

Continued from page 1

That in turn leads to the point that voting to leave the EU will not at one bound return absolute sovereignty to the UK Parliament, though one might think so from the campaign rhetoric. The fact is that virtually every bilateral and multilateral agreement made by a sovereign state puts its sovereignty into commission with others. The UK is a party to literally thousands of international agreements made in the past 100 years and, taken as a whole, they attenuate sovereignty. (The NATO treaty does so, for example, because it binds the UK to go to the assistance of any member state which is attacked.)

Another widespread misunderstanding is that the European Commission (the European civil service which proposes European legislation) is a bloated bureaucracy, hell-bent on creating detailed, unnecessary, inefficient, bizarre and wasteful regulation. In fact, the European Commission is quite small compared with the armies of national civil servants, especially bearing in mind that 6,000 are the translators necessary for the 24 official and working languages. The Commission has some 33,000 staff and the European Parliament 8,000 (compared with 405,000 civil servants in Britain, plus many more in non-departmental public bodies, and some 1,800 serving Parliament.) Though the comparison is not direct at all, these figures can be compared with the populations of the European Union and the UK which in 2014 were 508 million and 64.5 million respectively.

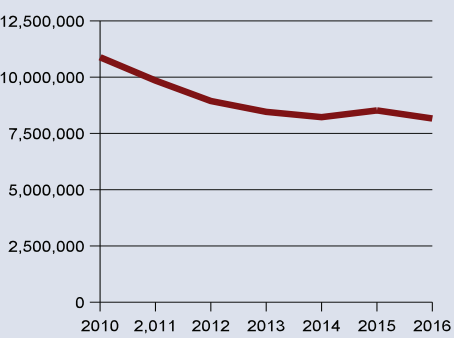
The financial performance and probity of the EU is often called into question in the UK, and concerns UK Christians. It is true that at the end of the 1990s the European Commission of the day fell on that question. But in 2014 the Court of Auditors' conclusion was that the EU's accounts were correctly prepared in accordance with international standards and presented a true and fair view, and that the figures for EU revenue were legal and regular. Its judgment on payments was that they were materially affected by error, the estimate being that payments were irregular in 4.4% of cases, compared with the materiality threshold of 2%.<sup>1</sup> There was still work to be done therefore, but now hardly the catastrophic picture sometimes still represented.

Whether the UK is or should be part of Europe is

## NON-FICTION SLIPS

**The impact of the web through instantaneous access to whatever facts we may need at any given moment of time has obvious repercussions in the book trade. One aspect is that the volume of non-fiction books being sold is slowly reducing as the graph shows. Numbers have dropped over a fifth, 22%, in the last five years.**

*Sales of non-fiction titles in the UK, 2010-2016E*



It might be thought that something similar would also be true for religious books, but in general, such are "bucking the trend." Religious sales did decline

a peculiarly modern question. We forget that there was scarcely any such debate before 1800. The political class saw Britain as a European state which could not afford to neglect the continent. Up to the Reformation, the British Isles were fully integrated into European (Catholic) culture and it was only in 1559 that the English crown lost its last continental territories (though replacements were acquired with the Hanoverians). Britain continued in close contact with the continent, not only in trade, but in phenomena as various as the grand tours of the aristocratic young and the treasure that Britain poured out between 1650 and 1815 to ensure that shifts in the European balance of power did not threaten her position in Europe and her security.

Globalisation in the nineteenth century offered wider possibilities to the UK (and to other European powers). The result was not only a global empire now long gone, but an enduring Atlanticism option, based on the close intellectual and cultural ties between the USA and the UK (the Republic of Ireland, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Sweden have them too). But the world wars of twentieth century surely demonstrated that the UK could not regard itself as other than fully integrated into Europe – that the continent was not far-away countries and peoples of whom we know nothing. So, the USA fervently hopes that that the UK will vote to remain, while Russia hopes that it will vote to leave. History has given the UK the advantages of both the Atlanticist and European options, and, by managing them both in a fluent way, it can maximise them. In this context, Euroscepticism can be construed as one of those periodic lurches in one direction which threatens a balance which advantages the UK.

But are there any specifically Christian dimensions to the debate? Not many and not obviously perhaps. And it is certainly not easy to find direct scriptural guidance for voting on 23rd June, though one does recall the efforts of pre-millennial exponents to equate the horned beast of Revelation 13 with Europe!

***There are one or two sub-texts, however.***

Most British people are quite unaware that the European project has been deeply Christian Democratic in character, owing much to Catholic

between 2011 and 2013, but grew in both 2014 and 2015, with 2015 being the best year for sales since 2008. In 2015 1.7 million religious books were sold, up 100,000 on 2014, Richard Dawkins' book *The God Delusion* and Christopher Hitchens' book *God is Not Great* being the top two sellers. Archbishop Tutu's exploration of apartheid *In God's Hands* and Archbishop Sentamu's book on social cohesion *On Rock or Sand* also sold well, however. The market for Bibles also maintains a prime place.

A study in America by Barna showed that fiction outsells non-fiction and, given a choice, most adults prefer to pick up a fiction book. Christians by and large prefer non-fiction, though the increasing production of fiction with a Christian element, such as by LionHudson, may reverse this statistic. Most American adults buy their books from a bookshop, not online, but their most common method of obtaining a book is via the local library or to borrow from a friend. Women show a much greater preference for books than men, especially Christian non-fiction (17% to 9%).

Why read books? Both Americans and British are most likely to read for pleasure. In Britain, older people spend 5 hours a week reading if 65 or over, against only half that, 2.4 hours a week, for those aged 18 to 24.

**SOURCES:** Articles in *The Bookseller*, 22nd Jan 2016, Page 5, 2nd June 2015, Page 6, 6th March 2015, Page 26, and Barna-update 11th Nov 2015.

P2|FUTUREFIRST|0616

social thought<sup>2</sup>. That has now largely been displaced by post-modernist secularism – though Brexit will not defend the UK against that. A vote to leave is a vote to leave something which was at base a Christian project.

Brexit thought too has a couple of strands which owe something to British Christian thinking.

***First***, there is an element which owes its roots to right-wing Christian reaction, deeply suspicious of Catholic Europe as a popish plot. This is the Protestant thread which was foremost in British-ness for more than 300 years. It is still very common among older, particularly nonconformist, evangelicals – I find that they are often sympathetic to, if not active in, UKIP. There is here much nostalgia for a simpler "Christian" world which never existed and for the loss of which "Europe" can be blamed.

***Second***, Brexit thought often reflects the little-Englandism which owes so much to nineteenth-century English non-conformity, to a yeoman-independence which is against imposing itself on others and being imposed upon. As such, it is suspicious that the European project is essentially imperial, even Bismarckian, in character. Therefore, Brexiters instinctively favour free-trade agreements between free and independent states to the ever-closer political union which has been in the preamble of European treaties since 1956. They appear to be closing their eyes to, or not trusting, the opt-out from "ever closer union" which the Prime Minister recently negotiated, an opt-out which was no small achievement at all in the European context.

After doctoral studies in the history of war, Neil Summerton was a British official in the Department of the Environment for thirty years and in that capacity had extensive involvement in negotiation on water matters in the European Union in the 1990s. So he knows the frustrations of the European game! He was a trustee and board member of Christian Research between 1990 and 1998, and has had long experience of local church leadership, and has written extensively on public policy, environmental ethics, history and governance matters.

21st April 2016

<sup>1</sup> European Court of Auditors, 2015 Activity Report, at [www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/AAR15/COVERPAGE-VIGNETTE.jpg](http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/AAR15/COVERPAGE-VIGNETTE.jpg)

<sup>2</sup> For its detailed pre-history, see Michael P Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe 1820-1953*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1957.

## These may be helpful

### Books and reports received

*The Country Lane Church.* A fascinating exploration of what it means to be either a Baptist or a United Reformed Church Member in a Cheshire LEP in research for an MA dissertation through Luther King House, Manchester, October 2015.

*Lausanne Global Analysis*, Vol 5, Issue 2, March 2016 has four main articles: (1) The global rise of minority faiths, (2) N American Messianic Jews, (3) The Christians role in the "Restorative Economy" and (4) Mission in Europe 1989-2014; [www.lausanne.org/content/lga](http://www.lausanne.org/content/lga).

*The Spectacular Ordinary Organisation*, by Rev Dr Viv Thomas, 2013, is now available as a free download at: <http://formation.org.uk/publications/the-spectacular-ordinary-organisation>.

## WHY MINISTERS LEAVE

**Why do ministers leave their leadership posts? From time to time the Church of England publishes details of the number of its clergy, broken down by age, Diocese, etc. but usually including the number who are no longer in service to the church. This includes the few who die, the many who retire, those who leave for other reasons, and the few who change from being full-time to part-time (and vice versa).**

In 2012, the latest year for which details are available, some 602 full-time paid clergy left their positions, four-fifths, 80%, of whom were men, and one fifth women. 1% of these died in service, 5% became part-time, almost half, 45%, retired, and half, the remaining 49%, resigned. Such losses need to be put into perspective – the total leaving in 2012 was just 8% of the 7,800 full-time paid total ministers who were serving. The number is bound to change from year to year, but in 2002, 10 years earlier, total losses were 610, 7% of the then total, which suggests that the 2012 proportions are about normal.

The Church of England also counts the number entering full-time ministry which in 2012 was a total of 436, meaning an overall loss of 136 ministers. Their total number of ministers has been decreasing steadily over the past 20 years or so, though the number of women coming into service is greater than female losses, so women are becoming an increasing proportion of the whole, being 25% of the total in 2015.

The reasons for loss are varied. Apart from death and retirement, such reasons include moving to work overseas, leaving parish ministry for work in a Christian agency or school, moving from full-time paid into part-time or unpaid posts, moving from church ministry to a chaplaincy, as well as leaving the ministry altogether. The published figures do not distinguish between these various causes.

Other denominations, in Britain or elsewhere, will have similar gains and losses. An American Baptist research study, published in the *Leadership Journal*, found that in 2015, of evangelical pastors leaving their church over the previous 10 years, only 13% had left for reasons other than retirement or death. The study asked questions about these 13% and found that such reasons were:

- 84% said they were on call 24 hours a day
- 80% said they experienced conflict in their church
- 54% found being a pastor "overwhelming"
- 48% found the demands of ministry beyond their ability to handle.

A private Australian study, also of Baptists, in the 1980s found similar reasons and proportions. Ministers traditionally have a day off each week, but the above 2015 study found that only three-fifths, 59%, actually did so. Another American study, this time of the United Methodists, found 10% were depressed which might precipitate their resignation.

The Seventh-Day Adventists' Conference (SDA), like the Methodist Conference, often initiates the movement of pastors. A recent survey found that of those leaving the ministry, 11% did so to earn better pay, 9% switched to another denomination, but 18% resigned due to family needs, job frustration or just wanting a new challenge. The frustration can be because of relational damage; "a pathological dysfunctional church" can damage the pastor's family. It can take time, usually at least 7 years, before a church sees growth under a new minister. Leaving before then can be frustrating for the minister, but equally so can not moving on when a person has been too long in the same post. When a minister resigns, is it primarily for practical, personal or theological reasons?

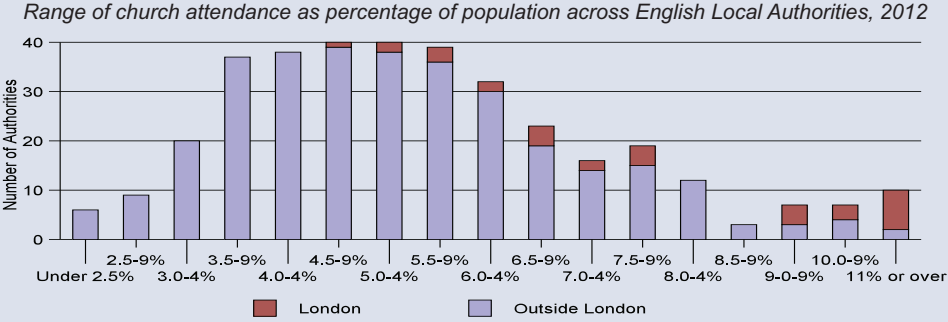
This kind of research is fairly rare, but the reasons for loss are likely to be common whatever the denomination or location. How does a minister avoid "being on call"? Publicly stating periods when one is not available is one possible method, not answering the phone but inviting callers to leave a message while having time with family, eating dinner or whatever, is

# Deprived English Towns

**The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published an analysis of towns and cities in England and Wales, where a town or city is defined as having a population in 2011 of at least 75,000, of which in total there are 112. It looks at a variety of characteristics covered in the Census, but does not include anything on religion.**

The latest issue of *UK Church Statistics* includes details of estimated church attendance in 2012 for each of the 358 Local Authorities in England (including the 33 London Boroughs, the 3 main Channel Islands and the Isle of Man), which ranges from the lowest, 2.0% of the population in Rothenham, to over 20% on Alderney and Sark. Local Authorities are not the same as towns and cities, but of course the one does include the other so some kind of comparison may be made.

The overall usual Sunday attendance figure in 2012 in England is given as 5.7%, which is the average across the whole country. It varies as shown in the graph. Half of the percentages are 5.3% or below, half above. London is shown separately as its Boroughs have a much higher rate of attendance than across most of the rest of the country.



This graph may be interpreted as follows:

- One Authority in 25, 4%, has under 3% of its population attending church
- A sixth, 16%, has between 3.0 and 3.9% in church
- A fifth, 22%, has between 4.0 and 4.9%
- Another fifth, 22%, has been 5.0 and 5.9%
- A seventh, 15%, has between 6.0 and 6.9%
- A fifth, 21%, has more than 7% attending church on an average Sunday.

How do these figures compare with the ONS city data? One of its measures was average (technically "median") house price in 2015, in which, across all types of property, St Albans just came top at £390,000, followed by London at £380,000, followed (in order) by Cambridge, Guildford, Woking, Oxford, Brighton and Hove, Watford, Bath and Bracknell (at £270,000). Eight of these ten towns/cities have an average church attendance of at least 6.2%, with the highest being Guildford at 10.0%. The two exceptions, both 4.0%, are Brighton and Hove and Bracknell. This gives some support for the statement that many churchgoers are middle class.

Exactly the opposite is true for the 10 towns/cities with the lowest average house prices. These are, from the lowest, Burnley (£78,000), Oldham, Bradford, Halifax, Stoke-on-Trent, Blackpool, Grimsby, Kingston upon Hull, Blackburn and Scunthorpe (£106,000). All these except Blackburn (6.1%) and Burnley (5.4%) have 4% or less of their population in church on Sunday, the lowest being Grimsby at 2.2%.

The ONS list covers more than housing costs, and includes income, unemployment, education, health, crime and the living environment. It averages the scores for each of these and arrives at a list of the 10 most deprived towns/cities, of which Oldham is worst (because of its income, unemployment and education scores), followed by West Bromwich (income and unemployment), Liverpool (health and income), Walsall (income), Birmingham (housing), Nottingham (education), Middlesbrough (income), Salford (health), Birkenhead (unemployment) and Rochdale (crime). These are all in the North West and Midlands.

Apart from Birkenhead with its high proportion of Catholics in church (churchgoing overall averages 10.8% of the population), Nottingham (6.4%), Liverpool (6.1%), also relatively high because of its Catholics) and Birmingham (5.9%), all the rest are 4.5% or less, the lowest being Salford at 3.0%, well under the country average of 5.7%.

Some Christians deliberately aim to live in poorer areas of the country for missional egalitarian reasons. Perhaps this kind of attitude might help redress the present church attendance imbalance between north and south. A gifted Christian teacher brought up and educated in the south east, for example, deliberately moved to the north west on qualifying, remarking, "Why should the south-east always have the best teachers?"

**SOURCE:** *Towns and Cities Analysis*, England and Wales, March 2016, Office for National Statistics; *UK Church Statistics*, No 2 2010-2020, ADBC Publishers, 2014, Section 14.

another. Having others in the team to whom the phone call is automatically diverted also helps. Part of the problem is less that such solutions don't exist, but more that the minister feels he/she should be available in times of need.

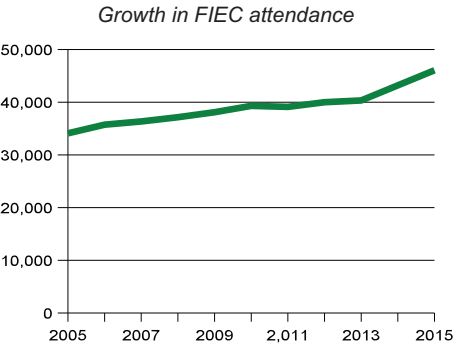
The other reasons given above suggest that conflict management, time management and pastoral counselling are all key parts of the training that needs to be given to ministers, possibly with mentoring help

**SOURCES:** *Statistics for Mission*, 2012: Ministry, Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops' Council; article "Hard Job, High Calling" in *Leadership Journal*, Christianity Today, accessed 29th March, 2016; Dr Rowland Croucher private research; article in *Ministry*, January 2016, Page 20t.

## Independent Growth

**The Fellowship of Independent Churches (FIEC) undertook a survey of its churches in 2015 with a five-sixths, 83%, response rate, the results of which indicate encouraging growth. In 2003 they had 467 churches in membership; in 2015 they had 515, an increase of 10%. This growth was especially seen in their larger churches (over 35 members per church). Like the Baptist Union, half (54%) of the FIEC's membership is with smaller churches. A consultation of leaders of their larger churches had 15% of their churches present which accounted for 52% of total attendance. The same is true of other major denominations where this has been measured (the Baptist Union and Anglicans, for example).**

The growth in church membership has seen an increase in overall attendance of about 7%, shown in the graph. Growth in FIEC attendance.



In 2015 a fifth, 20%, of their attendance was children in their Sunday services, almost certainly higher than for churches generally (the percentage for all English churches in 2005 was 19%, but is estimated to have fallen to 15% by 2015). However, some of their churches, like most other denominational groups, have no children attending (13%), a much smaller percentage than generally across all churches (39% in 2005).

As with other groups also, the percentage of churches holding both morning and evening services has fallen over the years, from 90% in 2003 to 77% in 2015, with about two-thirds, 70%, of total attendance coming in the morning. Interestingly, some of their newly started church plants hold only an afternoon or evening service, finding this an easier way to reach unchurched families and avoiding the problem of children playing sport on Sunday mornings. A large Anglican church in Sevenoaks, Kent (St Nicholas), started an afternoon service on a local Council Estate and had a congregation of 100 quite quickly.

Is the growth just visitors, people transferring from one church to another or are those coming seeking (believers) baptism? While half of the FIEC churches (53%) had no baptisms, mainly the very small churches, in total there were an estimated 830 baptisms in 2015, which represents 29% of the increased attendance seen between 2014 and 2015.

The FIEC churches as a whole have some 13% attending their morning services who are nonwhite, slightly lower than across England as a whole where it was 17% in 2005. But only a third, 34%, said they had no non-white attenders, as against 54% in England generally. They also have nearly 400 non-white leaders.

Clearly, the FIEC is a growing group of churches which can only be of significance for the future. A deeper look at some of its survey results will be given in a subsequent issue.

**SOURCE:** *FIEC Data Survey 2015*; comparative data from English Church Census given in *Religious Trends* No 6, Christian Research.

# SNOWFLAKES

***Family breakups*** cost the taxpayer £48 billion in 2014, including £16 bn for the impact on physical and mental health, £15 bn on tax credits, £7 bn on legal aid, £7 bn on housing and £3 bn on criminal damage carried out by disturbed children. A fifth, 22%, of those divorced or separated wished they had not done so 5 years later. Of these, 21% regretted the way it was conducted, 33% regretted the impact on their children and 24% wished they had avoided the financial consequences.

**SOURCE:** Relationships Foundation, in *Mailonline*, 1st March, 2016.

***Damascus Road.*** A small piece of research, when 118 people worldwide and of all backgrounds and ages were interviewed about their conversion, showed that for two-thirds it came slowly "after much reading about the chosen belief system." Almost half, 44%, had made the change because they disagreed with the views or actions of those who belonged to their original tradition.

**SOURCE:** Article in the *Church Times*, 8th April, 2016, Page 10.

***Majority use own moral sense.*** In a survey of UK "Christians," over half, 54%, said they preferred to draw on their own inner moral sense when seeking guidance on questions of right or wrong, and 10% said it was from religious teaching.

**SOURCE:** Richard Dawkins Foundation survey, quoted in *Plain Truth*, Spring 2012, Page 11.

***Too many men!*** Women outnumber men in the population (51% to 49%), and in church, but in the London Borough of Newham, 52% of the population are men, and women only 48%. In the relatively small number living in the City of London (7,400 in 2011), 55% are men against 45% women. That the life expectancy of men is increasing faster than that of women is partly an explanation.

**SOURCE:** *People and Places*, A 21st Century Atlas of the UK, by Dorling and Bethan Thomas, Policy Press, 2016.

***Catholic increase.*** The number of Roman Catholics in the world increased from 1,120 million in 2005 to 1,270 million in 2014, rising from 17.3% of the world's population to 17.8%. The number expanded faster than the population in every continent except Oceania. The number of priests also increased from 406,000 to 416,000, although the number declined 8% in Europe.

**SOURCE:** *Pontifical Yearbook 2016*, quoted in *The Tablet*, 12th March 2016, Page 25.

***Multiple church benefices.*** Do benefices which amalgamate several parishes together grow as strongly as those which consist of just a single parish? An extra analysis of the Church of England data for remote rural areas suggested not; a single parish was best. Are parishes which work together in a Team Ministry likely to grow? A further analysis showed that a Team Ministry made no difference to the outcome.

**SOURCE:** *Stronger as One?* A further analysis of the data behind the *From Anecdote to Evidence* research by Rev Dr Fiona Tweedie, available at [www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk](http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk).

***Faith tensions.*** How do you feel about your faith in society? When 1,000 Americans were interviewed last August, 54% said they were "misunderstood" (65% of those aged 18 to 35), 52% said they were "persecuted" (60%), 44% said they were "marginalised" (48%) and 40% said they were "sidelined" (59%). A quarter, 23%, said they were "afraid to look stupid" (38%).

**SOURCE:** Barna.org/research/faith-christianity/article/, Barna OmniPoll, August 2015, Page 10.

P4|FUTUREFIRST|0616

***I won't invite you!*** Reasons why some people will not invite their friends or family to church:

- We have no non-churchgoing friends
- What if it damages my friendship?
- Our services and people are unpredictable
- They might ask something about my faith, and I wouldn't know what to say
- I fear the congregation will think my friend is not "our" type of person
- I suffer, and I don't want my friend to suffer
- It's the church leader's job

**SOURCE:** Extract from Michael Harvey's book *Creating a Culture of Invitation*, Monarch, July 2015.

***Methodist decline.*** Many people are leaving the United Methodist Church in America. In 2002 total attendance was 3.62 million; in 2010 it was 3.10 million; in 2014 it was 2.86 million, and is projected to be 2.00 million by 2030 and 0.96 million by 2050. The number of churches also would drop – from 32,400 in 2010 to 21,100 in 2030 and 10,000 in 2050. Economist Don House who made these projections said, "The urgency is to find the strategic churches that are willing and able to grow. Time is of the essence." How far the decisions made on same-sex marriage and the ordination of openly gay clergy has affected the numbers is not known.

**SOURCE:** Article "Economist crunches UM numbers" by Rev Walter Fenton, in *Perspective*, Good News website, March 2016.

## Humour

### Ronnie Corbett's best jokes:

"A cement mixer collided with a prison van on the Kingston-by-pass. Motorists are asked to be on the look-out for 16 hardened criminals."

"We will be talking to an out of work contortionist who says he can no longer make ends meet."

"This is a message for seven honeymoon couples in a hotel in Peebles: Breakfast was served three days ago."

"There was a fire at the main Inland Revenue office in London today, but it was put out before any serious good was done."

"We've just heard that in the English Channel a ship carrying red paint has collided with a ship carrying purple paint. It is believed both crews have been marooned."

"It was revealed in a government survey published today that the Prime Minister is doing the work of two men, Laurel and Hardy."

**SOURCE:** *The Daily Telegraph*, 1st April 2016, Page 3, the day after Ronnie died, aged 85.

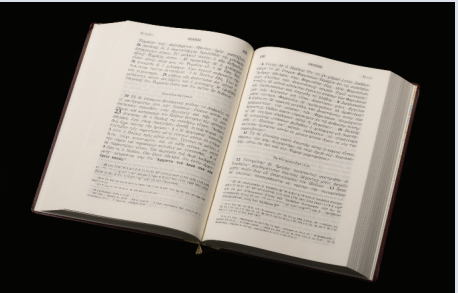
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Established 2009. UK subscriptions £20 per annum; overseas £32 per annum. Make cheque out to 'Peter Brierley', or contact for BACS details and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: [peter@brierleyres.com](mailto:peter@brierleyres.com)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

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ISSN 2040-0268





## REFLECTIONS

Mother Angelica, an American Roman Catholic nun who started her own television station, died on Easter Sunday, 2016, aged 92. While loyal to Catholic teaching she made some fairly thought-provoking comments from time to time. One of them was, "Unless you are willing to do the ridiculous, God will not do the miraculous."

A man was building a large boat in an area not known for great amounts of rain and a long way from the sea. It took him many years to complete it. Ridiculous. But then the flood came and Noah and his family alone survived.

A man stood in front of the Emperor of the known world, with all the glory of his office around him. He demanded that the Emperor set all his thousands of slaves completely free. Ridiculous. But Moses led those slaves to form a resurgent Israel.

An army general led his military band on a march around the walls of a city, not once but seven times, so that when they shouted the walls would fall down. Ridiculous. But Jericho fell.

A young man in his twenties, living in enemy territory, hiding his food as best he could, was told to take on the enemy. He gathered 300 people with him to fight an army of 132,000. Ridiculous. But Gideon saw the Midianites wipe themselves out.

An old man, a serving priest, was taken to the brink of a cliff and when he looked over the top he saw hundreds of bones, ready for burial. He was told to preach, or prophesy to those dead bones. Ridiculous. But Ezekiel saw them come together and rise up as a living army.

Half a millennium later, a man said to Jesus, "If it is you, bid me come." Jesus said, "Come." And the apostle Peter walked on the surface of the Sea of Galilee for a few seconds, perhaps a minute or two. Ridiculous. But Jesus controls the natural world.

Three women wanted to do something really lovely for someone they deeply respected, even though there was a huge obstacle in the way. So they got up very early one Sunday morning and went to the tomb. Ridiculous. But they found that the heavy stone had been rolled away.

Jump forward two millennia. A British woman in her thirties in the 1930s was responsible for over 100 orphaned or impoverished children, when the Japanese military advanced with their planes and guns. She decided to take them all and flee for safety. Ridiculous. They would have to go over the mountains in China before they were safe. But Gladys Aylward got there.

The 21st century. Is there a God-given something you could be doing which is ridiculous in the world's eyes, as well as your own? Then you may well see God do the miraculous.

Lawrence of Arabia once said that nine-tenths of military tactics (and management training and Christian ministry) were certain enough to be taught in schools. But the other, "irrational, tenth was like the kingfisher flashing across the pool" to get its fish. That was the test of generals. Can you spot the kingfisher?

**SOURCES:** Obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*, 30th March, 2016, Page 26; article in *The Tablet*, 2nd April 2016, Page 12.

## Why People stop going to Church

When a regular (or irregular) face is missing from your church, illness is the first obvious conclusion. In some cases, though, it may be because the missing face is now attending another church. People change church for a variety of reasons, including the following:

1) *The ministry no longer seems relevant.* Families will sometimes change the church they attend because their children find more satisfaction and enjoyment in the youth activities put on by another nearby congregation (15% of Anglicans in 2014, 28% of Brethren in 2013). The parents usually feel they should attend the same church to encourage their children's attendance, so they move.

2) *People move to another area.* This is probably the major reason why people leave, and it seems that many church people have been on the move over the last decade. Retirement, change in employment, being nearer family or even "Escape to the Country" and a more stress free lifestyle are all significant demographic trends. A third of Anglicans, 34%, joining a new church in 2014, and a third of Brethren, 30%, in 2013, did so because they moved location.

3) *Death.* This is the most obvious reason and the majority reason. Some two-fifths (43% of Anglicans in 2014, 26% of Brethren in 2013), are missing because they pass on, "promoted to glory" as the Salvation Army describes those dying in their corps. The churches collectively take some 7,500 funerals every week, and while not all of these are churchgoers, probably over half are.

4) *Moving into residential care,* having become too frail or ill to stay in their own home. This then becomes an opportunity for existing church members to provide transport if appropriate, or continued fellowship by visiting. Often the only spiritual input these residential care or household people have is watching *Songs of Praise* on a Sunday. No wonder only 19% of previous churchgoers when 85 or over felt part of a church fellowship.

People leaving for these reasons are not usually doing so because they have lost their faith or lessened their commitment. Their circumstances have changed and a move is necessary. Others, however, leave because their commitment has become less, and it is these who sometimes need pastoral advice and care. What are these reasons?

5) *Unable to find a suitable church.* Many churchgoers when moving to a new area will try a new church. If for whatever reason they dislike that fellowship, some will try again in another local church, but if that doesn't work out they may stop going altogether, forming part of what the Scottish call the "invisible church" but whose numbers can be quite substantial – perhaps some 17% of the entire population. This is often especially true if the man in the family dislikes the teaching.

6) *Lost their commitment or interest.* This was the reason given by 13% of Anglican adults, and 12% of Christian Brethren, that is, those whose belief may have lapsed or changed. Research in this area is very limited, but it may be due to young people (those in their 20s primarily) not finding reality in church (do not regularly feel "the presence of God"). Women may feel the congregation became uncaring, especially if they have had to go through a divorce. Men may leave if they feel the church "is going nowhere", that is, seems to have no strategic vision, or lacks any external challenge.

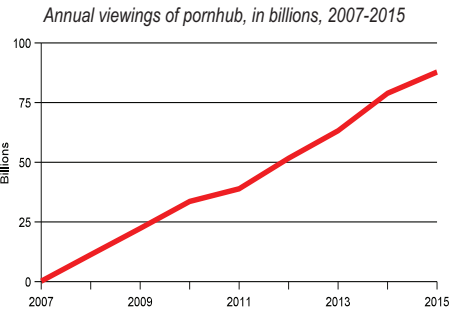
It is these two broad reasons which challenge the church. How can those moving be helped integrate into a new fellowship? How can wavering faith be encouraged and strengthened? A Willow Creek survey in 2007 found that even older people, "pillars of the church," sometimes begin to have doubts and uncertainties. A ministry based unambiguously and expositionally on the unchanging word of God as well as a strong, pastoral team can do much to alleviate some of the aspects of "church-drain."

**SOURCES:** *Statistics for Mission*, 2014, Research and Statistics Dept., Archbishops' Council, January 2016; *Christian Brethren in the UK*, 2013, Brierley Consultancy, May 2015; *Operation World*, 2010, edited Jason Mandryk; *FutureFirst*, December 2015, Page 6; Sir Halley Stewart Project, *Older People and the Church*, Christian Research, 2000; *Reveal where are you?*, Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, Willow Creek Resources, 2007.

## Christians and Porn

The well-known American research organisation, Barna Group, has released its results of researching Christians watching pornography. At the same time the results of an American Government study by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have been released. Although the results focus on America, the likelihood is that they would not be very dissimilar if European agencies undertook the same kind of research.

*The number of people* watching of porn is vast. One major internet site alone, pornhub, launched in 2007, had 88 billion viewings in 2015, 12 for every person on the planet, and when one takes out those too young to use the web and those with no computer access, and multiplies by an unknown factor (since there are thousands of porn sites), one quickly realises this is major global problem. The rapidity of the rise in number of viewing of this one major site is shown in the graph.



*Length of time watching porn.* Half, 46%, of American men aged 18 to 39 view porn, and a sixth, 16%, of women. On Pornhub alone viewers watch porn for 12 million hours per day! Boys first watch porn between the ages of 11 and 13. Barna found that a quarter, 26%, of those aged 12 to 17 actively seek out porn at least once a week; two-fifths, 38%, of those aged 18 to 25; a quarter, 25%, of those aged 25 to 30; a quarter, 23%, of those aged 31 to 50; and it only reduces to 9% for those aged 51 to 69. Seeing porn at least once a month Barna found to be true of 71% of the population, with only 29% saying they never see it.

Only half of adults, 25 and over, 54%, think *watching porn is wrong*, and they put over-eating and not recycling waste as higher wrongs! Just a third, 32%, of younger adults and teens think it is wrong, and nearly half, 43%, assume that everyone looks at it sometimes. The morality of it is hardly ever discussed. Americans spend \$2.8 bn in internet pornography each year (=£1.9 bn), equivalent to £6 per person in the USA.

*What is porn?* Full nudity is only regarded as porn by 11% of Americans. However, pictures or actions which are sexually explicit, showing intercourse, or seeking to arouse the viewer are described as porn.

*Christians watch porn* less than non-Christians. Two-fifths, 41%, of practising Christian men aged 13-24 view porn frequently against 72% non-practising Christian men. For those aged 25 or over these percentages are 23% and 55% respectively. For women they are 13%, 36%, 5% and 17% respectively. About a third of practising Christians feel a sense of guilt when watching porn. Only 9% of Americans have tried to stop using porn, and 16% of practising Christians.

The NIH study showed that the *impact of watching porn* is two-fold. Many men who watch porn frequently in order to get aroused find that when they actually seek to have sex with someone they are suffering from ED (Erectile Dysfunction) which inhibits their ability to have sex. Consequently a number of websites (such as NoFap) have been started to try and wean especially men off porn so that they can have normal sex. The same type of problem can also occur with women. Prof Philip Zimbardo of Stanford University says porn has a similar effect on behaviour as drug addiction, when pursuing something so hard causes the reward centres of the brain to cease to respond for arousal.

The second impact is that men view women as erotic beings who will nearly always respond to sexual activity with pleasure, however painful or debasing it really is. Porn desensitizes women, and male social status is measured by their score with "hot" women.

Clearly these are huge issues, with little Christian concern at present. Should the Church not give positive teaching on sexual purity, release in Christ and the fullness of life in Him? How can the standards and truths of Scripture be applied in a loving, caring, understanding but uncompromising way, recognising that porn is a relentless addiction but that Christians need to be "in the world" but not "of the world"?

**SOURCES:** Article in *Time* magazine, 18th April, 2016, Pages 32f; [www.barna.org/research/culture-media](http://www.barna.org/research/culture-media), accessed 23rd January 2nd February and 10th April 2016; Great Commission News, Fall 2015, Page 7.

## Church Planting in Tower Hamlets

The Centre for Theology and Community, equipping churches to transform their communities, was grant funded by The Mercers' (Livery) Company to undertake detailed research in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (whose population is one-third, 35%, Muslim) in the summer of 2015. In April 2016 it released its report on the research across 5 churches. They are all Anglican churches, part of the 18 parishes in the Diocese of London within the Borough.

The churches are St Paul's, Shadwell, St Peter's, Bethnal Green, All Hallows, Bow, Christ Church, Isle of Dogs, and Christ Church, Spitalfields. All are church plants undertaken by and through Holy Trinity, Brompton (HTB). The research included asking all adult attenders on a given Sunday to complete a questionnaire, 523 doing so, a response rate of 70%.

St Paul's had an infusion of members from HTB in 2005 and has grown from 12 to over 250 in congregational size in the succeeding 10 years. In 2010 the congregation of 30 from St Peter's agreed to St Paul's helping them and in 2015 had a congregation of 150, mixing both Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical cultures. All Hallows was down to 14 members but in 2010 agreed with Ric Thorpe of St Paul's that Cris Rogers should become their priest; 5 years later it has a congregation of 150.

St Luke's was just 15 people in 2013 but by 2015 had grown to 70 after a new minister and new congregation came from St Paul's. The evening service at Christ Church, Spitalfields, began as part of an already thriving church, so was a different kind of venture, and two clergy were invited as ministers in 2013. Five people from the morning congregation agreed to come to the new evening congregation which had become 115 two years later.

The Report tells the fascinating stories of these five churches. Tower Hamlets is one the most diverse and deprived parts of the UK. The churches have:

- 78% from white ethnic groups (compared with 66% in the local population)
- 56% of its households earning less than £40,000 per annum (compared with 70% locally earning less than £45,000)
- 10% who are new to church, 10% are returning to church life (these two groups equating to 115 people), and 25% who originally came from St Paul's, Shadwell.

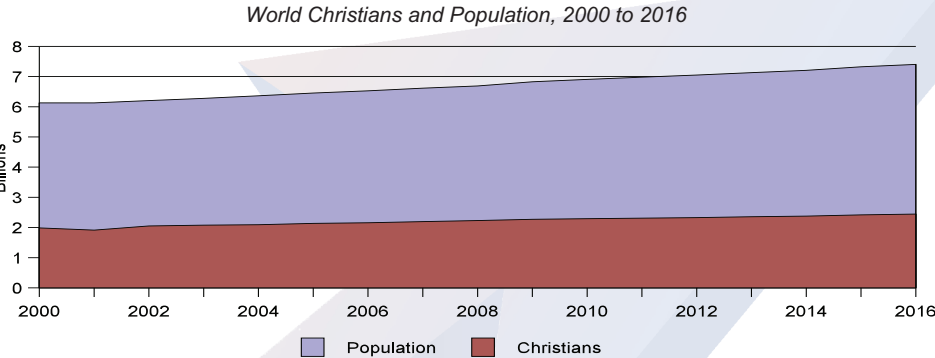
Over the 18 Anglican parishes in Tower Hamlets, congregational growth between 2003 and 2013 was 40%, 60% of this coming from the 4 which had benefited from an HTB church plant, and 40% from 6 other parishes, meaning that the other 8 parishes had seen decline.

What has happened here is significant. Many middle-class Christians living in East London now worship in a local church rather than travelling into central London every Sunday. The churches which have been planted have brought people, skills and resources to the parishes involved which has impacted their local community and restored the sustainability of the churches. Many Christians are now involved locally in hugely diverse communities. It has also strengthened the parish system. While they are "success" stories, much of the energy to make that happen has come from the grass roots, not from "the top down".

In all of the churches, nearly all of the original congregations have stayed, are still members today, and are very positive and supportive of the changes made. Much discussion was held with them before changes were made. Only three of the leaders came from HTB. All the church plants were asked to pay in full their contribution to the Diocesan Common Fund. 95% of the money required is now paid, against 33% before the church planting, so the Diocese gains financially! That support does not come from HTB which made a single initial one-off grant to St Paul's only.

Clearly much can be learned from this experience, not least in managing expectations

Borough of Tower Hamlets



The different groups of Christians are given in the Table, where Protestants include Anglicans:

Christians by Denomination, 2000 and 2016			
Denominational group	% of total 2000	% of total 2016	Av increase per annum
Roman Catholics	49.1	47.7	1.1%
Protestants	20.0	21.0	1.6%
Independents	14.2	16.3	2.2%
Orthodox	12.0	10.8	0.6%
Other Christians	4.7	4.2	0.7%

The Independents, which include the Pentecostals and Charismatic, are the fastest growing group, both within the Christian tradition, but also worldwide, growing faster than the Muslims.

Where are the Christians? A quarter, 24% are in Africa, growing at 2.8% per annum, another quarter, 24%, are in Europe, growing at 0.1%, a further quarter, 25%, are in Latin America, growing at 1.2%, and the remaining quarter, 27% is spread between Asia with 16% (growing at 2.2%), North America with 10% (growing at 0.6%) and Oceania with 1% (growing at 1.1%). In 2016, Latin America had more Christian adherents than any other continent.

In 2016 there were an estimated 46,000 denominations worldwide, up from 34,000 in 2000. These between them had an estimated 4.6 million congregations worldwide, up from 3.4 million in 2000. That would suggest each congregation had 530 Christian adherents on average, an impossibly high number showing that the number of "adherents" is far removed from actual church membership or church attendance.

The figures are also projected through to 2025 and 2050 (not illustrated), when Christian adherents are estimated to be 33.7% and 35.9% respectively of the world population. Numbers in Europe are declining and Asia is likely to have more adherents than Europe by 2050 (600 million to 500 million). 85 million Bibles are expected to be printed in 2016 worldwide, and another 200 plans drawn up for worldwide evangelisation to reach the 29% as yet unevangelised.

The figures come from the World Christian Database held at the Gordon-Conwell University in the United States, and are kept as up-to-date as they can be. Apart from the occasional publication of Operation World (the last in 2010), there is no other worldwide database on the church. Its chief value is probably giving overall broad numbers and trends broken down by denominational group and continent.

**SOURCE:** Figures published in a new format in the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, edited by Dr Todd Johnson, for the Overseas Ministries Study Centre, by Sage, Volume 40, No 1, January 2016, Pages 22f.

and managing change. "Leadership requires a good degree of emotional intelligence and also spiritual discernment to help navigate the many relationships" comments the report (page 102). Money undoubtedly helps, and prayer also, but the leadership and message are also key.

**SOURCE:** *Love, Sweat and Tears*, Church planting in east London, by Tim Thorby, Centre for Theology and Community. The fifth of their Research for the Local Church series. Downloadable from their website: [theology-centre.org](http://theology-centre.org)

## World Christianity

The latest estimates for the number of Christians worldwide have been published and show that in 2016 some 2,444,000,000 people worldwide, 33.0% of the global population of 7,405,000,000 count themselves as Christian adherents. More than half, 51%, of these live in countries where 80% or more would say they are Christian. The trends in both are shown in the chart.

It is clear that both are increasing slowly. Since the year 2000, the world's population has increased in the last 16 years by 1,277,000,000 people, a rate of 80 million people per annum or an average rate of 1.2% per annum. The number of Christians has increased by 458,000,000 people, a rate of 29 million people per annum or an average rate of 1.3% per annum. So the number of Christian adherents globally is growing, although not much faster than the average population growth. By contrast the number of Muslims has been increasing at the rate of 1.9% per year, half as fast again as Christian growth. The next two largest religious groups, Hindus and Buddhists, are growing at an annual rate of 1.3% and 0.9% per annum respectively. It is only the Muslims who are out-stripping Christians.



## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

### SNIPPETS

1) There are 134 registered Messy Churches in London. They are part of the "Fresh Expressions" group of growing churches across the country.

2) 80 million chocolate Easter eggs were sold in 2016, 10% of annual spending on chocolate.

3) In 2007, teenagers spent an average of 15½ hours a week watching TV; in 2011 it was 17½ hours, but by 2014 it was only 16 hours, as communicating via smartphones took 13 hours and gaming 10 hours.

4) It is thought that well-designed games engage players because they satisfy four basic psychological needs: mastery, autonomy, relatedness and purpose.

5) James Daunt, CEO of Waterstone's, estimates that Amazon has 30% of the book market, WH Smith 22 to 25%, independent shops and supermarkets about 10% each. Waterstone's share is between 25 and 28%.

6) In the UK there are 4,050 secondary or grammar schools. Almost 30% of these did not enter any children for a GCSE exam in Religious Education in 2014.

7) There are 1,800 billionaires in the world, 200 of whom are women. Two-thirds, 1,200, are completely self-made, whereas that is only true of 33 (17%) of the women.

**SOURCES:** 1) Personal email from Annabel Simcoe of BRF; 2) *Christianity*, April 2016, Page 15; 3) *Christianity*, March 2012, Page 22; 4) *Olcrom survey 2014* on *Guardian* website; 4) and 5) *Impact* magazine, Market Research Society, Issue 13, April 2016, Pages 79 and 30 respectively; 6) Article in *The Economist*, 6th February 2016, Page 28; 7) Taken from *The Week*, 5th March 2016, Page 23, coming originally from *Forbes* magazine.

There is little specifically Christian comment about the pros and cons of the forthcoming EU Referendum. Neil Summerton, now a retired senior civil servant with much personal experience of working with Europe, was asked to write an article looking at some aspects of the Christian dimension to the subject. This is his article, far more political than most issues we write about in *FutureFirst*, and not intended as any change in direction of our usual remit.

However, our Editorial Committee felt it would be good if another equally weighty article could be written from the opposing viewpoint. Jonathan Chaplin, Director of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics had commissioned Dr Michael Schluter to write such, and both he and Michael have given permission for copies of that article to be circulated with this issue of *FutureFirst*. This is a separate enclosure due to lack of space in *FutureFirst* itself. If perchance your copy does not have this please email us ([peter@brierleyres.com](mailto:peter@brierleyres.com)).

Readers may also wish to consult *God and the EU*: Faith in the European Project, edited by Jonathan Chaplin & Gary Wilton, published in 2016 by Routledge; the article on the EU Referendum in *Engage*, the quarterly bulletin from the Jubilee Centre in Cambridge, April 2016; and the articles in the May/June issue of *Idea* from the Evangelical Alliance; in the May/June issue of *Christianity*; or wish to see the "Remain" case made by Ben Ryan in *Rejecting Project Fear for Project Hope* on [ethics@tyndale.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@tyndale.cam.ac.uk).

## SOME REFLECTIONS ON 23RD JUNE

DR NEIL SUMMERTON CB

**On 23rd June, UK voters will be asked to take a momentous decision after more than 40 years of UK membership of the European Union. It will be even more momentous than the Scottish referendum of September 2014.**

The two campaigns are looking very similar: vision, emotion, excitement, Romantic adventure looks to be on the side of the leavers, as with the SNP in 2014. The opponents, as in 2014, emphasise the risks of leaving, particularly the economic risks – the downside in terms of foregone financial prosperity for all; "Project Fear", as the leave camp likes to say. It is this contrast that makes those arguing for the status quo look dull and boring – that great risk in modern democratic campaigning which so favours the Trumps and the (Boris) Johnsons who cultivate their larger-than-life, jokey, not to say buffoon-like, images (when they have got their nominations, they will abandon that in order to appeal to the centrists without whom they cannot be elected).

Not the least of the ironies of 2016 is that many who argued passionately to keep Scotland within the UK are now arguing to take Kingdom out of the European Union, and the arguments are similar. An English-determined vote to leave (as it seems it would be, since the Scots are likely to follow the SNP in voting to remain) ought in logic to reignite the call for Scottish independence, and make it all the more illogical to resist the argument. The Balkanisation of an exited UK is a risk that has been little spoken of so far.

A vote to leave the UK in 2014 would certainly have initiated a lengthy period of great constitutional and organisational uncertainty for Scotland, and even more so for the remaining parts of the United Kingdom (a matter scarcely mentioned in the Scottish campaign). What would the remaining UK have looked like? Leaving the EU will be uncharted waters in economic, organisational and even constitutional terms. What, for example, will happen to the now very substantial body of UK legislation which has been shaped by decisions within the EU over the past 45 years? This is not being discussed. As legislation of UK parliaments, it would, unless repealed or modified, remain in force after the two-year withdrawal period. But we do not know what would be modified, nor do we know to what extent it will in practice be possible to modify it, given that the price of satisfactory trade deals with the EU might well be the retention of much of existing European regulation on

the same single-market, level-playing-field grounds as now obtain. The leavers are confident that the EU will want to do trade deals with an exited UK. But that means gearing UK manufacturing and services to EU requirements. Escaping from the EU may prove to be a great deal more difficult in practice than a simple vote on 23rd June.

Further, in the UK detailed regulation often results not from European legislation itself but from the propensity of the perfectionist UK government machine to embroider and add to implementation legislation. On the other hand, there is a real question whether, if the UK had been left to itself, it would have made the degree of, for example, environmental improvement achieved during EU membership.

Another legal misunderstanding is that human rights decisions that we (particularly Christians) do not like come from the EU. In fact, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the European Court of Human Rights which administers it, fall under the umbrella not of the EU but of the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, which embraces the 28 EU member states as well as 19 more (making 47 in total), including Turkey and Russia. Voting to leave the EU has no direct relationship to UK membership of the Council of Europe and therefore to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.



Continued on page 2