

## LARGER CHURCHES

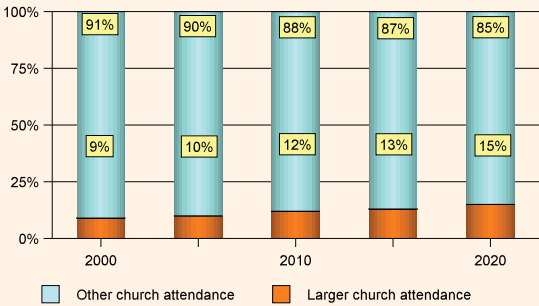
In the United States large churches are called “mega-churches,” usually defined as having at least 2,000 people present on a Sunday. A few of their very well-known churches, such as Willow Creek Church in Chicago (Bill Hybels) with 23,000 on a Sunday, or Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California (Dr Rick Warren) with over 40,000, are much larger.

In the UK, there are relatively few “mega-churches” by the American definition. Holy Trinity, Brompton (HTB) and All Souls, Langham Place are two key Anglican churches in London in this category, and Trinity Church, Cheltenham is another. Other churches in this category include the Kingsway International Christian Centre, now located at Chatham, Kent (over 9,000), Abundant Life Church, Bradford (8,000), Hillsong, London (7,500), Ruach Ministries, Brixton, London (5,000), Kensington Temple [Elim], London (3,000), Audacious Church, Manchester (3,000?), Glory House, London E13 (3,000), House of Praise, Woolwich, London (2,500), Jesus House for All Nations, Brent, London (2,500), Philadelphia Church, Sheffield (2,200), Solihull Renewal Centre [Elim] (2,000) and Rhema Church, Croydon (2,000). Some of these are Black Majority Churches (BMCs). [If any reader can update these numbers or add further names these will be gladly acknowledged in future issues of this bulletin.] There are some very large Roman Catholic churches also but their exact size is not known. Perhaps the UK has some 20 “mega-churches”, with a possible total attendance of around 70,000, or just over 2% of total English attendance.

Large churches, with more than 700 on a Sunday, include some 37 Anglican churches, 15 Baptist and 6 Independent. The number of Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Presbyterian churches of this size is unfortunately not known.

“Larger churches” are usually stated to be those with at least 350 people attending on a Sunday, across all services, including children and young people, this number coming from research by David Wasdell some 40 years ago which showed it was necessary to have at least 3 full-time employees in a church that size, that is, it has to be a *team* ministry not a gigantic effort by one or two people. There are certainly many more of this size (350+). A recent analysis has shown that there are 175 Anglican Churches this size in England, that number including those already mentioned. Collectively they account for about 100,000 people on a Sunday, some 13% of all Church of England worshippers in 2015. This percentage appears to be increasing as the chart indicates.

Percentage of Church of England Sunday attendance by size of church



The bar-chart, however, is misleading since it suggests that the number attending these larger churches is growing quite significantly. In fact the reason why the percentages increase is simply because the rest of Sunday attendance is decreasing. The number of larger Anglican church attenders remains about 100,000 to 105,000 between 2010 and 2020, simply because many of these churches are finding it very hard to see significant growth.

Three years ago, one large non-Anglican church in the north, for example, only had two (out of 800) attenders in its congregation who had been Christians for under 3 years, which the minister, when he learned of the situation, immediately said, “Right, we focus purely on evangelism from now onwards!”

Starting new congregations helps some churches to grow. The people who leave to help start the new church are sometimes replaced fairly quickly, but not always. Nicky Gumbel of HTB feels that there are many “de-churched” people, who have a faith of some kind, but are “looking for a church where they feel at home.” Hence his desire for HTB to take over churches on the brink of closure and help them to grow again into lively congregations. They have been asked to help with over 20 churches so far, mostly in the last 10 years, but including more recently fast growing congregations in Bournemouth, Brighton and Norwich. They have just started supporting a church in Birmingham.

Many new churches are collectively being started, but the common testimony is “that it’s very hard work.” Some 3,000 churches were started in England between 2010 and 2015, against which 1,400 closed (not the same churches). That’s a net gain, however, of 1,600 churches or 300 a year, across all denominations. Most of these were in London and the Home Counties.

Growth is not just about large churches. They are the many hugely important networks like New Wine, Soul Survivor, Vineyard, Newfrontiers, Fresh Expressions which collectively have an enormous potential for evangelism. But is it not just the evangelical churches which are growing, though most growing churches are evangelical. At least 10% of the largest Anglican churches are non-evangelical but are seeing some growth in their large numbers, through the quality and far-sightedness of their leadership.

Smaller churches can grow, and indeed are growing. A church of 125 becomes over 5 years a church of 150, a 20% growth in 5 years, virtually 4% a year – a phenomenal rate of increase! When London grew so much with all its immigrant churches between 2005 and 2012 it saw a 16% growth, “only” just over 2% a year! So small churches attracting new families are helping to swell the numbers offset by all the deaths.

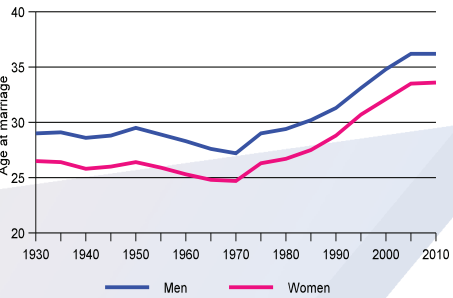
**SOURCES:** English Church Census data when collected in 1989, 1998 and 2005, augmented by other surveys since, such as *The Significance of Larger Churches*, Brierley Consultancy, 2009, evaluation reports from Larger Church Conferences, personal information; HTB website; article in *Christianity* August 2015, Page 221.

## No Grandchildren!

In spite of the proliferation and rise of modern communication technology, loneliness is endemic to 21st century society. In fact, the very obsession with such means of communication is itself perhaps an indication of that widespread feeling of inner isolation. Such can be caused by teenage insecurity, single parenthood, lack of a partner, elderly bereavement and many other situations, the more serious of which have mental health implications.

Has the changing pattern of marriage, cohabitation and delayed parenthood identified or added to the 21st century sense of loneliness? The first graph shows how the average age of marriage has increased over the last 80 years: up to 1980 it was mostly between 25 and 30 for both men and women (men marrying on average when about 3 years older than women), but it has risen steadily since then as many now cohabit first.

Average age of marriage, by gender, England and Wales, 1930-2010



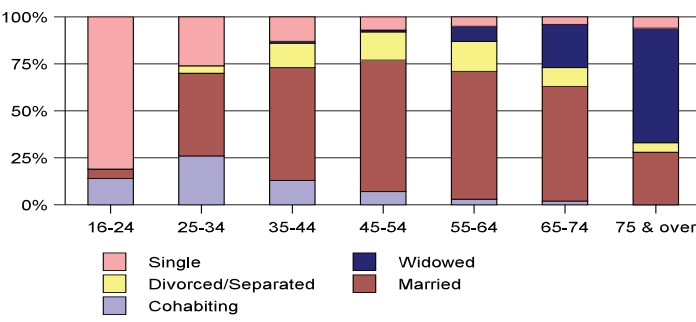
There are probably more great-grandparents alive today than ever before (as a proportion of the population). This is because the post-war generation, marrying in their twenties (very little cohabitation in the 1950s and 1960s), would have their first child while still in their 20s and maybe 1 or 2 other children. When these children grew up and began to marry/cohabit, 25 or 30 years later in the 1980s or 1990s, they often started their families in their 30s. Those children again 25 to 30 years later, now in 2010s, would begin to cohabit/marry and start a family also in their 30s.

If a parent has a child when in their 20s, who becomes a parent him/herself when the first parent is in their 40s or early 50s, then the first parents are likely to be in their 70s or 80s when their great-grandchildren are born. Since the life span has increased with many now living into their 80s or 90s, great-grandparenting is no longer exceptional. For the next generation, however, having its first child in their 30s, great-grandparenting may become less frequent, unless the lifespan increases still further (which seems likely).

The following diagram shows the range of marital statuses by age for women. Men are similar except that for those aged 75 and over, more are married (61% to 28%) and far fewer are widowed (27% to 61%). Those living alone go from just over 80% for those aged 16-24, to between 25% and 30% for those aged 25 to 64, and then increases reaching 70% for women 75 or over.

There will be some women who remain single by choice, others remain single by circumstance (Christian women not able to find a Christian husband), and others who, though cohabiting or married, choose not to have children or find that they cannot have children. Prof Friedman of the University of Pennsylvania found in 1992 that 78% of graduating students (male or female) said they planned to have children. In 2012 it was only 42%, a decline of nearly half in just 20 years.

Marital status for women by age, Great Britain, 2007



Either deliberate or circumstantial childlessness obviously means a section of the older population have no grandchildren or great-grandchildren. And those who might have been grandparents can find themselves lonely because they lack the stimulus and family involvement of having young people around. A survey in 2011 among 5,000 grandparents and 6,000 non-grandparents by the London School of Economics found that having at least one grandchild was “associated positively and statistically significantly” with overall life satisfaction.

**SOURCES:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) website for Age of Marriage; General Household Survey, 2007, ONS (last year it was undertaken), article in *The Daily Telegraph*, 16th January, 2016, Page 29.

While only 8% of the White population in London attends church, 19% of the Black population does and 17% of the Chinese/Korean/Japanese population. In Inner London 10% of White people attend church, but in Outer London it is 8%. In Inner London, virtually half, 48%, of all attendance is Black.

London itself, however, continues to grow and it is expected to be the only city in Europe to exceed 9 million people by 2020. The Office for National Statistics’ projection is for a total capital population of 9,155,500 that year. Churchgoing, though, may fall slightly as attending immigrants continue to move out of the capital, and may not be replaced by new ones, and older people in the Outer Boroughs pass away. The percentage of the population attending church in London in 2020 could be 7.7%, still much higher than England as a whole where the percentage is estimated at 4.8%.

**SOURCES:** *Capital Growth*, ADBC Publishers, Kent, 2013; Greater London Authority web Data Store, 2014 GLA Data Projections, accessed 5th March 2016 *UK Church Statistics*, Brierley Consultancy, ADBC Publishers, 2014, Page 12.8.

## Church of England

Early every year the Church of England now publishes a substantial document entitled *Statistics for Mission for the year two years before, so it comes about 13 months after the year end. The latest is therefore for the year 2014. The Head of the Research and Statistics’ Dept of the Archbishops’ Council, Dr Bev Botting, introduced a new measure for counting people coming to church shortly after her appointment four years ago, what she called “the worshipping community”, and while the precise concept is a little vague it is very useful since the form requesting details also asks about numbers joining and leaving and why. It certainly includes the normal congregation, including Fresh Expressions, or any new person who becomes a regular worshipper.*

In 2012 the total Anglican worshipping community was 1,082,000 people, and in 2014 it was 1,073,000, just a 1% reduction, smaller than the 3% reduction in Usual Sunday Attendance also given in the document (down to 765,000, a 15% drop on 10 years earlier). The Diocese of Southwark did not supply figures for 2012 and 2013 so its numbers for 2014 are excluded for comparison purposes.

A fifth, 20%, of the worshipping community in 2014 were under the age of 18, and 29% were 70 or over, compared with 20% and 27% respectively found in the English Church Census for Anglicans in 2005. These percentages were 20% and 28% respectively in 2012, not significantly different, though there is the suggestion that the proportion of those 70 and over has increased a little in the years since 2005.

Throughout England, some 82,000 people joined an Anglican church in 2014, while 56,000 left (including those who died), a net gain of 26,000 people. Why did they start coming?

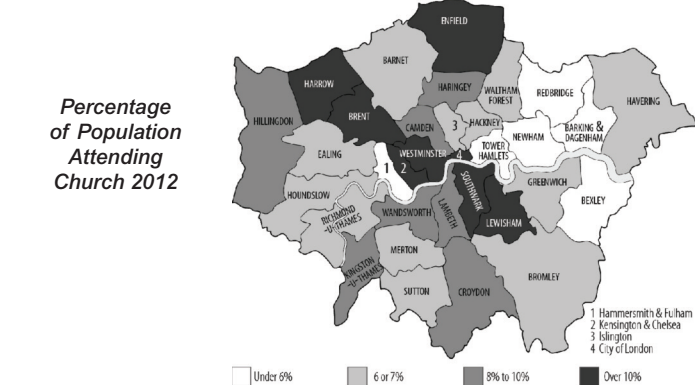
- 34% of adults and 24% of children because they moved into the area
- 35% of adults and 60% of children were coming to church for the first time
- 15% of adults and 9% of children had transferred from another local church
- 16% of adults and 7% of children started coming back to church again

These percentages are not dissimilar to those from a study just of the Diocese of Rochester in the years 1992 and 2002. People moving into an area are often easily spotted as the sign outside their house changes from “For Sale” to “Sold”. Could volunteers from a church visit such people with advice as to the nearest shopping centre, doctor, dentist ... and church? Would that help the moving process for families and encourage them to consider going to church nearby, even if they haven’t before?

## LONDON’S CHURCHES

At the time of the London Church Census in 2012, some 8.8% of the capital’s population was attending church. This was not spread evenly around London as some Boroughs had more than others, often because there were churches in those Boroughs to which people travelled from all directions. The most “absurd” percentage was for the City of London, which has a tiny population of just over 5,000 people but with 3,600 attending you have a percentage of 69%! St Helen’s, Bishopsgate, is one of the large churches attracting many.

Kensington & Chelsea, home of the Kensington Elim Church with attendance of the order of 3,000 people, as a Borough had 18% of its population in church on Census Sunday. These illustrations show that percentages do not tell the whole story, but the map does indicate where the key concentrations of worshippers are on an average Sunday.



If a third of newcomers are coming for the first time, the welcome they get is hugely important. Some churches have training for “welcome teams” reflecting this priority. The same will be true for those coming back to church again for some reason, often because they’ve been invited to a special event, or perhaps just coming for Easter or Christmas. One person at a Conference some years ago said she hardly ever went to church, but one Sunday woke up feeling, “I’d like to worship today,” so specially went.

Why did people leave? The reasons found were:

- 43% of adults died and 4% of children stopped because of illness
- 31% of adults and 43% of children moved away
- 13% of adults and 34% of children transferred to another church
- 13% of adults and 19% of children just stopped going to church.

The moving aspect dominates again here also. If a family is moving, can the vicar or churchwarden not find another similar church in their new neighbourhood and suggest they try going there? People move frequently for a variety of reasons. Naturally they look for the best possible house to suit their requirements; can they be encouraged as well to look for a “house + church” package? It would be interesting to know why so many children transferred to another church – presumably because that church was offering services or facilities which their initial church could not offer or perhaps peer friendship with those in another church.

The loss through death (also found in the earlier studies) simply highlights the problem facing the Church of England. The 29% over 70 is more than double the percentage of people of that age in England in 2014 (13%). Hence the imperative of trying to reach out to young people and keeping them when they attend. “What helps teenagers stay in church?” was one question in a survey a few years ago, and the answer was that they “wished to sense the presence of God” in the service, honest enough to say that they wanted spiritual reality. How do we provide that?

That the issue is urgent is seen in another statistic in the Church of England document. It compares the number of confirmations in 2014 with the number in 2004. Numbers are less in 2014, but the age at which they decrease the most is between 12 and 15, down -53% for young men and -57% for young women.

**SOURCE:** *Statistics for Mission* 2014, Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops’ Council, January 2016.

## SNOWFLAKES

**Churches are important** ... as part of Britain’s heritage, said 84% of British adults interviewed in December 2015, up from 79% a year previously. What was the best encouragement to visit a church? A warm welcome and a toilet. Three-fifths, 57%, of the public said they had visited a church in the previous 12 months either to attend a service or a non-religious activity or as a tourist.

**SOURCE:** Press release by the National Churches Trust based on ComRes poll of 2,040 British adults on 16th December 2015.

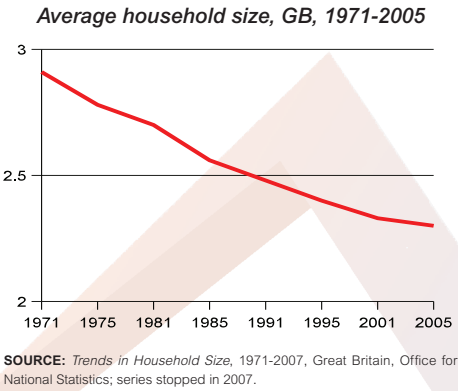
**Sodom and Gomorrah.** A news story in *USA Today* by Cathy Grossman indicated that half, 50%, of American High School Seniors think Sodom and Gomorrah were a married couple! At the same time published results of excavations at Bab edh-Dhra, southeast of the Dead Sea, which began in the 1960s, found that Sodom, Gomorrah, other “cities of the plain” (Gen 14:2) and a nearby cemetery were burned “from the top down” and, in places, “lie beneath several feet of ash even today.”

**SOURCES:** Yahoo! Story accessed Feb 2016, undated; *Acts and Facts*, Vol 45 No 1, Jan 2016, Page 16.

**Sunday trading.** An Evangelical Alliance survey on ethical consuming found that 59% thought Christians should avoid shopping on Sunday, 90% that no-one should be compelled to work on Sunday unless they had freely chosen to do so, and 92% thought workers should have the right to take time off every fortnight to worship on a Sunday.

**SOURCE:** *Idea magazine*, March/April 2016, Page 32.

**Households getting smaller.** In 1971, 17% of households in Great Britain had just 1 person in them, and 14% 5 or more. By 2007 the percentage of households with only 1 member was 30%, almost twice as many, and only 7% had 5 or more, half as many. Many more are living alone, far fewer are having large families, as this graph suggests:



**Family break-ups** now cost the tax-payers in the UK £48 billion each year, according to the latest publication of the Relationships Foundation (£15 bn on tax credits, £16 bn on health care, £7 bn on legal aid, £7 bn on housing, and £3 bn on criminal damage caused by disturbed children).

**SOURCE:** *Mail Online*, 3rd March 2016.

**Exodus.** There is a vast demographic change in the Middle East at present as war and terrorist situations create havoc for those living there. Dr Todd Johnson, the Lausanne Catalyst for Global Christianity, recently made a brave forecast of what percentage of the populations in the various countries affected might be Christian in the future when hopefully some semblance of peace and security has been restored. His figures are as below, naturally very tentative, showing the known percentages for 1970 and 2010 and his guesstimate for 2025:

| Country      | 1970 % | 2010 % | 2025 % |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Egypt        | 16     | 10     | 8      |
| Syria        | 10     | 5      | 2      |
| UAE          | 6      | 12     | 12     |
| Palestine    | 5      | 2      | 1      |
| Iraq         | 4      | 2      | 1      |
| Israel       | 3      | 3      | 2      |
| Saudi Arabia | 0      | 4      | 4      |

**SOURCE:** *Ongoing Exodus: Tracking the Emigration of Christians from the Middle East*, Todd Johnson and G Zurio, 2015; *The Economist*, 2nd January 2016, Page 31.

**What do you want in life?** A YouGov survey at the end of last year asked 18,000 people in 17 countries this question. Germans most wanted “better health”, and then “love”, and the Chinese wanted “better health” first and then “their own family”. All four Scandinavian countries together with the UK and the USA put “Love” first, with “better health” second for Finland, Sweden, the USA and the UK, but “my own family” second in Norway and Denmark. “Moral virtue”, “physical beauty” and “power” were bottom in five of these countries, with Sweden substituting “spiritual progress” for “moral virtue.”

**SOURCE:** Will Dahlgreen, 23rd December, 2015.

**Ministers move.** Why do ministers move church? Charles Arn, an American researching church growth, gave the following reasons (some giving more than one):

- 27% A desire to serve in a different type of community or area of the country
- 20% Getting promoted to a higher position
- 16% Wanting to pastor a larger church
- 15% Leaving to start a new church
- 15% Being transferred by their denomination
- 12% Being called by God to another church
- 11% Better pay and/or benefits
- 10% Fired or asked to leave
- 18% Other reasons (family needs; job frustration; new challenge and so on)

**SOURCE:** Quoted in article in *Ministry* Jan 2016, Page 20.

**The Referendum.** A *Telegraph* article identified 7 issues of importance as people go to vote on 23rd June:

- The UK’s place in the world
- The UK’s independence (decide things ourselves)
- The UK’s security
- The UK’s immigration increase
- The UK’s sovereignty
- The UK’s economy
- The UK’s foreign policy

No mention of the UK’s spiritual well-being! What are the implications for each of these for churchgoers and Christian leaders?

**SOURCE:** *The Daily Telegraph*, 27th February 2016, Page 6.

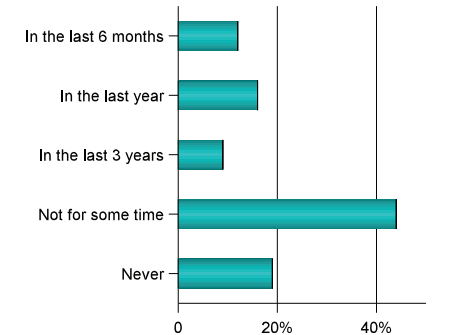
**The Synagogue Church** of All Nations (SCOAN) is a very large church in Nigeria, led by TB Joshua (aged 53 in 2016). Known as loving the Bible from an early age, he received a vision to start SCOAN, initially with few attending, but now seeing 15,000 attend each week, many from other countries who stay in a church guesthouse. In 2014, this collapsed killing over 80 people, mostly South Africans. SCOAN has also started a branch church in Ghana and runs Emmanuel TV station. Many miracles of healing are reported through him, but TB says his mission is not to heal but to introduce people to the Healer, Jesus Christ. “Your future must move into you before you can move into your future,” he says.

**SOURCE:** Wikipedia; *The Economist*, 4th October 2014, Page 62; www.logbtabby.com.

Continued from page 1

into the Sunday School movement has already highlighted the effect of church done badly.

**When was the last time you heard a sermon in your home church explaining that family is God’s primary institution for the communication of faith to children?**



But the importance of church working well was highlighted again in the question, “Who is responsible for ensuring your children have an active faith?” 55% said it was a partnership between church and family. Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence that the church is not playing its part. In response to the question, “When was the last time you heard a sermon on the family being God’s primary institution for the communication of faith?” only 28% had heard a sermon on this theme in the last year, as the second diagram indicates.

Therefore, the issue may seem complex and revolve around communicating to parents their role in faith development and the important part the church has to play. But it is also clear that there is a necessity to communicate to the church the need to help parents bring their children up in the way of Christ, primarily by being the sort of church children will want to attend, but also with pulpit sermons that let parents know their responsibility. But all this really does return to the “WHY?” and “HOW?” albeit in a slightly more intricate form.

The WHY question becomes two-fold:

- WHY should parents communicate faith to their children? AND

- Why is church so important in equipping parents to bring their children up in the faith of Christ?

And the “HOW?” question needs to be carefully crafted to keep parents at the centre. Therefore “HOW?” must be addressed from four angles:

- HOW do we equip parents to bring their children up in the way of Christ?

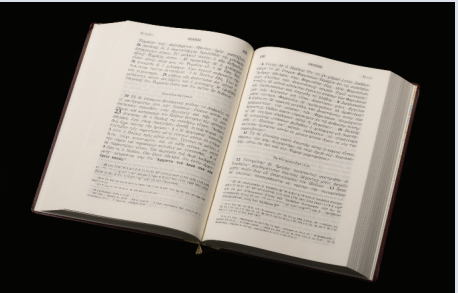
- HOW do we help Children and Family Workers to equip parents to bring their children up in the way of Christ?

- HOW do we help our Church Schools equip parents to bring their children up in the way of Christ?

- HOW do we help Church Leaders equip parents to bring their children up in the way of Christ and to create the sort of churches that children want to attend?

The next stage will be to look at how we best communicate the WHY and from there, address the HOW.





## REFLECTIONS

The spiritual need of immigrant refugees is not solely a 21st century opportunity but one very relevant in the 7th century BC. In a foreign city, unpopular and exploited, such were served by a faithful priest for several years before he was arrested by an awesome vision of God in His glory. His ministry changed after that, and he became more of a preacher and prophet, assuring his people that though the immediate future was indeed bleak, the long-term future was more positive.

Ezekiel was born about the year 623 BC, grew up in a Jewish family, and wanted to be a priest – ordination in those days was when they were 30. But catastrophe struck when he was 26 (597 BC) – Nebuchanezzar sacked his home city of Jerusalem and took many of the inhabitants captives as slaves back to his capital city, Babylon. Then God called Ezekiel to be a prophet as well as a priest with this wonderful vision by the river. He had a difficult message to tell – God was punishing them for their sins, and they would not be returning in their life-time. They should settle down, as best they could, and marry and have families.

The proof of his message came when Nebuchadnezzar again attacked Jerusalem (in 586 BC), this time demolishing the walls and Temple. The Jews in Babylon felt life was hopeless, so the emphasis of Ezekiel's message changed – they would not stay in this foreign land forever. Ezekiel had to act out God's message of hope and future restoration. Perhaps his fellow Jews also heard of the contemporary faith of Daniel's friends and the miracle of being thrown into a furnace and coming out alive.

Ezekiel was a very careful man who kept good notes of times, and after 12 years he received another vision, very different from the first. He is on a cliff-top looking at the valley below him. It is full of useless, dry bones. Then came the searching question, "Ezekiel, can these bones live?" Ezekiel, who had seen the Lord in His glory, knew He was the omnipotent Creator of all things, simply replied in effect, "Lord, you can do anything."

Yes, God can do anything, but in His sovereignty He often involves us as well. So it was here. Ezekiel was told to preach, or prophesy, over the bones. How are "dry bones" responding to your preaching? Ezekiel might have thought these inanimate objects needed to be buried, not lectured. But Ezekiel had learned to be obedient, the first step in any significance advance of God.

And as he preached, the bones began to move, then join themselves together, and move into the right positions to make a human skeleton. Then the skeletons started to grow skin and hair, and finally the Spirit of God came and breathed life into them and they became a living army. They would conquer! As Job exclaimed, probably many centuries earlier, God's purposes cannot be thwarted. After Nebuchadnezzar died, a succession of feeble rulers took over, until the Persians conquered the Babylonians and the new Emperor Cyrus gave the Jews permission to return to their homeland in 539 BC, about 34 years after Ezekiel had told them what he had seen.

We never know how God is working His purposes out, but indisputably He is, and sometimes we are asked to do something that seems odd, strange or peculiar. The test is whether we are listening, whether we glimpse what God is proposing, whether we share His desire to "seek and to save that which is lost" and whether we are willing to obey. If so, we will bring freedom, as the Jews experienced so many centuries ago. It is easy to say we haven't got the skills, serve in an unresponsive situation, don't have enough faith, but we have to be negative about negativity. We need to think outside ourselves and in the context of a God who gives us the privilege of being part of His awe-inspiring purposes.

## Churches are Growing

While church decline is now an accepted fact, there is also an awareness that "growth is in the air", and it is quite true that some churches are growing, that is, seeing more people come to their services on a Sunday now than they used to, say, this time last year! Which kind of churches are these? There are three broad types, all important because they mostly involve people under the age of 40 (though the leadership may be older):

Some are called **"Fresh Expressions"** or "Messy Church" which tend to be groups of people meeting informally, not always on a Sunday and not always in a church or church hall. They may meet in a school or village hall, and often include parents and children and increasingly, some of grandparent age as well. They invariably focus on Fun for everyone, and Food for everyone, so these are a major attraction! They are usually very Friendly and give Families in particular a very special sense of belonging. A warm Welcome is part of what they are about as well as a time of Worship. For some who attend, this is the only form of church they now go to and, for two-fifths, 41%, it is the only church they have ever attended! While such groups have been initiated by churches of various denominations, they have been especially begun by Anglicans, Methodists and the Salvation Army. Resources are being published by the Bible Reading Fellowship specially for Messy Churches.

Other churches are starting further congregations which tend to be more formal, usually as independent churches rather than the previous "mother-daughter" church model. These **church plants** will often meet in a hall or school or in a church, usually at a different time from the main services, and thus can be more convenient for those who have jobs or other responsibilities on a Sunday morning. Some of these infant churches have quite robust congregations, while others are fairly small. Size doesn't seem to matter, but the age of the person leading the new congregation generally is under 50. It is very hard work starting a church like this, and it requires much dedicated effort, support and determination to keep on going. Over the past 25 years some 9,000 new churches have been started in England, although 8,000 have closed (not usually the same ones!).

The third area of growth is simply **an increasing Sunday congregation**. Larger churches seem better able to grow in this way than smaller churches, usually because they have more people to help do things a little differently Sunday by Sunday, and maybe have used some of this volunteer help to leaflet surrounding houses. The main reason for their growth, however, is the quality of the preaching (so say 91% of newcomers to larger churches), which is frequently relevant to their life and very helpful in explaining what the Bible means on various topics. Worship and Welcome are especially important here also – some churches have two coffee queues after the service, free for newcomers, donation please from existing attenders! While many church plants have been started by evangelical churches, some church plants come from those of other persuasions.

All congregations vary from year to year as some people move away or die, and others move into the area or transfer from another congregation. So how does one measure "growth"? It is probably best measured on an annual basis – how many more people does a church have on an average Sunday now than a year ago? Over the last 5 years, by what percentage has the congregation increased? If by as much as 10%, it is definitely in the "growing" category! This is much harder often for larger churches, as a 10% increase in a small congregation of 25 is just 3 people, or perhaps just one family. Even so, all growth is to be welcomed.

Has there been a corresponding increase in church membership? Some denominations are definitely growing such as the Orthodox, Independent, New and Pentecostal churches, all of which have seen a membership increase since 2011. Some of this may come from immigration, and some may be purely notional as someone saying, "I'm a church member" in a polling situation without regard to whether they attend church (a definition increasingly being used by some academics). The population generally continues to increase, some of whom would indicate as being "Christian" in a poll.

Does all this mean that the church overall is growing? Sadly no, it doesn't, as the number of people dying with a church background in an ageing population is very large. Some 7,000 church people die every week, across all denominations, and the number of new people joining a church by any of the ways given above is collectively probably only a fifth of that number, so numbers continue to decrease. But that doesn't stop your church doing something new!

SOURCE: Various tables in UK Church Statistics No 2 2010-2020.

## Continental Variations

The proportion of young people in the world is slowly reducing. In 1950, in all continents except North America, the proportion of those aged 15 to 29 in the population was 25% or more. By 2015, that was still true of Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, India and parts of the Middle East. By 2050, if present trends continue, that will only still be true of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The reason is easy to discern – while the fertility rate in all parts of the world, including Sub-Saharan Africa, has dropped in the last fifty years, it is still highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, where women on average have 5.0 children each (down from 6.8 in 1970). Across the world as a whole it is 2.5 children per woman (it was 4.8 in 1970). In South Asia, which excludes China, it is still marginally above this, at 2.6 children, although in China with its long-held one-child policy, now officially modified, it is 1.7. This is reaping demographic problems in China where there is a drastic shortage of young women, leading to the consequential kidnapping of ladies likely to be suitable brides in Vietnam or other countries.

As in the European Union, which also has the same rate, 1.7, this is well below the replacement level of 2.1. In Europe it simply heralds the enormous and rapid ageing of the population. In the latter, however, with the arrival of immigrants in great numbers, the demographic out-turn of the population movements of the last 10 years or so will change the scenario for the statistical authorities. Many immigrants are in their 20s. This is especially important for Germany whose fertility rate is seriously low (1.1, the lowest in the world), but which has taken in huge numbers of refugee immigrants. When the movements have died down, it will be interesting to see their new demographic picture.

North America's fertility rate is also below replacement level but is higher than in Europe, at 1.9 children per woman.

It will also be interesting to see how the religious composition of Europe's population changes with the immigrant and refugee influx. In Britain at least, their influx has been substantial, as the growth of the Black Majority Churches testifies.

SOURCE: The Economist, 29th January, 2016, Special Report, Pages 4 and 10; report in the Daily Telegraph, 2nd June 2015.

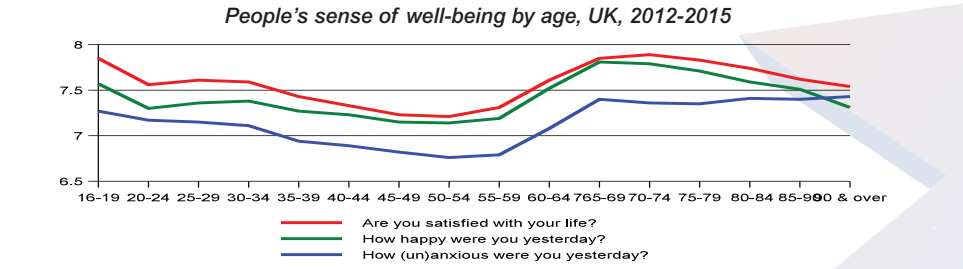
## ARE YOU HAPPY?

Over the last four years, at the specific request of David Cameron the Prime Minister, the Office for National Statistics has asked just over 300,000 people in its various surveys questions such as:

- Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

in an attempt to assess people's well-being. The questions had to be answered on a scale from 0 (Not at all anxious, happy, or satisfied) to 10 (completely anxious, happy or satisfied) and were measured alongside control questions of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, marital status, health, employment and so on.

Some interesting answers emerge. The average score for anxiety was 2.9, for happiness 7.4 and for satisfaction 7.5, but with wide variations. They consistently varied by age as shown in the graph, where the anxiety score has been subtracted from 10 (= being not anxious) for comparison purposes.



These results show that consistently the lowest age for being satisfied, happy or non-anxious is when a person is between 50 and 54, and that there is a sharp increase in happiness and satisfaction as people move into their 60s when retirement looms. The most satisfied people are those aged 70 to 74, followed by those aged 65 to 69 and 16 to 19. Satisfaction and happiness tend to drop as people get older, almost certainly because this then gets compounded with deteriorating health or sickness (which when measured separately got lower scores with age).

### Gender and Ethnicity

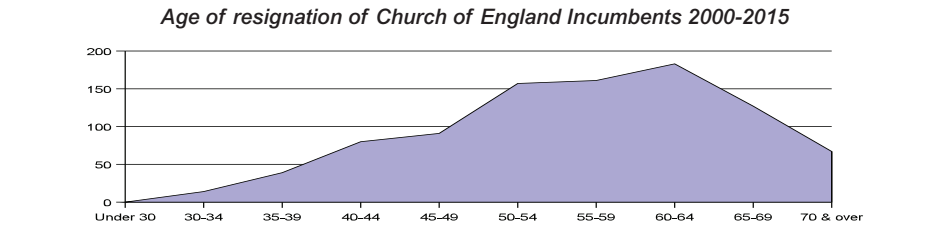
Women generally scored slightly higher than men in terms of satisfaction and happiness but men tended to be slightly less anxious than women.

Indians generally were more satisfied and happy than those of other ethnicities, with white people being second, although Bangladeshis also tended to be happy and not anxious. Black people were the least satisfied, Arabs the least happy, while Gypsies had the lowest anxiety score.

### Religion

Christians and Hindus had the highest level of life satisfaction, with Muslims, those of No Religion, those in Other Religions (that is, not Jews, Sikhs or Buddhists who were measured separately and are in between) the least satisfied. Hindus and Christians were also the happiest, with Muslims, those of No Religion or in Other Religions the least happy. Christians, Sikhs and those of No Religion had the least anxiety.

Apart from the fact that these surveys beg the questions of what happiness and satisfaction really are, how far do clergy fit into the apparent norm? Only the Church of England publishes details of when its ministers resign. The second graph shows the age when Incumbents have resigned over the last 15 years, and shows an interesting correlation with the preceding graph, although there is no statistical reason to link the two. The graph could suggest that the thought of retirement increases clergy's sense of satisfaction and happiness and reduces anxiety levels! Conversely, is the increase in resignations at age 50 to 54 linked to the poor life satisfaction when people are in their 50s? Whatever their age, encouraging our clergy is never amiss!



SOURCES: Tables on Well-being by the Office for National Statistics, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rnl/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being>; Church of England Newspaper each week for resignations.

## American Churches

The American Leadership Network, part of the Vanderbloemen Search Group (a recruitment agency), undertakes surveys of larger churches. In its most recent, which Dr Warren Bird conducted in 2014, it received replies from 91 selected churches with an average Sunday attendance of over 5,000! It focussed especially on salaries (American pastors received an average of 3% pay rise in 2014, something that very few British ministers would have had), and found that 3.4% of a church's budget went on the pastor's salary. It also found that four-fifths, 81%, of larger churches have an online giving option.

The survey found that nearly half, 46% on average, of a church's income went on staffing, and that the larger the church the smaller the per capita giving (something also true in the UK). There are roughly 300,000 Protestant churches in the USA, attended by approximately 56 million people every weekend, an average of about 190, almost four times as many in the UK (55 in 2015).



Willow Creek Church, Chicago

Of these worshippers, 1 million or 4% attended the 100 very largest churches, followed by another 3% in mega-churches of 2,000 or more, excluding the 100 largest. A further 12% attended churches with between 1,000 and 2,000 people. English percentages will be very different from these – in 2010, the highest 6% of Protestant attenders attended just 0.7% of our churches of 500 or more, showing how few really large churches we have, 18% went to churches with between 300 and 500 people, and 13% went to churches of between 200 and 300 people.

The American survey found that the larger the church, the younger its congregation is, something which is true in the UK also. It also found that 18% of these large churches were declining, something very similar to the 20% of Britain's larger churches.

SOURCES: Leadership Network 2014 Large Church Salary Report, Dr Warren Bird, Leadership Network, 2015; Religious Trends No 5, 2005/2006, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 2005, Table 8, 12.3; Larger Church Analysis 2012, Brierley Consultancy.

## Humour

### Poor translations ...

(Danish airline) We take your bags and send them in all directions

(Heathrow) No electric people carrying vehicles past this point

(Japanese taxi) Safety first: please put on your seatbelt. Prepare for accident

(Kenyan maternity ward) No children allowed

(Beijing shop) Haircuts half price today. Only one per customer

(Café in Empire State Building) All your eggs made with 3 omelettes

(Swedish furrier) Fur coats made for ladies from their own skin

(Indian jar of jam) Contains no fruit whatsoever

(Hotel in Tokyo) Do not open door until door opens first

SOURCE: Lost in Translation, Charlie Croker, Michael O'Mara, 2006.

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

Established 2009. UK subscriptions £20 per annum; overseas £32 per annum. Make cheque out to 'Peter Brierley', or contact for BACS details and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: [peter@brierleyres.com](mailto:peter@brierleyres.com) [www.brierleyconsultancy.com](http://www.brierleyconsultancy.com)

☎ 01732 369 303

ISSN 2040-0268



## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

## SNIPPETS

1) 100,000 sexual offence cases occurred in England and Wales in the year ending Sept 2015, 3% of all victim-based crime, of which one-third was rape, equivalent to 1 woman in every 900 in the population.

2) Three-quarters of the population say they have been influenced by a religious leader, even by someone local they knew personally, such as a parish priest.

3) Two-fifths, 39%, of teenagers in the UK chill out before sleeping by reading, 32% by using their phone and 28% by listening to music.

4) "Britain has the most trustworthy citizens in the world" was the conclusion from a survey of young people which found the most honest nations were Britain, Sweden, Germany, Italy and Lithuania – and the least honest Tanzania, China, Morocco, Vietnam and Colombia.

5) The richest 5% of men in England live to an average of 96 years; the poorest 10% live to just 62.

6) For the first time since records began in 1920, Japan's population has fallen, down a million people from 2010 to 2015 – to a total of 127 million. Its birth rate is falling and it has an ageing population.

7) The number of postgraduate students applying to train as RE teachers in the UK has increased to 310 in 2016, compared with 190 in 2015 and 200 in 2014, perhaps helped by tax-free bursaries of £4,000 to £9,000.

SOURCES: 1) Crime in England and Wales, Statistical Bulletin, Office for National Statistics, January 2016; Table 2; 2) Quote from article by Prof Linda Woodhead in The Tablet, 16th May, 2015, Page 6; 3) Survey by Office for National Statistics quoted in Christianity, March 2012, Page 22; 4) Survey by University of Nottingham reported in The Daily Telegraph 10th March, 2016, Page 13; 5) The Sunday Times, quoted in The Week, 27th February 2016, Page 21; 6) Taken from The Week, 5th March 2016, Page 9; 7) Universities and Colleges Applications Service, quoted in the Church Times, 4th March, 2016, Page 7.

## WILL THEY HAVE FAITH?

REVD DR MARK GRIFFITHS JP, VICAR OF WARFIELD

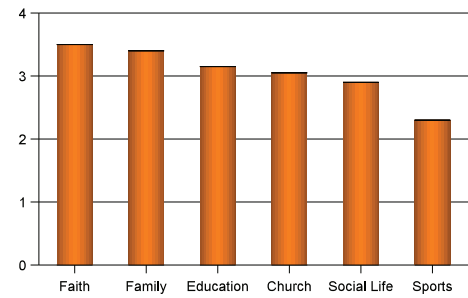
Throughout the summer of 2015 several round table discussions took place between various national organisations around the subject of parents communicating faith to their children. **FutureFirst** has run various research articles on this theme over the years, but what came out of these discussions that was particularly interesting was the idea that the difficulty might not be to do with HOW - after all there is an increasing range of resources of varying quality - but with WHY. WHY should parents communicate faith to their children? And of course with no identifiable WHY, then HOW becomes redundant.

I wanted to explore this further and see if the findings would hold true in the network of churches that I was connected to, namely New Wine. So I conducted several more conversations with key leaders over the two weeks of the New Wine National Gatherings 2015. These further conversations helped frame a questionnaire to send out to those on the New Wine database. The survey was sent by e-mail in mid-August with a September 1st deadline. Clearly ours was not the best time of year for sending out questionnaires or the longest period set for a response. As it was, just over 1500 parents responded. Bearing in mind that there was typically one combined response per household, it meant that the survey had captured responses from more than 2,000 parents.

There is one area that needs remarking upon but is not really the subject of this research. Of the respondents, 51% had believing fathers and 67% had believing mothers. In terms of grandparents, only 30% had believing grandparents. This wasn't the subject area, so no detailed questions were asked from there, but it would suggest that New Wine may well be dealing with a lot of first generation Christians. On the face of it, that would appear to be good news in terms of mission and evangelism. And if nothing else, it would prove to be intriguing future research.

What is encouraging about the survey is that the vast majority of parents saw the importance of their children having faith. In response to the question, "How important is it that your children have faith?" more than nine-tenths, 92%, responded that it was very important, although that still left 8% spread between "not at all important", "important but not essential" and "quite important". It is worth highlighting again that these respondents are from the New Wine database. Ministry to children is usually a high priority throughout the network and is significantly invested in at the national gatherings.

### Parental evaluation of influences on their children



However, the part of the survey that needs careful reflection is in regards to parental attitudes to "Church." While the majority of those surveyed consistently highlighted the importance of "Faith," "Church" came out only slightly ahead of "Social life/Friends" and "Sport," with "Education" and "Family" slightly ahead of "Church," as the diagram indicates. The question was, "With regards to your children, in your view as a parent please rate the following in terms of importance on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being least important and 5 being the most important."

Therefore, the question, "How important is church attendance in faith development?" needs asking. Certainly if Christian parents' attitudes to Church are the same across the nation, this would be a strong contributory factor to declining church attendance figures.

A theological understanding of the Old Testament highlights the difficulty of parents passing on faith to their children outside the context of a faith community, and that is what is being attempted if church is not seen as a high priority. The Old Testament shows us that faith is communicated in multiple contexts. But the communication of faith by the gathered community is clearly essential. Instructions on communicating faith to the next generation are given to the community, not just the parents. In fact, the Jewish understanding is that the whole community DO communicate, whether they choose to or not. It is not optional. Every member of the community communicates something; whether that something be faith-affirming truth or not is down to the respective members of the community, but they will be communicating something. Our attitudes, our passions, our commitments, the way we worship, the way we respond to others, all communicate. A child who is part of a church is constantly being influenced regarding his/her faith, either positively or negatively.

But we can prove that further, in relation to our last but one survey question, "What has helped you in communicating faith to your children?" There were 1200 responses to this, but they all boiled down to a few similar answers, presented in various forms and phrases. The response, "as a family we were **an active part** of our local church" or similar wording such as "our children **were actively involved** in ministry." Being part of a faith community is clearly important; being an involved member of that faith community is decisive.

In regards to other external factors, it was surprising to see that peer groups and education weren't considered strong contributory factors to faith development or the lack of it – that despite the fact that 77% indicated that their children had Christian peers. It may well be that it is an unnoticed factor. In terms of education, it is likely that the national variance in the distinctive of faith schools makes this element difficult to measure, although I would have hoped that Lord Dearing's report and recommendations on Church Schools 15 years ago would be bearing more fruit by now.

However, when the question was asked, "What are the obstacles to faith development?" there were again large numbers of responses but the majority were along the lines of, "Church didn't communicate to my children culturally," or, "dull and boring services put my child off." My own research

Continued on page 4