6% of churchgoers over 25 years adds up to 8 million people, or 15% of the population, a figure not vastly different from the 17% at the beginning of the previous paragraph.

This suggests several things. Presumably churchgoers moving to a new location will at least try one or more local churches before dropping out. The welcome they receive becomes hugely important not just for their possible attendance at that church, but their continuing attendance at *any* church. Are there ways in which clergy, or others, could link up people who are moving to a suitable or like-minded church in their new neighbourhood? When someone moves should they try and find a suitable combination of “house + church” rather than just “house”?

In a letter to the *Church Times*, Ted Harrison, former BBC religious-affairs correspondent, suggests that “one of the significant causes of overall (church attendance) decline is population movement.” He goes on to explore the difficulties of finding a suitable church in all the turbulence of finding a new medical practice, suitable shops, and everything else.

What priority is given to continuing churchgoing? The recent *From Anecdote to Evidence* survey by the Church of England suggests it might be quite low (only 28% of “active” Anglicans felt helping their children find faith was important). When asked why they had stopped going to church, people answered, “We couldn't find one like the one we left,” or “The preaching was different,” or “We didn't feel at home,” or “It's all different here.” One older couple moving home went one Sunday to their local church; it happened to be a family service (and their children had all grown up), but they sat behind a family with two children. Talking to that family afterwards, the mother, learning this was their first visit, immediately invited them to lunch. They didn't accept, but found the offer enormously encouraging, and stayed with that church.

Whatever the percentage of non-attending former churchgoers, some will nevertheless attend at special occasions, such as Christmas or a Harvest Service. The welcome given at these services is also important, as is the type of service. One non-churchgoing couple were visited at Christmas, offered a mince pie and given an invitation to the Christmas service at their local church. They went, but were terribly disappointed when not one of the traditional carols was sung! They haven't been since.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth is carrying out a survey on “Why Catholics leave the church”. A Pugh cartoon illustrating this news item showed someone on their computer typing in, “Too busy filling in online surveys.”

SOURCES: *Religious Trends* No 2, 2000/2001, Christian Research, Eltham, Table 8.4.1; *UK Church Statistics* 2, 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, Table 16.8; *Electoral Roll*, Diocese of Rochester, Christian Research report, 2003, Table 3.1; *Operation World*, OM, WEC and Biblical, 1993, 2001, 2010, edited by Patrick Johnstone, Jason Mandryk; article in *Church Times*, Ted Harrison, September 2015; personal information; *The Tablet*, 10th October 2015, Page 32.

WHO ARE THE CHRISTIANS?

In the 2011 Population Census 59% of the UK population ticked the “Christian” box. That percentage perhaps breaks down:

• 5% actual (regular) churchgoers (measured from other surveys)

• 17% ex regular churchgoers (see “Non-churchgoing Christians” article in this issue)

• A total of 37% whom Linda Woodhead, Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University would identify as in one of three groups: (a) “Cradle Christians” (baptised as infants), (b) “Ethnic Christians” (calling themselves Christian because they are British), or (c) “Moral Christians” (those who admire Christian ethics), though the constituent percentage of each group is not known.

It is possible the first, “Cradle Christians,” might be guesstimated. The Church of England used to publish estimates of the number of baptised people living in England. The last published estimate was for the year 1979 and given then as 40% of the English population, which suggests that the proportion of “Cradle Christians” could be quite large, as many of these people will still be alive 35 years later.

Almost certainly though the percentage will have decreased as fewer children are being baptised (about a third of all births now instead of over half in the latter part of the 20th century), and some of them will already be included in the 5% or 17% figures given above. Suppose the actual percentage of “Cradle Christians” in 2015 is 30%, then that would mean that some 7% of the population would be either “Ethnic Christians” or “Moral Christians,” some 3 million people. Given that two-thirds (69%) of the 1.8 million black people in England are Christian, some of whom probably would describe themselves as Ethnic Christians, that might be a reasonable figure.

SOURCES: Prof Linda Woodhead, *The Tablet*, December 2012; Office for National Statistics, Population Census 2011, quoted in *UK Church Statistics*, No 2 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, 2014.

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Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

7 statements from a single book on how the world, and the UK, is changing, and the challenges the church will need to face.

1) Global studies show that when income per household reaches £9,000 a year, numbers of children per couple start to drop dramatically.

2) 30% of humanity is overweight, which costs around 2.8% of global GDP (in health care and lost work days), and causes 5% of all deaths.

3) Globally there are 44 million abortions every year.

4) There are 18 million young children in the world with no parents.

5) Around 40% of adults in the UK in 2015 do not know by 4.00 pm what they will be eating that evening. 60% of the trade of local shops comes from those who live less than half a mile away.

6) Six out of 10 Americans believe that God heals people in response to prayer; 40% believe that God created humans just 10,000 years ago, and 60% oppose almost all abortions.

7) 30% of all UK shopping in 2015 apart from groceries is online, growing at 3% per year, twice the percentage in America.

SOURCE: *The Future of (almost) Everything*, Dr Patrick Dixon, Profile Books, 2015. 1) Page 74; 2) Page 82/3; 3) and 4) Page 96; 5) Page 178; 6) Page 177; 7) Page 181.

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WHAT IS BELONGING?

By Heather Wright, Chair of York Schools & Youth Trust (YoYo)

It is over 20 years since Professor Grace Davie published *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging* and since then the phrase she used as her subtitle has been widely quoted. Believing is clearly defined by courses such as Alpha or Christianity Explored, but understanding belonging is less straightforward. Indeed some of the criticism in recent years is that “belonging” is a description which cannot readily be defined.

Davie's sense of belonging was at a wide societal level, expressed perhaps in people like my neighbours who turn up annually for the carol service at “our church”! But what does it mean for someone to say they “belong”, beyond attendance and having their name on the Electoral Roll or list of members?

Not long after Davie's book was published I undertook a major research project which looked at how church “works”, especially socially, for women in the congregation. The findings were published in *Eve's Glue, The Role Women Play in Holding the Church Together*. A smaller project subsequently looked at the main findings about women to examine how they were different for men. Personal experience suggests the factors about belonging which were uncovered then are still relevant.

Here are some key factors from that research:

	Women in Church	Men in Church
Belonging	Want relationships Belong with friends Describe how they belong in detail Very important	Want to be involved Belong with family Don't talk about belonging Not very important
Believing	<i>Want:</i> A relationship with God To get to know God To see God work in people Outcome: To make church welcoming	<i>Want:</i> Relevant teaching To learn about God To appreciate worship Outcome: To make church “happen”
Taking on roles	<i>Ask:</i> Who will I do it with? Who will I do it for? Who asked me to do it? Outcome: Involvement builds community	<i>Ask:</i> Does the job need doing? Does it use my gifts? What role will I have? Outcome: A role provides identity

What does belonging mean?

In spite of coming from very different kinds of churches – various denominations, large and small, rural and urban – the answers given during the research were remarkably similar. Women's answers were mostly subjective, to do with relationships and acceptance, whereas men found it a harder question and were more objective in their answers. These aspects of belonging are not necessarily sequential, but may be.

- 1) *Being known* by name and spoken to as a person, not just being an anonymous face or “Joe's mother”. This helps with a sense of identity, which psychologists tell us is often weak for women.
- 2) *Being valued* as a person, not just a “bum on a pew,” and being welcomed, whoever I am and without reservation.
- 3) *Being involved* is two-way, because very often taking on a specific job or role in the church brings someone more closely into contact with a few people whom they can then quickly get to know much better.
- 4) *God has called you there*. For some people there is a very strong spiritual sense that this is where God wants them to be.
- 5) *Feeling accepted* is quite hard to describe, but women use phrases like “I feel part of the family”, “I feel at home”, “I can be myself without being frowned at”.

Penny Jamieson was the first English woman to be appointed an Anglican Bishop when she became Bishop of Dunedin in New Zealand. In that context she wrote in *Living at the Edge*, “It is not uncommon for women, as they present themselves as candidates for ordination, to stress how well they have been ‘accepted’ by people who have begun to see the signs of vocation in their lives. This is associated with the general tendency that women have to emphasise the relationships they have with others, the support they have received from other people and the regard in which they are held.” (italics mine).

Being accepted goes much deeper than being welcomed. There are four questions that people ask, often unconsciously, when they first join any new group and these seem particularly relevant to developing a woman's sense of belonging to church:

Continued on page 4