

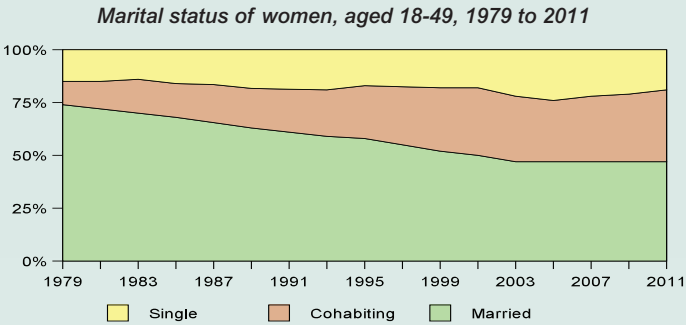
# COHABITATION

A comprehensive study of lifestyle by the Office for National Statistics has a section especially focussed on numbers who are cohabiting in Great Britain today. Of the entire population aged 16 or over, 11% are doing so, men and women the same percentage. Half, 53% of men and 49% of women, were married (which will include a few gay marriages). A quarter, 27% of men and 21% of women, were single, with the remaining 9% of men and 19% of women widowed, divorced or separated.

The percentage cohabiting varies by age, with more women aged 16 to 24 cohabiting than men (12% to 7%), but for those aged 35 or over men are more likely to be cohabiting than women (37% against 29%). The percentage cohabiting aged 25 to 34 is the highest percentage in any 10-year age group, and is 27% for both men and women.

Three-quarters, 75%, of those who cohabit are legally single, and one-sixth, 17%, are divorced, leaving 6% who are legally separated, and 2% who are widowed (mostly women aged 50 and over).

The percentage of women aged 18 to 49 who are married has declined since 1979 as the chart shows, but has levelled off since 2003 at 47%, while the cohabiting percentage has tripled from 11% in 1979 to 34% in 2011. The remaining group, labelled "single", also includes those who are legally widowed, divorced or separated.



Since 1980, surveys show that women up to the age of 30 are consistently more likely to be in a cohabiting relationship than men (68% to 51% in the years 2004-07), but by the time they are 35 or 40, men are cohabiting more than women.

In a fascinating paper based on the results of the 2001 Census, Prof David Voas looked at cohabitation by religion. Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims cohabited least (less than 5% of women), while those with No Religion cohabited most (36%), followed by those of Other Religions (23%), Buddhists (14%), Christians (13%) and Jews (9%).

How many cohabiting women have children? Although half, 51%, do not, obviously the other half do! Of this 49%, 45% are dependent children under 18, and just 4% are non-dependent. Since non-dependent children by definition have to be 18 and over, and most cohabitation takes place before people are 40, many cohabiting couples are not yet old enough to have non-dependent children. How many married women of all ages have children? 26% do not compared with 51% of cohabiters. Of the 74% of married women who do have children, 17% have non-dependent children, compared with 4% of cohabiters.

How many cohabitations have cohabiting people had? One in 6, 16%, have had at least one previous cohabitation, that is, with another partner, and a quarter of these, 4%, have had two or more. Those aged 30 to 44 are more likely to have had more cohabitations, a fifth, 21%, having two or more. How long do they last? Those who have had only one cohabitation see it last just over 4 years on average (49 months), while those in their second or further cohabitations find they last only just over three years (38 months).

How do cohabitations end? Often by the parties getting married – a tenth, 11%, of currently married people have had at least one cohabitation before tying the knot. However, rather more, 14%, do not end up in marriage.

What has all of this to do with the church? Just this, that cohabiting couples by and large do not come to church. There are a few who do – surveys suggest perhaps 2% of all attenders cohabit (1% in evangelical churches), but these percentages are far short of the population as a whole. In terms of church couples there are perhaps 21,000 in total who are cohabiting, just 1½% of the overall total of 1.4 million cohabiters in the population.

**SOURCES:** General Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics, 2013, *Living the Christian Life*, Brierley Consultancy survey for Langham International Partnership, 2013, "The Maintenance and Transformation of Ethnicity", David Voas, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol 35, No 9, Nov 2009, Page 1502; article in *Population Trends* No 145, Autumn 2011, Page 55.

## These may be helpful Books and reports received

A new e-magazine began in December 2015 called *Church Art Monthly*. It is emailed free of charge to its readers as a pdf attachment. It is the only church and cathedral art magazine in the UK, and will take advertisements. Its editor, a former *Times* and *Financial Times* journalist, may be contacted at bobcrew7@gmail.com.

*New Churches in the North East*, David Goodhew and Rob Barnard-Symmons, Centre for Church Growth Research, St John's College, Durham University gives

a list of the 125 new churches found together with their websites. There are 8 chapters analysing the findings, with a special emphasis on ethnicity.

*Why Fonts Matter* looks at the many different font styles available today and what they say about legibility, associations, nostalgia, personality, gender, and their inherent psychology. Published by Virgin Books, in 2016 edited by Jamie Joseph.

*The World in 2016*, *The Economist*, edited by Daniel Franklin, December 2015.

*Church Buildings Survey Report 2015*, Churches Trust for Cumbria, Nigel Robson, 2015.

# Malaysian Church

The country of Malaya gained its independence from Britain in 1957, and was part of the new Malaysia country formed in 1963 through the coming together of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah, although Singapore has since withdrawn (in 1965). Many people left Malaysia at that time, and the churches struggled to survive, especially as there was a paucity of leaders.

In the 1960s and 1970s many young people sought tertiary education overseas as there were only a few Malaysian Universities then, and many of these became Christians. They returned after their studies to work but also became involved in church activities and services. Today they are the leaders of the churches in Malaysia.

The government of the new nation has introduced many changes, not least of which is that education is now in Bahasa Malaysian (BM), not English, and a gradual introduction of Islamisation processes in all strata of society, which has led to the seizure of BM Bibles, the forbidding of the use of the word "Allah" for the Christian God, the removal of the sign of the Cross in public places, the denial of non-Islamic religious air space, etc., all of which have restricted the life and witness of the church. The irony is that all citizens are encouraged to read and speak BM but the churches are forbidden to promote Christian literature in BM.



Malaysia has a population of 31 million people, about 1 person in every 240 in the world (0.4%). Virtually half of its population (48%) are Muslim, a fifth (22%) are Chinese with their own folk-religion, and up to 10% are Christian. Hindus are 8%, Buddhists 7% and the remaining 5% are made up of other small religious groups, with just 1% non-religious. Perhaps two-thirds of the Christians are practising Christians, with two-fifths (41%) being Catholic, a seventh (15%) being Methodist, 12% being the Evangelical Church of Borneo, and a similar proportion who are Anglican.

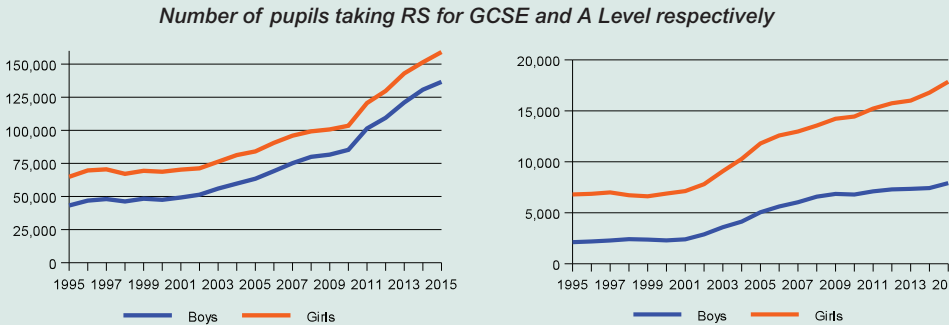
The Church faces many challenges, especially in reaching the younger generations, such as Gen X and Gen Y. It has many opportunities, however, even if it is officially allowed only to reach out to a third of the population (it may not evangelise Muslims). There are also many migrant workers (some 5 million in the population). The Church provides many schools, hospitals and social welfare centres, which puts it at the cutting edge of society. However, "discipleship is the key factor for the survival of the Malaysian Church" for the first half of the 21st century, along with "providing good education for lay people".

**SOURCE:** Talk by Archbishop Moon Hing, of the Province of South Asia of the Anglican Church, at the Lausanne International Researchers' Conference, Kuala Lumpur, May 2015; *World Christian Encyclopedia*, David Barrett, OUP 2001; article by Rev Dr Philip Hughes in *Pointers*, Christian Research Association, Australia, Vol 25, No 3, Sept 2015, Page 15.

# Examining Religious Studies

Most students at school take their GCSE and A Level exams when they are in Years 11 and 13, aged about 16 or 18 respectively. In 2015, one in every 18 16 year old (whether boy or girl), 6% of all students taking GCSE – nearly 300,000 in total – took their GCSE in Religious Studies, or RS for short. It happens to be one of the more popular non-mandatory subjects. That number is 15 times the estimated number of young people aged 16 coming to a church in England on a Sunday, some 20,000 in total.

Likewise in 2015, some 26,000 students took RS for their A Level, 3% of all A Level students. The percentages taking these public RS exams have been steadily rising. They have virtually tripled in the last 20 years, both for GCSE and A Level (from 110,000 to 300,000 for GCSEs and 9,000 to 26,000 for A Levels). So RS is definitely becoming a more popular option! The graphs show that the increase since 2010 has been significant for GCSE and the period 2002 to 2006 for A Levels.



More girls than boys, pro rata, take A Level RS than GCSE. About two-fifths, 41%, of those taking RS GCSE are boys, a percentage which has held fairly constant since 1995. The proportion of boys taking RS at A Level in 1995 was 24% while in 2015 it was almost a third, 31%.

The success rate of GCSE is especially noticeable. More than half the students taking RS GCSE in 2015, 53%, obtained an A\*, A or B grade in their exam, with girls doing better than boys (61% to 44%). This is better than the marks obtained overall for all subjects when only 43% of pupils obtained these three top grades. These percentages have not changed very greatly since 2005, though the percentage getting an A-C grade has doubled since 1995. This possibly shows that RS is considered an "easy" option, but it is just as likely that an interest in Religious Studies is a real interest and students therefore do well in it because they apply themselves to what is being taught.

As well as more girls than boys taking either exam, girls also do better than boys in both RS GCSE and A Level in terms of grades obtained. One might therefore expect that more girls than boys would go to church as teenagers. However, the 2005 English Church Census and the 2012 London Church Census both showed that more boys than girls attend church as older teenagers, aged 15 to 19 (51% boys to 49% girls in England and 53% to 47% in London).

Amidst the overall decline of numbers attending church, these examination figures are important as they show that interest in religion among young people is real. It is true that Religious Studies now encompasses the study of two religions (which was not necessarily true before 2015), and that Religious Studies embraces much more than a study of Christianity or the Bible, but that so many wish to study it surely gives an opportunity which could be utilised.

A secondary school in Kent had a Christian Union, attended by a dozen or so students. A nearby church started a Youth Café, opening from 3.30 pm to 5.00pm every day serving drinks, cakes and sweets. More than 30 students from the school would meet there each day to discuss many things, including religious topics and what the church was focussing on that week in their youth club, which a number attended. The interest is there, if only a suitable opportunity can be given for it to be explored.

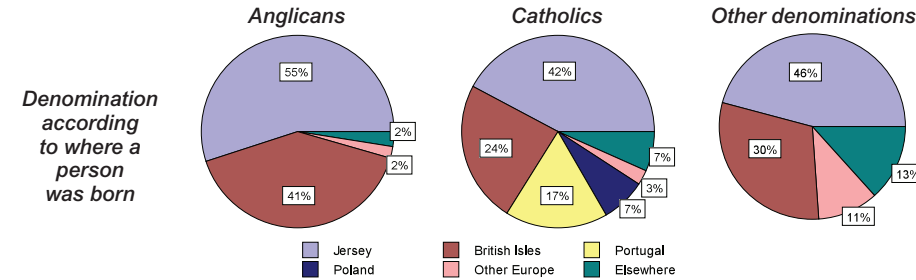
**SOURCES:** Exam figures from [www.dstbustubs.co.uk/gender](http://www.dstbustubs.co.uk/gender), and reproduced in relevant editions of *Religious Trends* (Nos 3, 5 and 7) and *UK Church Statistics* (Nos 1 and 2).

# JERSEY RELIGION

The 2015 Annual Social Survey of Religion in Jersey included a question on religion for the first time since the survey began in 2005. Jersey is an island of 45 square miles, 14 miles from Normandy and 100 miles south of Great Britain, the largest of the Channel Islands, with a maximum height of 470 ft above sea level.

The Survey showed that over half, 54%, of adults regarded themselves as having a religion, but two-fifths, 39%, did not, with 7% not knowing or unsure. As might be expected older people were more likely to have a religion (78% of those 65 and over) than those who were younger, 16 to 34 years old (half that proportion, 37%).

Of those with a religion, the large majority, 97%, were Christian, with very small numbers of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims or Sikhs, totalling 3%. Of the Christians, 44% were Anglican, 43% Roman Catholic and 13% other denominations. This varied, however, according to where a person was born as shown in the following pie-charts:



The charts show that just over half the Anglicans and almost half those other denominations are Jersey-born, while two-fifths of Catholics are. Two-fifths of Anglicans were born in the British Isles (which includes the Republic of Ireland), but only a quarter of the Catholics, as a quarter of the Catholics come from either Portugal or Poland. A third of those of other denominations come from the British Isles. A quarter of those in other denominations were born either elsewhere in Europe (11%) or another continent altogether (13%).

Only half (50%) of Jersey's population was actually born in Jersey, indicating that over the years there has been a lot of migration to the island, mainly from the British Isles (a third, 33%). Just a tenth have come from Portugal (7%) or Poland (3%), leaving 7% to come from elsewhere.

Church attendance, however, is much lower than these adherent figures indicate. In 2012 it was estimated that 8% of Jersey's population actually went to church, some 8,000 people. This is about the same percentage as the other main Channel Island, Guernsey, which also has 8% of its population attending church, although its population is smaller and churchgoers number just 5,000 people. An additional 400 attend on Alderney and Sark, a fifth of their population of 2,000. The Guernsey government does not collect religious data.

According to the English Church Census in 2005 (which included the Channel Islands) about a third of Jersey's churches are Anglican, and a sixth are Roman Catholic, showing that in Jersey as elsewhere, Catholics have larger numbers per church than others. Jersey also has many Methodist churches, about a quarter of the 70 or so churches on the island as a whole.

**SOURCES:** *Jersey Annual Social Survey*, 2015; *UK Church Statistics*, No 2, 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, 2014.

# SNOWFLAKES

**British values.** The 2013 British Social Attitudes' Survey found three things that the general population thought important for being truly British:

- 95% To be able to speak English
- 85% To respect Britain's political institutions and laws
- 85% To have British citizenship

In a recent survey the Evangelical Alliance found that its members agreed with these, with members feeling more strongly (96%) about the second. Evangelicals also felt that consumerism was our worst negative trait (65%), while a good sense of humour was the most positive (41%). Three-quarters (75%) felt freedom of speech needed greater protection in the UK.

**SOURCE:** Article in *Idea* magazine, Sept/Oct 2015, Pages 14/15.

**Being closer to God.** A research study in 2001 on larger churches found that young people were drawn to them if, when there, "they could feel the presence of God." That has now been confirmed by an American study which asked the 30% of those aged 18-34 who had responded why attending that church was so important to them. Over two-fifths, 44%, of them put as their first reason, "I go to be closer to God." What helps these "Millennials" feel that? Having space in the worship area (but not too much), only very simple symbols of Christianity and an informal layout of seating. Sometimes even the colour in which the church is painted is important!

**SOURCE:** What Millennials want when they visit church, Barna Group research, Barna-update, March 2015.

**"Civil celebrants"** is the name given by some Registrars to lay people taking crematorium funeral services. A shortage of priests has driven the Roman Catholic church to allow deacons and others to take baptisms and marriages (though priests still do the Last Rites), but in some areas lay people (of whatever denomination) take the funeral services. A list of non-clergy held by the local crematorium often means that a funeral can thus be fitted in when a clergy person is not available. Rev Dr Ian Meredith of St Mary's, Portchester, says, "Civil celebrants are more 'people-centred' in their approach to the service. It may be one of the idolatries of our time, but many relatives want to hear more about their loved ones than about God." **SOURCE:** Article in the *Church Times*, 19th June, 2015, Page 14.

**Large Canadian churches.** About 1 person in 8 of Protestant churchgoers in Canada attend a large church (defined as being between 1,000 and 10,000 in congregational size). Four-fifths, 79%, of these churches have grown in the last 5 years, with 16% growth coming from new Christians, and 13% from those renewed in the faith. Just over half these churches have planted another in the last 10 years (only 35% in the UK), and a further 16% are considering it. More than half said their growth was due to their youth and children's ministry (as is also true in London). Two-fifths, 40%, have congregations on more than one site, and three-fifths, 62%, were multi-ethnic (at least 20% of the congregation are of a different race).

**SOURCE:** Leadership Network survey reported in *Religion Watch*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Nov 2015.

**Libraries.** In 2010, the UK had 4,466 libraries, supported by a government grant through local councils of £1.2 bn, or an average of £250,000 each. In 2015 the number was 3,917, down 12%, on an average grant of £240,000, down 4%. Visits to libraries were 265 million, down from 310 million

in 2010, a decline of 14%. Visits now average 68,000 per library per year. Paid library staff have decreased 22% since 2010, but volunteers have increased from 21,000 to 41,000, an increase of 93%, and are now an average of 11 per library. Since Christianity is a "religion of the Book" perhaps more volunteers could come from local churches.

**SOURCE:** *The Bookseller*, 11th December, 2015, Page 11.

**Megachurch attendance decreasing.** Very large American churches are seeing an increase in numbers going, but a decrease in the regularity of attenders. Many "Gen Xers", those aged 35 to 50 in 2015, are going less frequently than once a week, and are now only about 23% of all attenders, down from 28% in 2010. Those aged 18 to 34, Millennials, make up 19% of attendances, the same as 5 years ago. UK percentages in 2015 would be, respectively, 16% and 12%. As in the UK, the US churches are planting new congregations, 62% having done so in 2015, up from 46% in 2010. In the UK, 35% had planted at least one church in 2008.

**SOURCE:** Religion Watch, December 2015, Vol 31 No 2, Page 7.

**Christian publishers** joined the 2015 adult colouring-in vogue hobby. Currently the top 20% of Amazon's best-sellers are colouring books for adults! Now one Christian publishing house (Willow House Books) has released a Scripture colouring book with designs and texts while another (Redemptorist Publications) a Pope Francis colouring book with designs supplementing his words.

**SOURCE:** *The Tablet*, 12th December 2015, Page 16.

**Green Christians.** A Tearfund survey, conducted by ComRes, found that 96% of Christian people in the UK recycle and 54% cycled or walked instead of driving.

**SOURCE:** *The Tablet*, 12th December 2015, Page 29

**Poverty.** Recurrent poverty accounts for about a fifth of the overall experience of poverty. So what causes recurrent poverty? In a carefully researched paper, a round-up of available evidence, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found there were a number of factors which increased the risk of poverty – previous experience of poverty, becoming divorced or separated, being a single parent, or having a child. The first of these carried three times the risk of the last.

**SOURCE:** *Cycles of poverty, unemployment and low pay*, Chris Goulden, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, "Reviewing the evidence", Feb 2010.

**Negative press.** A small survey of some 190 reports of either Christianity or Atheism in the national press found that three-fifths, 62%, of the reports were negative and two-fifths, 38%, positive. A quarter, 26%, were "discursive". Serious reports written by experts, a further quarter, 24%, were "descriptive", pining down the event to its essential facts, and the other half, 50%, were "tendentious" where the authors were aiming to persuade the readers of their viewpoint. In a further analysis of a small number of readers' letters, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian* were found most likely to be positive, with *The Times* and *The Independent* being found to be mostly negative.

**SOURCE:** Article in *Implicit Religion*, Vol 18, No 1, 2015, Pages 96-98.

**Inflation.** The rate of inflation increased threefold between 1750 and 1810, and then was largely static until the 1920s, a period of over a century, but since then prices have risen 40-fold!

**SOURCE:** Article in *Economic Trends*, No 604, March 2004, Page 41, Office for National Statistics.

**The CRE Exhibition** at Excel, London in May 2015 attracted 7,800 visitors, a drop of 20% compared with 2014 held at Sandown Park. However, of these Excel visitors, two-thirds, 65%, or 5,100, had never been to a CRE Exhibition before, and, of these, three-quarters, 75%, said they would recommend the exhibition to a friend. Three-fifths, 58%, or 4,500, said they were church leaders (against 65% in 2014). About half, 53%, of those attending in 2015 said they would visit it in 2016. Over 80% of those who said the 2015 Exhibition was enjoyable found it useful.

**SOURCE:** Visitor Survey at 2015 CRE, Bible Society, Autumn 2015.

**CORRECTION.** In the previous issue, December 2015, mention was made of the research by the Church of England, HOPE and the Evangelical Alliance (EA) in the piece on English Evangelism. It was suggested erroneously that the sample of practising Christians may have come from the EA database; rather it came from the sample that the survey firm ComRes drew together of practising Christians. Apologies for the misunderstanding. Full details are in the website [www.talkingjesus.org](http://www.talkingjesus.org)

*Continued from page 1*

Aberdeenshire (65%), Highland (62%), Orkney Islands (70%) and the Western Isles (65%).

Two-thirds of Scotland's rural churches, 64%, are Presbyterian, four-fifths of which, 82%, are Church of Scotland. Their report, *God's Own Country*, focussed on "rural theologies" but also gave practical examples of change in rural churches.

**What can be done?**

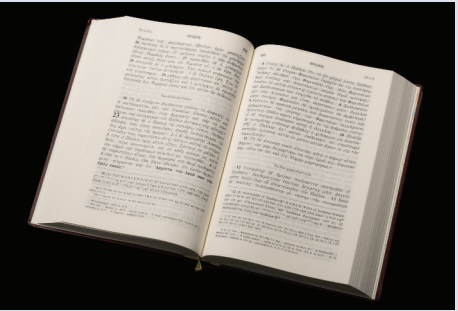
Should the local Anglican bishop close unviable churches with congregations of, say, under 20 people? (The report recommends "streamlining" the process of church closure). Should he/she restrict multiple-church benefices to a maximum of four churches? Should he insist that in every benefice there should be only one Parochial Council? Should lay people (or another organisation) be appointed to take some of the administrative load from the vicar if he/she is responsible for several churches? Should some churches be sold, even given away to other (Christian) faith communities, or simply an alternative use be found for them?

Are there ways of changing church services, or times, to make them attractive to more people? Should churches embark on a deliberate programme of mission? Are there ways in which the church building could be of more use to the community? Some hold farmer's markets, others house a Post Office or other shops, or provide a space for village activities (if pews are replaced with chairs).

The problems are obvious, and not just Anglican. The solutions are far more difficult. Part of the issue is getting people to think big enough, broadly enough, widely enough to tackle the different possibilities, having what some call a "helicopter" view, looking at several villages perhaps or a significant area.

**SOURCES:** *Report of the Church Buildings Review Group*, chaired by Rt Revd John Inge, Bishop of Worcester; *Released for Mission*, Growing the Rural Church, Archbishops' Council, 2015; *Religious Trends* No 6, Christian Research, Pages 5, 16-18; *Multiple Parish Survey: More Than One Church*, MARC Europe, April 1988; *Capital Growth*, ADBC Publishers, 2013; *God's Own Country*, Mission and Discipleship Council, Church of Scotland, no date on website; *Church of England Newspaper*, article on 23rd October, 2015, Page 3; *Statistical Digest of Rural England*, Defra, June 2012; Article in *Rural Theology* Vol 13, No 2, 2015, Page 130.





## REFLECTIONS

### What do you want me to do for you?

Twice in a single chapter of Mark (10:36, 51), Jesus asks two different people the same question, "What do you want me to do for you?" The first time it was when James and John, two apostles, wanted special preference in the coming Kingdom, and the second was in Jericho when blind Bartimaeus asked to be given his vision again.

The first time Jesus did not support the request made of Him – to sit on His right hand was "not mine to grant", but the second time Jesus gladly acceded to the request and Bartimaeus "immediately regained his sight and followed Him on the way."

At other times, Jesus effectively asked the same question, but responded differently because He already knew the answer. "Son, your sins are forgiven" (2:5), or to Legion, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" (5:8), or going with Jairus, "My little daughter is at the point of death" (5:23), or when the crowd brought Him a deaf mute (7:32). At other times the answer was implicit, such as "Help us, we're terrified" when the disciples woke Him in the boat on Lake Galilee in the middle of a storm (4:38).

The question comes to us as we start a New Year – if you had one request, what would it be? James is very blunt, "You do not have, because you do not ask," (4:2). Dare we ask Jesus for one seemingly impossible thing that we long for?

The question is also very pointed. "What ... to do for you?" This is not necessarily a question about your family, or your church, though it could be made such. Jairus wanted his daughter better, so effectively asked on her behalf. James is also clear in this: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly," (4:3) as James knew from his personal experience. So we need to ask appropriately.

Sometimes in trying to determine vision and strategy it is important to ask big questions, such as "If you could change one thing in your life/this church/community/country, what would it be?" or "If someone gave you a million pounds on the condition it was spent in the next six months what would you use it for?" or "When you get to 2025 what decisions do you wish you had taken in 2016?" This kind of overview or helicopter thinking (as it is sometimes called) helps one to focus on the big picture, the key elements of the situation.

The question is not multiple, as "What are the five things you plan to do this year?" but rather it focuses on the chief object, the key topic, the essential essence of the situation. The question in effect is singular, "What is it..."

The question also focusses on Christ. "What ... do you want me ...? In Christ "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," (Col 2:9) "through whom God created the worlds," and who "sustains all things by his powerful word," (Heb 1:2,3). The question is asked by someone who can do what is impossible for us, what is beyond our ken, what we cannot imagine or think.

So the challenge remains, and it is very simple to understand, "What do you want me to do for you?" How do we answer the same question which He is asking us today?

## Kenyan Youth

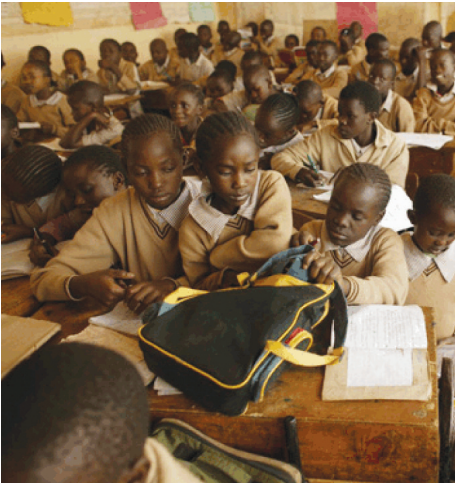
Young people in Kenya have a tough time finding employment from both personal observation and more importantly according to a survey report completed last year by Jacob Olose. Those aged between 15 and 35 have an average unemployment rate of over half, 55%. Some 800,000 young Kenyans join the labour market each year, according to the World Bank, but only 50,000 find a professional job, 6%.

With over a third of its population, 36%, estimated at 45 million in 2014 under 15, and increasing by a million a year, helping young people becomes imperative. One option is the opportunity to start a small business. Forbes Africa cited 7 out of Africa's 30 best entrepreneurs under 30 to be Kenyans.

The high level of unemployment has been blamed for the escalating incidence of crime. Part of the problem is seen to be older people staying on in jobs when they could retire, but fail to do so because of lack of adequate state or private provision for old age. The National Youth Council Chairman presented the President with a request to lower the civil servant retirement age from 60 to 55. When the Presidential Candidate Raila Odinga, a Luo, failed to get elected in the 2007 election, riots broke out, especially in the Luo area around Kisumu in north-west Kenya, partly by young people tired of having so little prospect of employment.

Kisumu was one of the counties selected by Uwezo, a survey organisation in Kenya working especially in education. Its latest report showed that in Kisumu only 3 out of 10 children in Class 3 (9 year-olds) could do Class 2 (8 year-olds) work in Maths or English. One reason for that, however, is that, although children are meant to start Primary School at age 6, some parents (often a single parent or relative/guardian) cannot afford the school uniform required and so delay their child joining a school, even though Primary Education is partly free (the government paying the teachers' salaries). As a consequence two-fifths, 38%, of pupils in Class 3 are over the age of 9 and sometimes well over! The same is true for all Classes up to Class 8 where half, 47%, are aged 15 or 16 or sometime even 18 or 19.

**SOURCES:** *Causes of increased rate of unemployment in Kenya*, Jacob Olose, African Institute of Research and Development Studies, October 2014, Page 11; *Are our children learning?*, Literacy and Numeracy in Kenya, 2014, Uwezo, 2015.



A Kenyan primary school classroom; some have over 80 children, with few or no technological or other resources.

## RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE

*The Tablet* called it "a deeply flawed report" and most of the other Christian Press also gave it very critical reviews. The Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life (CORAB Report), published December 2015, may have a high-sounding title but it was not an official Commission, even though chaired by the Rt Hon Baroness Butler-Sloss GBE, a retired judge. There were 20 Commissioners in total, including Rt Rev Prof Lord Harries of Pentagarth, former Bishop of Oxford, and the Pentecostal Bishop Dr Joe Alfred.

The consultation process was very large, with various weekend meetings and hearings, and the number of individuals and organisations consulted ran into dozens, indeed hundreds, of people from every strata of society. The Commission began with a House of Lords debate in November 2014 with 22 speeches.

The Report focusses on the increasing numbers with no religious belief, the declining numbers of those with a belief, and the increased diversity of religious faith in the UK. All this is well-known, and the Report goes on to summarise the other key variables within British society. It then discusses at length education, the media and the importance of good relationships (a chapter on each), and suggests ways forward at the end of each chapter. There is also a chapter on action, and on the law.

It particularly suggested that faith schools should select fewer incoming pupils or staff on the basis of their religion. This caused both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England, which between them are responsible for almost half (47%) of the schools in England, to comment, defending the status quo. In essence, the report wants these schools to be more "open" and that this principle should apply to other religious schools, such as the Muslim schools.

The 144 page Report included a useful statistical section summarising belief and attendance, by religion, country, age, and over time. There was a chart summarising independent reading of the Bible (half, 48%, not having read it for more than a year or longer), and another reflecting religious affiliation by generation of ethnic minorities, slipping overall from 95% in the first generation to 82% in the second. The Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis saw the least slippage, the Black Caribbeans saw the most (80% to 59%) and the Black Africans were in between (from 95% to 80%).

There are 37 recommendations in the Report feeding into 12 summary suggestions. In essence it pleads for action to be taken to create greater understanding of the fundamental values of public life, this to be reflected in national events, schools, the BBC Charter, the laws of the land and in counter-terrorism legislation. It can be viewed and downloaded at [www.corab.org.uk](http://www.corab.org.uk).

**SOURCE:** *Living with Difference*, Community, Diversity and the Common Good, Report of the Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life, Woolf Institute, Cambridge, 7th December, 2015.

## 2016

Many of us are fascinated by the future, and 2016 is no exception judging by the media interest in the coming events. The Queen is 90 on 21st April, the Rio Olympics start on 5th August, 2016 is the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbour, etc. The list is full of anticipation!

In church terms, the Anglican year started with the significant gathering of all 38 Archbishops at Lambeth to see if they could resolve their differences particularly in relation to the subject of homosexuality. Numbers attending church of all denominations in England on an average Sunday are likely to be just under 2.9 million in 2016, some 5.2% of the population, one person in 19, slightly less than in 2015 when it was 5.3%. In Wales it could be 4.7% of the population in 2016, and in Scotland it could be 7.6% but a fourth Scottish Church Census on 8th May may yield a firmer proportion. There is to be a Church Census in the other UK countries in October.

Current estimates of mortality suggest that in 2016 some 25,000 active churchgoers over 65 will die (11,000 men and 14,000 women) plus 3,000 younger people, mostly in their 50s. If this estimate is correct that would mean that about nine-tenths of the funerals churches take are for non-churchgoers. These figures will be offset by some 22,000 babies born to churchgoing mothers who presumably will bring their children to church.

While some will stop regular attendance at church, these numbers should be offset by the impact of evangelism, church youth camps, large conventions and so on, plus the ongoing witness of Christians to friends and neighbours.

During 2016 some 400 churches are likely to be started or planted in the UK, offset by perhaps 340 closing (many such due to small, non-viable congregations). About a quarter of the new churches could be Fresh Expressions. While four-fifths of the new churches will probably be in England, the other three countries of the UK will see new church beginnings also, especially among immigrant and independent churches. Many new groupings of churches have started in recent years, like Network Churches and the Filling Station in Scotland, which start new churches or encourage existing ones.

There is also likely to be a net increase of some 200 new ministers this year, many of them women, the growth being seen especially among the black Pentecostal churches. So 2016 promises to be a year of gains and losses, as all years are, but there is no decrease in the extent of "fields white for harvest."

**Sources:** *UK Church Statistics* for attendance figures, funeral numbers, new churches, and Office for National Statistics for mortality and fertility rate proportions.

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## American Religion

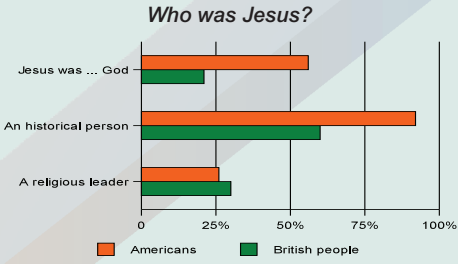
The American research organisation, Barna Group, as part of its 2015 activities undertook surveys in England and Scotland as well as in the United States. Some of their findings will be similar to British concerns also. Eight of their key results were as follows:

*Same-sex Marriage.* The US Supreme Court ruled to legalise same-sex marriage in all 50 states in June, 2015. Two-thirds, 68%, of practising Christians over 40 were not in favour, nor were half, 50%, of those under 40 (against 50% and 31% respectively in the general population). They feel it is morally wrong (67% and 62% respectively of Christians, 50% and 33% of the general population).

*Growing concerns over Religious Freedom.* Although the incidents on which such concerns are based will be different from those in the UK, the same broad trend is true, especially among evangelicals (three-quarters, 77% in 2015, 60% in 2012, that is, those who seem most affected by restrictions on religious liberty), against 41% and 33% respectively in the general population. There is widespread agreement (87% of the population) that religious freedom means "all citizens must have freedom of conscience."

*Post-Christian Beliefs are increasing.* The influence of the Christian faith is waning, especially in politics and culture. Barna measures Christianity on a 15-point scale according to answers given to a variety of questions about faith and practice. Those who score positively on 9 or more of these are deemed "Post-Christian", and based on 61,000 interviews over the last 7 years they have found the percentage of "Post-Christians" increasing, 44% of the American population in 2015, up from 37% in 2013. The same trend is true in Britain although we don't have equivalent measurements.

*Adults disagree on who Jesus was and is.* While many believe He was an historical person (92% in America, 60% in the UK), far fewer believe He was God (56% in America, 21% in the UK). A quarter, 26%, of Americans felt He was just a religious or spiritual leader, similar to the 30% in Britain.



*American Identity* is focussed on Family (62%) as against being born in the US (52%) or being a Christian (38%). Britain doesn't seem to have an equivalent faith metric but secular surveys show that in Britain identity is seen as revolving more around ethnicity, which in the US is only 23%.

*Voters want a Presidential Candidate to take a stand on key issues.* The same is also true in British elections where parliamentary candidates are prone to publicise party politics rather than their own views.

*Discipleship in US Churches is not effective.* Many British pastors would agree with their American counterparts. Barna found that only two-fifths, 40%, of practising Christians said they had made much spiritual progress in the past year, while the *Living the Christian Life* survey in Britain in 2012 found the figure was 28% for British Christians.

*Women are disengaging from Church.* Two-fifths of American churchgoers, 43%, said they felt they received no "emotional support" from their church, and they tended to drop out as a consequence. There is no direct comparison of this with English churchgoers. However, of the men and women under 65 who left the church between 2000 and 2010, those aged 15 to 44 formed 52% of the men and 63% of the women.

**SOURCES:** *Year in Review*, Barna's Top 10 Findings in 2015, <http://barna.org/research/culture-media>, downloaded 16th December 2015.

## Muslim Conversions

The latest issue of *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* has an article co-authored by Duane Miller and Patrick Johnstone seeking to estimate the number of conversions of Muslims to Christianity worldwide. They calculate that in 1960 there were about 200,000 Muslim converts, whereas now there could be as many as 10,250,000, made up as follows:

- 6,968,500 in Asia
- 2,161,000 in Africa
- 493,000 in North America
- 483,000 in the Arab world
- 147,800 in Europe

They arrived at their numbers by collecting data from published sources, missionary reports, finding most of the converts among evangelicals, but also among pockets of Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, as well as those claiming to be both Muslim and Christian. They readily acknowledge that their figures are far from precise, especially as so many conversions in Muslim societies take place secretly for fear of reprisals.

Those who claim to be both Muslim and Christian have created some controversy and criticism from among other Christians, and are sometimes discriminated against and persecuted in the Islamic community. It appears that such people are orthodox in their view of Christ, but less certain that Muhammad should be accepted as a prophet. Fred Farrokh found a wide range of responses on whether such dual-identification is possible or desirable. "Muslim background believers in Christ will continue to endure some forms of social ostracism," he wrote.

Will Muslim refugees in Germany turn to Christianity? Some churches are seeing "significant" growth from their work with them. One Lutheran parish linked to the Lutheran Missouri Synod in Berlin reckons 700 out of its 900 members are ex-Muslims, many of them refugees. The minister, Rev Gottfried Martens, said he felt 90% were genuinely converted, and not just because apostate Muslims cannot be sent back to Afghanistan or Iran. Refugees from these two countries may be attracted towards Christianity because they have an opportunity to interact with other people of similar background as well as the compassion which may be shown by Christians in the host country.

*The Economist* reported a University of Wales researcher using forms issued to mosques reckoning that 5,200 Britons turn to Islam every year, confirming an earlier estimate of 5,000 a year based on the 2001 results from the Scottish Population Census. This would make a grand total of about 100,000 converts to Islam in the UK in 2013, a number also quoted earlier in *The Tablet*. As the UK is part of Europe, this number, if correct, would mean that two-thirds (68%) of European Muslim converts live in the UK.

**SOURCES:** Article by Duane Miller and Patrick Johnstone in *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, Vol 11, No 10; article by Fred Farrokh in the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, Vol 32, No 2, mainly taken from a note by the editor, *Religion Watch*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Nov 2015; <http://www.reform.net>; articles in *The Tablet*, 3rd Nov 2012 and *The Economist*, 18th May 2013, Page 26.

## Humour

Phonetically defined ...

Dogma = a puppy's mother

Polygon = referring to a lost parrot

**SOURCE:** John Atkinson, in *Time* magazine, 2nd November 2015, Page 17;



### Providing Facts for Forward Planning

## SNIPPETS

1) More of those aged 18 to 34 in America see Christmas as a cultural holiday rather than a religious holiday (43% to 40%). That compares with 17% to 68% respectively for those over 65.

2) 55 years ago, on 1st January 1961, the farthing coin, used since the 13th century, ceased to be legal tender in the UK. Most minted since 1936 are worth about £1 today.

3) 62% of the churches (of all denominations) in Cumbria had just one or no young people in their congregation in 2015.

4) Over 1,000 men and women have been ordained in the Church of England in 2015, against just 48 Roman Catholic priests in England in 2014 and 53 in 2013.

5) In Ireland (North and South together) there were 2,159 Religious Priests in the Roman Catholic Church in 2002, but this has fallen to 1,888 in 2012, a drop of 13%.

6) In 2015, one in seven, 15%, of 7 year-olds owns a mobile phone, which increases to three-quarters, 72%, by the time they are 11 years old.

7) Those living in urban areas in England are more likely to be over-weight; almost two-thirds of the entire population is over-weight. Should obesity be classified as a "national risk"?

**SOURCES:** 1) Pew Research survey 10th December, 2015, from web; 2) Appetiser, Oakhouse Foods, Winter 2015, Page 11, and [www.coins-of-the-uk.co.uk](http://www.coins-of-the-uk.co.uk); 3) *Church Buildings Survey*, Churches Trust for Cumbria, 2015, Page 6; 4) and 5) *The Tablet*, 1st August, Page 8, and 17th October, 2015, Page 16; 6) *Millennium Cohort Study*, Institute of Education, University of London, L, Nov 2014, Chapter 2; 7) *Public Health England*, 2015.

## RURAL CHURCHES

Rural churches are part of the landscape of the British countryside. Visit a village somewhere where you've not been before, and invariably you'll find a delightful church tucked away, often at the heart of the village itself! There would be a real nostalgic loss if such weren't there! The Office of National Statistics shows that only about 10% of the population lives in rural areas, but of these some 12% attend church. Rural people are also older – 51% are 45 or over, against 40% of those in urban situations, although the average age isn't so different – 44 to 40.

### Churches and attendance

Rural churches accounted for two-fifths, 41%, of churches of all denominations in England in 2005, a slowly decreasing percentage (it was 43% in 1989) because rural churches close slightly more often than those in other types of environment. Of these, almost three-fifths, 57%, were Church of England, a fifth, 20%, were Methodist, and the final quarter, 23%, were spread across the remaining denominations, of which the largest was Roman Catholic with 6%.



Church attendance, however, has some different percentages. Almost a fifth of rural attenders, 19%, were Church of England in 2005 (down from 22% in 1989), 9% were Methodist and 17% were Catholic, the other half, 54%, being spread across the other denominations, the largest of which were the Baptists at 10% and the Independent Churches at 9%.

This difference means that the average attendance in a rural church was just 38 people in 2005, only a third of the 116 across all non-rural churches. The Anglican average was 28 people and the Methodists 18, although the Catholics averaged 113 because of their policy of having one more central church drawing people in from the surrounding villages.

### Special Anglican issues

*Small numbers.* A recent Church of England report reviewing church buildings shows that rural attendance per capita is about double that in other locations, but it also showed that a quarter of rural Anglican churches have a Sunday attendance of under 10, a quarter of between 10 and 19, a quarter between 19 and 37, and a quarter above 37, giving an average of 30 (very close to the Census figure of 28 given above). The report also indicated that some £105 million was spent as capital expenditure on rural churches in 2013, an average spend of £7,000 per church.

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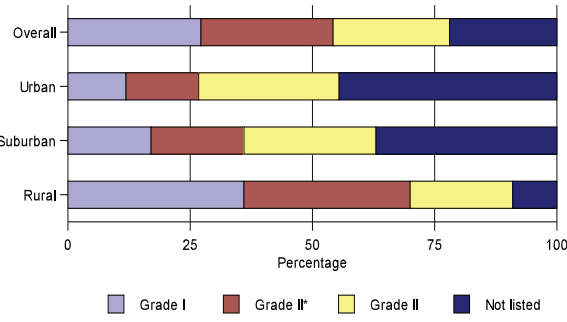
*Few lay leaders.* If numbers attending a particular church are small, there may not be many (if any at all!) willing to take on responsibilities for being Church Warden or other functions, especially if a number of those attending are over 65 years of age, as 30% were in 2005, with 13% 75 or over.

*Training.* An earlier Anglican report, *Growing the Rural Church*, focussed on the priorities of effective training and envisioning lay people, while seeking to build a culture of discipleship appropriate to a rural context.

*Insufficient clergy.* A further complication is that there are insufficient clergy for the number of churches, with the consequence that many clergy are asked to look after multiple churches, sometimes more than 12. If each church has its own separate Council, the vicar will spend a considerable proportion of his/her time at church meetings! Research undertaken 25 years ago showed that most ministers could not realistically manage more than four churches. One reason for London's church growth is that only 7% look after more than one church, against 28% generally. On the other hand, in a 2012 survey of rural clergy three-quarters, 76%, said that "rural life is very rewarding."

*Listed buildings.* Nine-tenths, 91%, of rural Anglican churches are listed buildings, something no other denomination has (the Methodists which are next have only 10% of their churches listed). The chart shows the extent to which this is especially a rural problem.

### Proportions of Anglican churches which are listed, by type of listing



*Greenshifting.* Around the turn of the century, and the years 2005 and 2009, a number of families moved from their urban or suburban location to a rural one, the so-called "greenshifting" phenomenon, and since some of these were churchgoers, some village churches saw an increase in their numbers. This trend has now diminished, so what other solutions are there to the "rural problem"?

### Scottish Churches

The 2002 Scottish Church Census found that a quarter, 25%, of Scottish churches were in rural areas, many of which will have similar problems to those in England. However, their average attendance was much higher, 81 in 2002, although down from 94 in 1994. These compare with 180 per church in 2002 and 220 in 1994 for non-rural churches. Some parts of Scotland have a much larger percentage of rural churches:

*Continued on page 4*