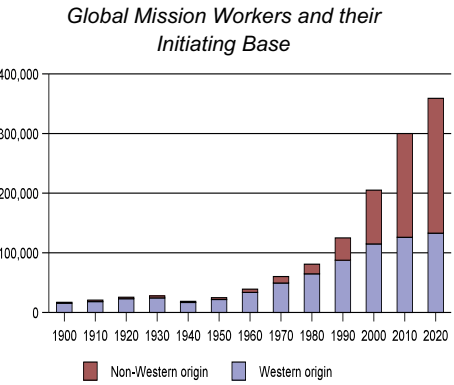


A Century of Mission Workers

On 30th June 2017 the Colorado agency Global Mapping International (GMI) ceased operations after 34 years of providing maps, illustrations and other diagnostic tools for mission executives and the general Christian public. It provided a valuable service and will be much missed. One of its final “missiographics” focussed on the number of missionaries or mission workers serving worldwide since 1900 and the proportion of them which came from a Western country. The chart is based on their figures which have come for various years, but are here put at uniform intervals.



It may be seen that numbers between 1900 and 1960 were, by today's standards, relatively small (under 50,000 globally), most of whom came from Western countries. Between 1960 and 2000 numbers quadrupled, however, with those coming from non-Western countries increasing at a much faster rate than those from Western countries. The projected figures since 2000 show the number of Western mission workers virtually static, but numbers from non-Western countries more than doubling from 90,000 in 2000 to an expected 230,000 by 2020.

As an example of this kind of increase the number of missionaries from South Korea alone was 21,000 in 2016, whereas it had been close to zero 30 years previously. Does this kind of expansion work? Yes it does, as GMI cites the percentage of the global population who have never heard the good news of Jesus Christ in 1900 as 54%, whereas it was down to 28% in 2000, although the source of these figures is not stated.

Much mission information is available through the Correct Me if I'm Wrong quarterly email bulletin, back numbers of which can be found on www.globalcmiw.org.

SOURCE: https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/missio-graphics/Volume+5/missiographic_percent_christian.pdf

These may be helpful

Books and reports received

Carry Each Other's Burdens, How churches can better support those serving on the margins, Laura Bagley, Research for the Local Church 7, October 2017, the Centre for Theology and Community, freely downloadable from theology-centre.org.

21st Century Stewards, The rise of operational management in churches and the need for new vocations, Tim Thorlby, Research for the Local Church 8, October 2017, the Centre for Theology and Community, freely downloadable from theology-centre.org.

POPULATION GROWTH

The latest press release by the Office for National Statistics about the UK population indicates that the population has grown by just over half a million people (538,000) in the 12 months ending June 2016, which has been about the average increase for the last 10 years. The increase is made up from:

- 193,000 more people being born than dying (what is called “natural increase”)
- 336,000 net international migration, and
- 9,000 more armed forces service men and women now living in the UK.

There were 781,000 births (4,000 more than in 2015), and 588,000 deaths (16,000 fewer due mainly to the 2015 flu virus affecting more younger people than vulnerable older). The immigration figure is virtually identical to the net immigration figure of 2015 which was 332,000.

The population in England grew faster than in the other three countries of the UK (0.9% compared to 0.5%). The total UK population now stands at 65,650,000 people, estimated from the 2011 Census and expected to be within 13,000 of the true figure. The basic numbers are given in the Table, together with the percentage in church membership.

Country	Population		2016 Percentage	Church Membership	
	2015	2016		2015	2016
England	54,786,300	55,268,100	84%	68%	69%
Wales	3,099,100	3,113,200	5%	4%	4%
Scotland	5,373,000	5,404,700	8%	13%	12%
N Ireland	1,851,600	1,862,100	3%	15%	15%
UK	6,511,000	65,648,100	100%	5.22 mn	5.15 mn

The population increased most in London, which has more younger people and therefore more births. Over the last 5 years (2011 to 2016), the numbers under 15 in London have increased by more than 10%, twice the English average. Numbers of those aged 15 to 64 have increased by 5% in London, three times the average, but there is a smaller increase for those 65 and over, only 12% compared with just over 13% across England as a whole. Elderly numbers have increased substantially as well in all other three countries (Wales and N Ireland at 12%, Scotland at 11%).

In the year to June 2016, 3 million people moved in England and Wales from one Local Authority to another, representing 5% of the population, or one person in 20 moving in a year. Some of these would undoubtedly have been church members, which helps explain why movement in and out of congregations can be quite significant.

In a congregation of 100 people, on these figures some 5 might be expected to move every year, 7 will die and 4 will leave for other reasons. 16% is a high rate of loss especially when new people joining are only likely to be 12% of the original congregation. It is this difference nationwide that is resulting in falling church numbers. On Church of England figures 8% of the joiners will be people new to church life (the other 4% returning from a period away). Whether some of the joiners comprise as much as the 5% movers into the church area depends on where the church is located.

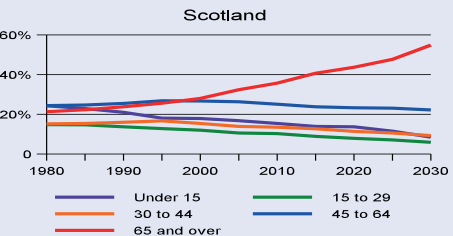
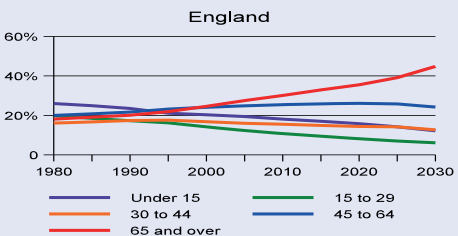
Many people left London in 2015/16 (as a percentage the highest rate of moving in England and Wales) , and the South West had the highest numbers moving into the area. Slightly more people moved out of England and Wales to Scotland than N Ireland, but the difference is very small. Scotland attracted students (aged 19 to 21) but England and Wales attracted those aged 23 to 25, presumably in the search for employment. There is virtually no gender difference in those moving; women moving just as much as men.

There are 900,000 UK citizens living in other EU countries, especially Spain, France, Ireland and Germany. On the other hand there are 3.2 million people born in the EU living in the UK as well as a further 5.4 million born outside the EU. That's a total of one person in 8; are those from overseas 13% of our congregations?

SOURCES: *Population Estimates for UK mid-2016*, Office for National Statistics; church membership figures from *UK Church Statistics*, ADBC Publishers, 2017.

Age Trends

The age of churchgoers is known from the various Church Censuses, and can be estimated for intermediate years. The percentages of churchgoers across all denominations by age-group, for the 50-year period 1980-2030, estimated for the years ahead, for both England and Scotland are shown in the graphs:



It may be seen that Scotland has a more serious ageing problem than England on present trends. This is largely because of the many immigrant churches which have started in England which, in the main, have a lower age profile than those in Scotland. In the former, 59% of Anglican churchgoers could be 65 or over by 2030, while only 23%, less than half, of Pentecostals will be in this age-group then, and only 21% of the New Catholic (a reduction from 71% in 2015).

The Finnish Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Parliament of Finland on December 6th 1917 thus making itself an independent republic, ending its autonomy within Russia as the Grand Duchy of Finland. The nation thus celebrates its centenary this year. Since 1917 the country has almost doubled in population (from 3.1 million to 5.6 million today), and is continuing to maintain the close ties with Sweden and Britain it has had throughout the last century.

Nine-tenths, 90%, of its population are nationally Christian, with about 1% in other religions and the remaining 9% with No Religion. Five-sixths, 82%, of the “Christians” are part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, by far the largest (99.5%) of five Lutheran denominations, with Pentecostals (growing) and the Orthodox (declining) being the next two largest groups (7% each). The Orthodox Church is mostly Greek (98%). The Finnish Lutheran Church has a small presence (1,800 members) in the UK, catering for Finns living here; they can contact each other through the InterNations website.

Finland is a land of lakes, with some 57,000 larger than 10,000 sq m, and 130,000 smaller ones covering much of the countryside. However, it is exquisitely beautiful, and stretches up almost to the Arctic Ocean, so is the favourite place for visiting Santa Claus!

Recent developments in the Finnish church include a significant growth of Pentecostalism, which numbers over 70,000 today. Their emphasis on healing the sick and speaking in tongues has led to a spreading of the charismatic evangelical movement to other denominations. Many Finns are antagonistic to Pentecostalism (37% in 2003). Pentecostals are strongest in the “west midlands” parts of Finland.

A totally different influence in Finnish religion is the emergence of the so-called Movement of Silence, which focusses on organising silent retreats, concentrating on togetherness, Bible study, prayer and music. In 2001 the movement had some 1,200 members and a number of retreat centres.



Another kind of grassroots-level Christian expression is offered by the St Thomas Mass, an alternative ecumenical Lutheran service not related to the Catholic Mass in any way. First held in a Helsinki church in 1988, attended especially by those in their 20s, it has proved very popular and filled the church again and again, subsequently spreading to other cities. It continues to meet but the initial congregation has grown with it, so that today many are in their 40s, and its attraction to “millennials” is far less strong. It has attracted many people with no prior connection with Christianity and is largely run by volunteers.

The Salvation Army and the Seventh-Day Adventists are also relatively strong in Finland (11,000 and 6,000 active members respectively in 1985). A Gallup poll in 2003 found 7% of Finns were born again.

Why does the Lutheran Church continue to attract good numbers of people? When they were asked, those features each affirming more than 80% were as follows:

The church maintains cemeteries (90%), Possibility of having a church funeral (89%), Possibility of having a child baptised (88%), The church maintains the Christian tradition of church festivals (88%), Possibility of having a church wedding (84%), Possibility of being a godparent (84%), The church helps old people and the disabled (82%), The church teaches right life values to young people (82%).

Unlike those in neighbouring Scandinavian countries, 14% of Finns feel a strong sense of belonging in the church, double the average felt in Scandinavia as a whole. There have been two occasions in the last 80 years when the number of Finns joining the Lutheran Church has exceeded the number leaving – in 1942-44 and 1965, both times when the threat of a possible invasion by Russia was very high.

A high proportion of the population (57%) trust the church (a 2000 study), and their belief system (even if not a church member) is broadly orthodox and Biblical. Their views on sexual fidelity, moral ethics, abortion, legal matters are mostly traditional. This does not mean though that a high percentage attend church regularly – it was 6% in 2004 and falling. In this, Finland is in line with many other European countries and is equally in need of an outpouring of God's Spirit.

SOURCES: Wikipedia: *Religion in Finland*, Kimmo Kääräinen, Kati Niemeläaand Limmo Ketola, Publication 54, Church Research Institute, Tampere, 2005; *Finnish Christian Handbook*, Suomen Kirkon Seurakuntaliiton ja MARC Europe, 1988.

Churches. Similar proportions of these groups of denominations simply don't exist in Scotland where nearly three-fifths, 57%, of churchgoers in 2030 will most likely be either Church of Scotland or Roman Catholic (a reduction from 71% in 2015).

In England the Anglicans and Roman Catholics are still very big denominations but together only 46% of all churchgoers, and in the future (2030) the Pentecostals could well together be more than the Anglicans (22% of the total against 20%).

Both countries have similar problems with reducing proportions of those under 45, and in both the proportion of those aged 15 to 29 reduces to about 6% of the total by 2030 on present trends.

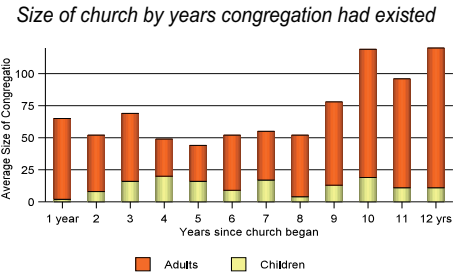
SOURCES: Four Church Censuses in both countries, percentages and forward estimates from *UK Church Statistics* No 3 2018 Edition Tables 13.1.2 and 13.2.2.

Finnish Religion

Planting Churches in Scotland

One of the questions asked in the 2016 Scottish Church Census was the year in which that particular congregation began. As a consequence it was possible to gain an insight into those churches which began relatively recently, say, within the previous 12 years. There were nearly 100 of these kind enough to complete a form. Not all those approached did so, and almost certainly many new congregations would have been missed since their addresses did not appear on any identifying lists.

The overall average size of these new churches in 2016 was 63, including adults and children, and some of these will have been augmented by those transferring from a parent congregation. The average size varied by how old the church was, as shown in the chart, and, as might be expected, the longer a church had existed the larger its congregation.



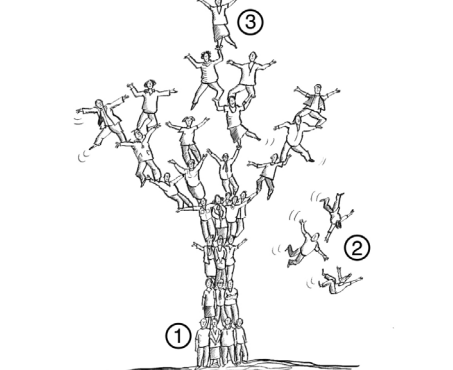
Initial congregations were between 50 and 75 for the first 3 years, but then numbers declined to about 50 between years 4 and 8, before beginning to grow from year 9 onwards. This would suggest an initial enthusiasm, then the real hard work of making the church work flourish with regular, committed and persevering members, before beginning to grow and presumably becoming more financially viable, perhaps with a full-time pastor. This broad pattern is not surprising though what is significant perhaps is the average length of time for each stage.

Children followed a broad pattern of growth over several years, then a general plateauing of numbers, with inevitably some years of plenty and other years of far fewer.

The largest number of these newly started churches were those begun by the Presbyterian churches, other than the Church of Scotland (average congregations of 86), followed by the Baptists (78) and those started by the New Church streams (71). The average Church of Scotland group, often a Messy Church, was 55. The smallest number in a congregation were those started by the Black or immigrant groups, whose average was 48.

Unfortunately the Census did not ask why a church was started, or how, or where its initial support came from or any of the practical questions needed before launching out into actually starting a new group. These questions were, however, explored in the London Church census, and there is a chapter on them in the report *Capital Growth*.

SOURCE: 2016 Scottish Church Census, analysis of returns by newly started churches.



SOURCE: *Escape into Humour* 2017, the Rotary Club of Hoddesdon, Page 10.

SNOWFLAKES

Social Media. The Jubilee Centre has produced a simple but helpful guide to the use of social media asking the question, “Is being better connected undermining our relationships?” Social media can permeate almost every hour of our lives, and anything so powerful must have spiritual consequences. While allowing better communications, can the “always-on” culture distract from more meaningful relationships? It is a short, useful read, available free.

SOURCE: *Social Media leaflet* from Jubilee Centre, www.jubilee-centre.org/social_media.

Economic development. Dr Hans Rosling, a medical statistician, died 7th February 2017, but frequently sought to debunk gloomy stereotypes about poor countries. He would emphasise:

- Global population growth is slowing rapidly
- The divide between global rich and poor is blurring
- Humans are living much longer than 50 years ago
- Many more girls are getting an education
- The number of people in extreme poverty fell by a billion between 1980 and 2013.

SOURCE: Obituary in *The Economist*, 11th February 2017, Page 67.

Irish teenagers. A survey commissioned by Christ in Youth in Ireland found 70% identified as Christian, and 60% as Catholic. However, half of those questioned, 48%, said they were less spiritual now than when they were 12. A third, 30%, of practising Christians said they felt church teaching on sexuality was wrong.

SOURCE: *Finding Faith in Ireland*, by Barna Group, quoted in *The Tablet*, 28th October 2017, Page 31.

Mission. 2000 visitors at Greenbelt, Big Church Day Out and New Wine answered questions about “Mission”, which meant “Evangelist” for almost half (44%), with it meaning “evangelism” for a fifth, 22%, a “calling” for 18%, “life” for 17% and social justice for 16%. They agreed (91%) everyone should be involved, and half (50%) said they were active in mission. The biggest fear in practising such was confusion as to what it was (27%), so sorting that out would be the next step (49%).

SOURCE: Report in *The Church of England Newspaper*, 20th October, 2017, Page 9.

Republic of Ireland. As in other Western countries the number with No Religion is growing fast, with 10% of the population of 4,760,000 ticking this in 2016, up from 280,000 in 2011 to 480,000 in 2016. Roman Catholics are 78% of the population, down from 84% five years ago. Other Christians are 6%, other religions 4%, the remainder giving no answer.

SOURCE: Article in *The Tablet*, 21st October 2017, Page 25.

Is Religion a good thing? An international survey of 17,400 people found they were split 51%:49% in saying it was positive:negative. Belgians were most negative at 68%, and then Germany, Spain and Australia at 63% with Sweden and Britain at 62% and France at 61%. No wonder the EU didn't want “God” in its Constitution! The country least negative was Japan (26%), followed by Russia and South Korea (36%). Getting on with people of different religions was much more positive, 74% being at ease with such.

SOURCE: Article in *The Tablet*, 28th October 2017, Page 29.

Cathedral visitor reduction. There were fewer visitors to our Cathedrals in 2016 than in 2015, especially in Cathedrals which charge for admission (down -12%), whereas those which are free were only down by -1%. The number visiting Leicester Cathedral was down -29% but that was partly because of the many attracted by the Richard III publicity in 2015. Westminster Abbey had 1.2 million visitors in 2016, 1.7 million in 2015 but over 2 million in 2013.

SOURCE: *Visitor Attraction Trends in England*, 2016.

Top 3 Catholics in 2017. Damian Green, at the time First Secretary of State (and in effect Deputy Prime Minister) was given this honour by *The Tablet's* editor, Brendan Walsh, followed by Baroness Sheila Hollins, psychiatrist of disability and safeguarding adviser to Pope Francis, followed by Andy Burnham, Mayor of Manchester, and former shadow Home Secretary.

SOURCE: Article in *The Tablet*, 28th October 2017, Page 11.

Loneliness. A survey of 53 churchgoers who were or had recently been caring for those with dementia asked how their experience impacted on their Christian faith. The key factor to emerge was loneliness, especially if the carers were in that role for many years. Those in rural areas spoke of their social isolation, but equally felt secure in an unostentatious faith, with support from friends and neighbours, not just the church however helpful that may have been.

SOURCE: Article in *Rural Theology*, Vol 15 No 2, 2017, Pages 97, 109.

1851 Census. There were 17.9 million people in the UK in 1851, and of these some 10.9 million attended church, but as many of these would have attended twice and even three times, the number of individuals attending (as against attendances) is not known although estimated at 39%. Of interest, however, is the fact that there were 30,047 “ministers, priests, religious teachers and students of divinity”, or 0.2% of the population, which compares with 40,268 ministers in 2017 or 0.06%, a third fewer pro rata, in today's population.

SOURCE: *The Butcher, the Baker, the Candlestick Maker*, Roger Hutchins, Little Brown, 2017, and *UK Church Statistics* 2018 Edition, ADBC Publishers, Table 1.1.1.

Time online. The Table shows the hours per day people have spent/are spending online outside of work on average over the last four years, and thus its impact on a person's free time. This can have an incredible dominance in our thinking, and an increasing influence on our life-style. Note that Britain and Hong Kong are increasing fastest.

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017	pa change
Britain	2.2	3.4	3.6	4.1	+23%
Hong Kong	2.6	2.7	4.3	4.8	+23%
France	1.6	1.8	2.4	2.7	+19%
USA	2.2	2.4	3.5	3.6	+18%
Mexico	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.6	+13%
Average	2.3	2.4	2.9	3.2	+12%
Japan	2.3	2.4	3.0	3.1	+10%
Brazil	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.9	+8%
Russia	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.4	+3%
China	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.5	-1%

SOURCE: GroupM, as given in *The Economist*, 4th November, 2017, Page 22.

Correction

In the article about “Non-Evangelicals” in the October 2017 issue of *FutureFirst* it was stated that 40% of Evangelicals were BME and 21% of non-Evangelicals. These figures are incorrect and should be 35% and 13% respectively. We apologise for the error, and are grateful to the Evangelical

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

www.brierleyconsultancy.com
01732 369 303

ISSN 2040-0268

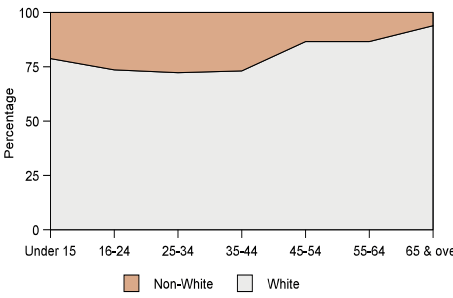
Midlands [Birmingham] which were all at 45. The five highest were Cornwall (58), Northumberland (57), and Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk, all at 55.

The relative strength of the growing denominations in England helps keep the number of churchgoers as a percentage of the population from sliding downwards too fast. In 1980, 10% of the English population went to church, and 17% of the Scottish population. By 2015 these percentages had become 5% and 8% respectively and are projected to both be 4% by 2030, showing that Scottish churchgoers, which include far fewer pro rata growing immigrant and Pentecostal churches, as a whole is declining faster than in England.

The two fastest growing groups of denominations, the Pentecostals and New Churches, have the highest percentage of men in their churches, respectively 49% and 50%, against an overall average of 43% in England. (In Scotland the percentage is 40%). In England the denominations with the lowest percentage of men are the Methodists and United Reformed Church with percentages 36% and 35% respectively. This suggests that to have an above-percentage of men helps church growth. The Independent churches as a group are also collectively growing in membership terms (at +0.8% pa) . They too have an above-average percentage of men, at 48%. However, the Independents are declining in attendance showing that gender is not a firm necessity for growth!

Part of the Pentecostal strength in England is that Black Christians have been here for many decades, and thus have people of all ages. The Scottish immigrants on the other hand are relatively recent and are mostly aged 25 to 34 as the two charts below show. Growth is a complex topic and is much more than the demographics explored here!

Proportions of White and Non-White churchgoers by Age in England and Scotland respectively



The Risk Factor

"Aslan is a lion - the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh," said Susan, "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion ..."

"Safe?" said Mr Beaver... "Who said anything about safe? Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." (C S Lewis, The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe)

Safety is the holy grail of modern society

We take out insurance policies to protect ourselves against unforeseen dangers. Sometimes it seems as though the overriding goal of contemporary Western societies is to play it safe and to arrive peacefully at a comfortable death at a respectable age.

The contemporary Western church is not exempt from this obsession with safety. Friends of ours were actually reported to the Social Services for daring to move to Pakistan with their children and were obliged to undergo countless interviews and assessments to confirm that they were of sound mind.

Safety is the holy grail of modern society in two ways: it is apparently desirable, and it does not exist. Total safety simply cannot be obtained. Risk may be minimised, but never eradicated. Cars are safer now than ever, yet 1,700 people were still killed in car crashes in the UK in 2016. We pump millions of pounds into counter-terrorism efforts led by one of the finest police services in the world, yet people still die from terrorism. Whatever steps we take we are still unable to eliminate the risks which come from nature such as wildfires and earthquakes.

Christians are not exempt from risk but are sandwiched between a culture which seeks to avoid risk at all costs, and a Christ who said: "Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

What are we to do?

Firstly, we need to recognise that a commitment to Christ is costly. We need to get away from any hint of nominal Christianity, any suggestion that the Christian faith ought to lead to a comfortable and pleasant life. There are people in the world who will kill us for our faith. We need to recognise instead the truth of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's comment, that "When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die." We make conversion so cheap – just say this Sinner's Prayer and you're in! – but in truth it costs everything.

Secondly, we need to recognise that following Christ is worth any cost. Are we prepared to lay everything we have on the altar for the sake of Christ? It is surely no accident that the story of the expansion of the Christian faith around the world is littered with examples of men and women who did precisely that.

Adoniram and Ann Judson were American missionaries who founded the church in what now is Myanmar. He was jailed and tortured for 20 months, sometimes suspended from his ankles from the ceiling of a rat-infested jail, and as soon as he was released both his wife and baby died. In 37 years of work he took only one trip back to the USA. Myanmar now has the third largest number of Baptists in the world.

Finally, we need to remember that abandonment to Christ is the single greatest source of joy in the world. So often I become grim-faced and taut with stress, but when I step back and think about the soaring joy of following Christ my eyes fill with tears. My parents-in-law watched a daughter die, went through cancer treatment, and still decided to continue serving as missionaries in Pakistan. Safe? None of this is safe. The Lord Himself is not safe. But believe me, He is good.

Article by Matt Vaughan, author of Mission, Risk and Suffering (available from kitab.org.uk) abbreviated with permission from Interserve magazine Go, Autumn 2017. Matt is an Interserve Mission Partner working in a turbulent part of South Asia.

No Religion in Australia

Unlike the UK, the Australians have a nationwide Census every 5 years rather than every 10 years. The results of their 2016 Census are interesting, and, as in the UK, there is a religious question which includes the option of ticking "No Religion". However, the 2016 Census differed from previous censuses in moving this option from last position (as previously) to first position. The number ticking "No Religion" has increased; how much of this increase is simply due to the change of position of one answer?

The Table shows the percentages ticking "No Religion" both in the 2006 and 2016 Censuses broken down by age-group. These age-groups are at 10-year intervals, so the second line in the Table gives the 2016 figure for the same age-cohort as in 2006 but now of course 10 years older.

"No Religion" by age-group in Australia, 2006 and 2016										
Year	Under 15	15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 to 84	85 & over	
2006	24%	24%	25%	20%	17%	14%	9%	7%	6%	
A	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	~	
2016	35%	37%	39%	33%	28%	25%	20%	14%	10%	
B Increase	+13%	+15%	+8%	+8%	+8%	+6%	+5%	+3%		

This Table may be read as follows. In 2006 25% of those aged 25 to 34 ticked "No Religion". In 2016 this age-group had grown 10 years older and so were now aged 35 to 44, and in the 2016 line 33% of these ticked "No Religion", the two percentages being linked by the arrow in Line A. The difference between 33% and 25% is 8% indicated in Line B as "Increase".

It may be seen that the percentage indicating they had No Religion increased across all age-groups, but the rate of increase (Line B) was sharpest (or highest) for those now aged 25 to 34 and was progressively smaller for older age-groups. This confirms what has long been recognised that most people's world-view or religion becomes settled in their early 20s, and those going from 15 to 24 to 25 to 34 would have been in that age-group. It also perhaps suggests that the ages between 15 and 34 are those most influenced by the increasing secularism and "debunking" of religion in this century.

The overall percentage of Australians saying they had No Religion was 19% in 2006, 23% in 2011 and 30% in 2016. Is all this increase solely due to the change in position of "No Religion" on the census form? Almost certainly not, since No Religion has been increasing in many other countries also. Why in Australia? Much media attention has been given to the cases of abuse in the church, and the failure of leadership to deal adequately with them, with a consequential loss of confidence in religious organisations. An Australian Royal Commission drew especial attention to these issues. This is bound to have had some effect.

There may, however, be a further reason – a decline in nominalism in religion, a view suggested by Rev Dr Philip Hughes, previous director of the Australian Christian Research Association. He points out that the increase in No Religion is not associated with any drastic decrease in church attendance, although numbers are declining. In other words, the nominals abandon any pretence at a religious label in favour of, perhaps, a more honest atheism.

It may partly be that the definition of "Christian" is having differing connotations. UK Prof Linda Woodhead for example has suggested that there are four types:

- Ethnic Christians, Christian because British, or because it is their culture
- Moral Christians, admiring Christian ethics, and thus feeling an affinity to Christianity
- Cradle Christians, who were baptised as babies
- Faithful Christians, who pray, read their Bible and go to church.

On the other hand there is a growing number of what Steve Aisthorpe calls "invisible" Christians, which, based on his research in north-west Scotland is quite a significant number of people. Some of these might easily have been "nominal" but are now more regarded as formerly churchgoing Christians who have stopped attending church on a regular basis, but still believe. These are "believing without belonging" rather than "belonging without believing" which was Grace Davie's original hypothesis.

In Australia the No Religion folk are a smaller percentage in urban areas than in the rural areas, and the invisible Christians tend to be more rural also. Perhaps some of the No Religion adherents are ex-invisible Christians, because it is so long since they last went to church. While this might possibly be so for older people, it cannot be true of the younger people for whom No Religion is an authentic statement of their creedal position.

"No Religion" is high in North-West Europe (35%), Australia (30%), Americas (32%), UK (26%), but especially in China (65%). Over half, 56%, of the Chinese in the UK in our 2011 Census said they had No Religion.

Does that mean that change is unlikely? Another Australian survey by McCrindle Research found that some Australians were attracted to religion and spirituality, because of:

- 16% Seeing people who live out a genuine faith
- 13% Experiencing a personal trauma or life event
- 12% Stories or testimonies from people who have changed due to coming to faith

One Gen Y participant (aged 23 to 37) in the survey said, "Maybe try to push the Jesus thing, rather than the 'come to church and learn about Jesus' thing."

SOURCES: Article in Pointers, by Philip Hughes on "No Religion" in the Australian Census, Vol 27, No 3, September 2017; Implicit Religion, Vol 15, No 4, 2012, Page 450; Steve Aisthorpe, The Invisible Church, St Andrew Press, 2016; Tess Colgate in Eternity, Australian Church News, 9th May, 2017, Page 2.

Size of Churches

The size of a particular congregation is significant in a number of ways. Larger churches, for example, have more resources, both in people and (usually) finance, to undertake more activities. It is surprising though just how many smaller churches have numerous activities being undertaken frequently by a dedicated army of often older people faithfully labouring behind the scenes. The following Table attempts to assess the number of churches of a given size, in part taken from the latest Church Census, and what proportion of total attenders are part of what size church.

Size of English churches by denomination, 2015

Band: Size of Sunday congreg-ation	Average size taken as	Church of England			Free Churches + Orthodox			Roman Catholic			Total: England		
		Churches %	No of people	% of people	Churches %	No of people	% of people	Churches %	No of people	% of people	Churches %	No of people	% of people
1-10	5	18.6	14,500	1.9	9.4	9,700	0.7	2.8	400	0.0	12.6	24,600	0.8
11-25	12	25.4	47,700	6.3	23.4	58,400	4.2	5.9	2,000	0.1	22.9	108,100	3.7
26-50	30	18.3	86,300	11.4	21.0	131,400	9.4	6.3	5,400	0.3	18.9	223,100	7.5
51-100	55	21.9	189,300	25.1	20.5	235,100	16.8	6.9	10,700	0.6	20.1	435,100	14.7
101-150	110	10.0	172,000	22.8	10.1	231,300	16.5	7.9	24,600	2.6	9.9	427,900	14.4
151-200	165	2.6	66,000	8.8	7.8	267,800	19.1	10.3	48,200	6.0	5.9	382,000	12.9
201-300	220	1.8	62,700	8.3	4.9	224,200	16.0	17.5	109,100	15.1	4.6	396,000	13.4
301-400	330	0.6	33,000	4.4	1.6	112,500	8.0	17.1	159,700	19.8	2.3	305,200	10.3
401-500	440	0.3	22,000	2.9	0.7	65,100	4.7	14.3	178,200	22.2	1.5	265,300	9.0
500+	~	0.5	61,500	8.1	0.6	64,400	4.6	11.0	268,400	33.3	1.3	394,300	13.3
BASE (=100%)/TOTAL		15,685	755,000	100.0	20,812	1,399,900	100.0	2,832	806,700	100.0	39,329	2,961,600	100.0

The Table shows that the number of congregations in England comprises many small churches – over half, 54%, have 50 or under attending on a Sunday. In the Church of England the Usual Sunday Attendance across the 5% smallest churches is 7 people and across the 25% smallest churches it is 15. On the other hand across the 0.5% largest churches the attendance is 700 (excluding the 6 churches with attendance in four figures, only two of which are in central London [HTB and All Souls]). Across the largest 5% average attendance is 150, and across the largest 25% it is 60. The overall median (not mean or average because the few very large churches skew the figure) is 28 people, meaning that half the churches have more attending and half have less.

Across the whole country and across all denominations the median size is 44 people, that is there are almost 20,000 churches with less than that on a Sunday, while 20,000 have more. However, in contrast to the impression given by these numbers is the fact that only 12% of worshippers are in churches of 50 or fewer, and half of English worshippers actually worship in churches of 185 or more people on a Sunday.

It is the Roman Catholic figures included above which make a substantial difference. This is because with an acute shortage of priests, the various Catholic Dioceses have been grouping parishes together into single administrative units, reducing the number of churches open on a Sunday, and indicating to their parishioners that Sunday Mass will now be held in these more central churches. Their theology of encouraging everyone to attend Mass every Sunday means that more people thus go to fewer churches, so the churches in use tend to get larger congregations, while the non-Catholic churches without the merger constraint on average get smaller.

Some 30 years ago the Methodists tried merging a number of their churches in Cornwall and encouraging their people to go to a "central" church but the experiment didn't work. Those in the closed churches felt they had been pushed out of church and simply stopped attending altogether or went instead to a church of another denomination.

In America, the size issue takes totally different dimensions since there are many "mega-churches", those with more than 2,000 on a Sunday. There are probably about 1,500 of such churches with Sunday attendance totalling perhaps 4.7 million people, and a further 15,000 what they call "medium-sized" churches, that is, with between 500 and 2,000 attenders, with something like 325,000 churches catering for 34 million churchgoers. That's about 0.4% mega-churches (with 8% of worshippers), 4.4% of medium size churches (with 31% of worshippers), and about 95% of "small" churches with less than 500 people catering for 61% of worshippers. England has 99% small churches on this definition catering for 87% of worshippers. America, like England, is in reality a land of small churches, even if "small" has different meanings in the two countries.

SOURCE: Statistics for Mission 2016, Page 9; numbers extrapolated from figures on Page 8.12 of Religious Trends No 5, 2005/2006, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 2006; table in Acts & Facts, October 2013, Page 7.

Our Incredible Moon

Our moon is one of the most incredible bodies in the Solar System. Despite there being at least 175 moons for the other planets in our System, as counted thus far, ours is unique because of its size and because we have only one moon. While our moon is considerably smaller than the earth, the other planets' satellites are thousands of times smaller than their respective planets.

Because of the closer relationship in size, our moon gives us tides. That's unique too but then no other planet has oceans and needs tides to sustain life.

The moon is also unique in another way. Its orbit round the earth is virtually circular while the orbit of other satellites is elliptical. As it orbits around the earth it rotates on its own axis. All the moons (except Triton, one of Neptune's moons) orbit in the same direction as their planets rotate, and on a plane that matches the planet's rotation along its equator. The moon, however, orbits on a plane which matches the earth's revolution around the sun, and none of the other 175 do that. Why is that important? It helps to maintain the tilt of the earth and that's important to keep the pattern of seasons and temperatures across our globe. Were it not for our moon, the earth's tilt would gradually change.

The moon's size and orbit mean that the earth's tilt does not vary by more than a couple of degrees as its travels round the sun. If it varied more the earth would have either boiling tropics or frigid, sunless Antarctic winters, either or both of which would be disastrous for living things. This is the only planet which has a satellite like ours and, as life is unique to the earth, the only planet where it matters. Praise to the God of creation!

SOURCE: Article in Answers magazine, September/October 2017, Pages 72/73.



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) The first text message was sent in 1992, 25 years ago. It said, "Merry Christmas."

2) 52% of the world's population lacks Internet access and of these, 62% (= 32% of global population) live in Asia and the Pacific Islands.

3) 49 out of every 100 new Seventh-Day Adventist members eventually leave the church.

4) Only three-quarters, 72%, of newly wedded young couples adopt the groom's surname, while 10% take the bride's surname, and 11% use a double-barrelled surname. Presumably the other 7% each keep their own surnames (sometimes for professional reasons).

5) Alibaba, China's equivalent to Amazon, has 400 delivery stations in Beijing alone, each delivering up to 130 items to customers each day (50,000 items daily!), and has 2.5 million couriers throughout China.

6) A duck's quack doesn't echo, and no-one knows why.

7) A third of mothers with young children ask their mothers to care for their grandchild while they go to work. Two-fifths, 40%, of grandmothers live within 15 minutes of their grandchildren.

SOURCES: 1) The World in 2017, The Economist, 2016; 2) UN report quoted in Time magazine, 2nd October 2017, Page 19; 3) Ministry, July 2017, Page 7; 4) Report of survey of 2,003 adults in The Daily Telegraph, 1st November, 2017; 5) Article in The Economist, 28th October 2017, Page 10; 6) Plain Truth, Spring 2012, Page 23; 7) Report in The Daily Telegraph, 7th November, 2017, Page 12.

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GROWING, BUT AGEING

John Humphrys, the Radio 4 Today presenter, lost his bet! He had bet £5 that more people attended football matches on a Saturday than people went to church on a Sunday with Giles Fraser, an Anglican priest who sometimes gives "Thought for the Day" on the Today programme. But 5% of the population go to church on Sunday whereas only 3% watch a football match according to sportingintelligence.com. John said he would make his bet into £50 for a charity.

It is true that church numbers are declining but the figures in the latest (third) edition of UK Church Statistics, just published as the "2018 Edition," show that the church isn't about to die anytime soon. Forward estimates in the book suggest there are likely to be 4% of the population still attending church in 2030.

To help see the wood from the trees Church Statistics divides the 250 denominations in the UK into 10 broad groups – the four large Institutional denominations of the Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox (very small in attendance terms) and Presbyterians, and the six smaller "Free Churches" which are the Baptists, Independent Churches, Methodists, New Churches, Pentecostals and collectively the many Smaller Denominations.

The four Institutional denominations have about 70 individual denominations between them, and together account for two-thirds, 70%, of all church members and collectively are unquestionably declining, at an average rate of -2.1% per annum over the 50 years 1980 to 2030. The "Free" denominations (180 in total) form the remaining third, 30%, of church members in the UK, and are collectively growing, albeit very slowly at +0.3% per annum. Two-thirds of these Free denominations are seeing real growth, right now, in 2017!

The Pentecostals, which are growing the fastest (between 2012 and 2022, the years covered in detail in this edition of Church Statistics), measured an average growth rate of +2.0% per annum, but this has slowed over the last 12 years as the many new churches started in this period need time to consolidate before a fresh wave of expansion.

The New Church streams (Newfrontiers, Vineyard and Salt and Light, which are the three largest, each with total attendance in five figures) are also collectively growing (+1.9% per annum). They are followed by the many "Overseas National Churches" as they are called, part of the Smaller Denominations group, also growing overall (at +1.5% per annum), catering for immigrants from many countries and speaking multiple languages between them.

The largest groups are the Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Tamils but collectively there are at least 600 non-English-language churches in this broad immigrant group, which excludes the charismatic Pentecostal churches. The Overseas Nationals sit alongside other major (but smaller) denominations such as the Salvation Army (nearly 700 churches in the UK), the Quakers (500) and the Seventh-Day Adventists (300).

The group growing fastest, however, often seen not as churches in themselves but as part of a church's outreach, are the Messy Churches, with almost 100,000 in attendance across the UK in 3,200 separate units, accounting for 6% of all the churches in the country, and growing in attendance at the rate of 11% per annum!

So growth is real and visible in many places, but some denominations are seeing decline such as the Baptists (-1.2% per annum), and especially the Methodists (-3.6% pa) and United Reformed Church (-4.7% pa). The key reason for smaller numbers in these and the larger denominations is the inability to attract sufficient young people to replace the many elderly members who die. This basic demographic problem is clearly seen in the chart, where the percentage in brackets after a denomination's name is the proportion those attenders are of the total in 2015. The Pentecostals have the highest proportion of those under 30, the Methodists (along with the United Reformed Church) the lowest.

