He became the first chair of MARC Europe in the 1980s, and has been an inspiration to many ever since. His courage in the face of illness, pain and suffering, his constant encouragement and not least his perpetual cheerfulness will be greatly missed by scores of people. His far sighted vision enabled Christian Research to have the financial foundation in property on which all its operations were based from 1993 to 2007. A warm friend, a constant adviser, his insight, wisdom, understanding of the times was deep and always practically applied. While a great joy for him (and heaven!), his passing leaves a huge gap here on earth. FutureFirst has been much the stronger for his input into every edition.

He leaves his wife, Jenny, and two adult sons, both with families.

Peter Brierley

Belief in Evolution

Two recent pieces of American research

look at who believes in evolution. Almost

half (46%) of those responding to the

General Social Survey in 2004 believed

that "God created human beings in their

present form within the last 10.000

years," two-fifths (41%) believed "human

beings have developed over millions of

years, but God guided this process," and

just 10% believed in evolution with God

playing no part. The remaining 3% had

Those who accepted that the Bible is the

literal Word of God were twice as likely to

take the first position (93%), while those who

thought the Bible was a book of legends

were much more likely to agree with

evolution (80%). Such results confirm the

findings of a number of different surveys.

The second piece of research, with much

larger numbers involved, looked at what

It is very clear from the Table that ministers

follow lay people in their thinking about

other ideas.

To Agree or Disagree ...

Beware those who nullify the power and work of the Spirit by suggesting that His primary influence was limited to the time of the New

Beware those who denigrate the cross of Christ by claiming that He did not die as a substitute for us in our transgressions.

Beware those who refuse to acknowledge God's creativity in providing females with the gifting and godliness necessary for leadership,

Beware those who accept secular understanding of how the world was formed, denying God's power in making the heavens and the earth and all that is

Beware those who consider the Scriptures to be less than the divinely inspired authority in all matters of

Beware those who take Scripture solely as the record of salvation and do not see in it the overall immutable and sovereign purposes of God,

Beware those for whom man and his intelligence, his skills, his will, his ultimate triumph, and not God, are the centre of His universe

Beware those whose analyses are incorrect, conclusions invalid, and prophecies are false, whose understanding is wrong, who are deluded in their own minds and who speak lies in God's name

Beware those who fail to see God at work in the events of history speaking to mankind in both mercy and judgement while seeking human beings to share fellowship with Him through His Son, Jesus

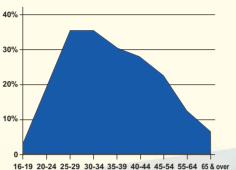
.. for He will visibly revisit this earth in incredible splendour, almighty strength, and resolute determination to ensure that the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory are His, and His alone, for ever and

But ... we embrace those who are committed to the God-breathe inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, the virgin birth, the Lord of miracles, the crucified Saviour, the risen Christ, the reigning and coming King, the divine Creator and ruler of the Universe the Potentate of Time and the ultimate triumph of His Kingdom. Beware those things which divide but embrace those things which unite.

When a person initially leaves single status he/she either marries or forms a cohabiting partnership. In 2008 15% of non-singles were single parent families, 18% were cohabiting and 67% were married. However, such simple percentages hide changes in age, gender and the dissolution and re-forming of new or other partnerships. The percentage of those living with a partner varies with age as shown in Figure 1. This does not show gender difference which is largest for those aged 16 to 19 (1% male, 5% female)

and aged 20 to 24 (13% male, 24% female). Figure 1: Percentage cohabiting by age

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There is a steep climb in proportions cohabiting up to the late 20s, where it stays at just over a third of all adults before dropping in the late 30s and thereafter.

Singleness is compounded for younger people as many continue to live with their parents. Figure 2 illustrates the many changing circumstances for those aged 20 to 34.

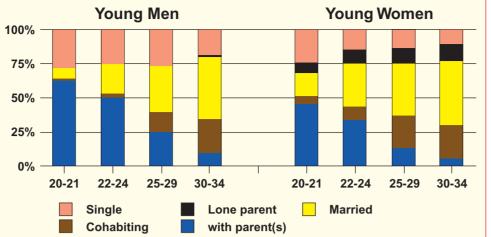
Both young men and young women leave their parental home rapidly after reaching 25, women faster than men. The cohabiting proportions increase for both sexes, and lone parenthood is an important component for the youngest women which grows in proportion as they get older. Those staying single reduce after the age of 21 but not greatly thereafter, there being more single men than women. The proportion who are married steadily grows for both sexes with age, with slightly more women married

ministers believed, broken down into three groups, as shown in the Table. than men

Clergy attitudes towards evolution, by tradition	Evolution is t	he best expla	anation of life	Adam and Eve were historical people			
	Evangelical %	Mainline %	Catholic %	Evangelical %	Mainline %	Catholic %	
Strongly agree/ agree	5	35	56	92	35	16	
Neutral	3	14	19	1	13	13	
Strongly disagree/disagree	92	51	25	1	52	71	
Base (=100&)	3,484	3,079	416	3,183	3,083	413	

evolution (or vice versa), and that it is the evangelicals who are most likely to concur

Living Arrangements Figure 2: Living arrangements, by age and gender, 2008



Staying together

Do cohabiting couples stay together? The majority do so at least for the first 10 years (now the average length of married life), although many marry in this process, as Figure 3 indicates. However, those cohabiting are three times more likely to separate than those who are married.

What are the factors which tend to keep cohabitees together for longer? It used to be whether they start a family, but this is changing. In 1992 37% of cohabitees were still together 16 years after the birth of a child, but only 7% in 2006.

Age is important. Two-thirds of older people (35 and over) are likely to stay together, many getting married in the process. For the third whose partnership ends, over a quarter (28%) marry or cohabit with a new partner, the remainder staying single.

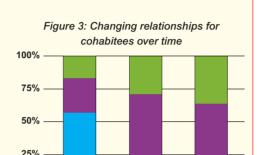
Those with one partner with limiting longterm illness, with previous experience of partnership dissolution, with less educational qualifications, in a low social class or lacking employment were all more likely to end their partnership.

Implications for church life

Currently about 2% of churchgoers are cohabitees, something which may be

that the early chapters of Genesis are historically accurate. Catholics are far less likely to agree, and the mainline groups are somewhere in the middle. Across all three groups, the percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing that Adam and Eve were historical was 62%, while those saying evolution was the best explanation was 21%. It would be interesting to know how far British clergy followed these percentages.

SOURCES: Articles by Paul Leveque and Andrea Guillaume, and by Ted and Linda Lockett in Review of Religious Research, Volume 51, Numb 4. June 2010 and Number 3. March 2010, respectively





higher in urban areas (in Melbourne, Australia, for example it is 7%). This may vary with denomination, with Anglicans and Catholics likely to have a higher proportion than others. Age, gender and having a family are all important elements. Single parents are an important part of society's household make-up, but few are churchgoing, perhaps only 1%.

There are several issues here: celebrating family life in its entirety, helping the vulnerable, teaching on Biblical standards issues of leaving home, encouraging couples to deepen their relationship (and ideally get married) and recognition of changing living arrangements, and so on. Each needs to be considered and worked through in the local church situation.

SOURCES: Articles in Population Trends, Office for National Statistics ave Macmillan, No 138, Winter 2009 (Page 30) and No 139, Spring 2010 Pages 44, 51); Engage, Jubilee Centre, Issue 28, Spring 2010, Page 5; Al ume Matters, Philip Hughes and Stephen Reid, Christian Rese Association, Melbourne, February 2009, Pager 67; Religious Trends, No. 7 2007/2008, Christian Research, Swindon, Tables 4.5.2 and 4.10.2.

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CHRISTIAN BOOKS

The Christian book trade has had a battering in the past year. The demise of STL (as it used to be called) was a cataclysmic blow for distribution, publication and the book trade. While 8 of the Wesley Owen shops were taken over (but retaining the name) by the new owner, Koorong, or by CLC (6 shops), or by others like Living Oasis (owned by the Nationwide Christian Trust) which has taken over 20 shops, or independently, the chain and its overall influence have gone. Publishers like Scripture Union were hit especially hard. The STL Warehouse in Carlisle was taken over by John Ritchie Ltd, based in Kilmarnock. A much smaller chain, SPCK, was sold in 2008 and has since gone into administration.

In addition, there has been the recession, and, as with other products, the book trade has dropped generally. Sales of books in the UK were 3% down at the end of June 2010 to what they were 2 years ago, and volume was 4% down. Non-fiction (the genre of most Christian books), especially hardback, has fallen most, particularly reference and biographies, declining 10% in just one year. Two of the major secular bookshop chains, Borders and Books Etc. have gone into liquidation. In the last 6 months of 2009, 30 secular bookshops closed. although some 2,100 remain, one-third of which are in town centres

Before the Wesley Owen crisis, more than 100 Christian bookshops had closed in the past eight years, but there remain more than 400 still open Church attendance is also declining, and churchgoers and church members are increasingly elderly, and seem to be reading less. Some 10% of churchgoers are estimated to visit Christian bookshops regularly, buying not just books but cards, CDs, DVDs, etc. Some £16 million was spent on religious books in 2009 according to Nielsen BookScan data, only 0.1% less than in 2008, but regarded as "a significant underestimation" because many Christian bookshops are not part of he BookScan panel

There is, however, another challenge, relevant to all bookshops - the growth of iPads, Amazon Kindles, Sony Readers, and the like which allow books to be read on a phone or kind of flat laptop. It is presumed that this "ebook", electronic book reader, phenomenon will eventually reduce sales of physical copies, but there is little evidence yet of that in the Christian scene. However the other electronic gizmo, Amazon, continues to provide a challenge in terms of speed of delivery and price.

Now we shall sing Hymn Number 98, which can be found in the Kindle download at www.amazon.com/Complete-Book-Hymns-ebook/dp/B001GS...



SNOWFLAKES

Bringing up children. A survey of 2,400 parents was undertaken by the government in 2009, and showed:

- 94% of parents were confident of their parenting skills.
- 36% argued with their children most days, 47% if they were with 6-10 year olds.
- Mothers were more affected than fathers by their children's behaviour.
- 46% of full-time working parents wished they spent more time with their children, with 32% saying "it was nowhere near enough'
- 79% of parents asked family members for advice, and 71% other parents, especially about pregnancy, maternity or babies.
- 94% of parents had been in contact with the staff at their child's nursery, school or college within the last year, and 74% had received information on their child's progress.

Does/should your church provide help on parenting, family life, or other like matters?

SOURCE: Parental Opinion Survey 2009, Department for Children, Schools ilies, by Mark Peters et all, undertaken by TNS-BMRB, Research Report DCSF-RR194, January 2019.

When is old age? This fascinating question was asked in last year's British Social Attitudes Survey, and the answers are shown in the chart.

Just over a third (33%) of the sample of 2,200 put 70 as the time when people reach old age, although a further quarter (23%) put it later. Some readers will

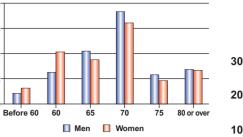
What then for the Christian scene? As ever, personal service is important. Men are four times more likely to ask for an assistant's help than women, but a secular survey showed that half (50%) the population reckoned on buying fewer books in 2010. Can Christian bookshops trump that? The Christian Book Club which began in 1997 under David Wavre was still listed in the 2009 UK Christian Resources Handbook. Getting information about new books will always be important for sales, hence the large bookstalls at events like the Christian Resources Exhibition, New Wine. Spring Harvest, Greenbelt, etc. become especially important. Twenty years ago, many ministers would recommend a book from the pulpit; can such endorsement be regained? Word-of-mouth is always important. Many church bookstalls still exist, but perhaps do less business than formerly. Many church libraries and book rooms are no longer.

The A4 monthly publication for the Christian book trade. Christian Marketplace, edited by Clem Jackson, has become from July 2010 an A5 freebie for those using Christian bookshops aiming to encourage sales of books. How important for the sale of a book is the author? The cover? The blurb on the back? Surveys suggest these are all essential, so publishers are a crucial part of the battle for survival – and indeed, without them, there would virtually be no book trade!

and the Church Times 19th February and 19th March 2010



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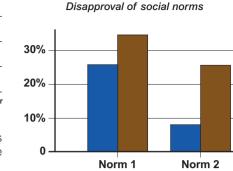


doubtless draw comfort that that means that less than half the sample put it before you reach 70!

When men and women reach old age

SOURCE: British Social Attitudes Survey. 26th Report. Alison Park et al. National Centre for Social Research and Sage, London, 2010, Page 165.

Social norms. The latest edition of *British* Social Attitudes reports on the 2006/2007 European Social Survey of social norms. Five items were surveyed, and the percentage disapproving of three actions in the UK were similar to the rest of Europe - having a full-time job with a child under 3 (21% UK and Europe), having a child Having a divorce when your child(ren) are same be true in the UK? under 12 years of age, and Norm 2: Choosing to remain childless.



■ UK

Identification with the Christian faith was measured in two national surveys in Australia, one in 1993 and one in 2009. The results were broken down by age and showed a drop in every age-group, with the drop among those aged 15 to 29 the greatest. But there were two slight surprises – the drop among those in their 30s (the GenX generation) was less than outside marriage (20% and 18%), or expected and the drop among the those in cohabiting (14% and 15%). There were their 50s (Boomers) was more than two however which were markedly different, expected. Are some GenXers retaining as the diagram shows, where Norm 1 = their grandparents' values? Would the

Europe

SOURCE: Article by Philip Hughes in Pointers. Christian Research Association, Australia, June 2010, Vol 20, No 2, Page 3.

THE RELIGION OF IMMIGRANTS

born abroad, up from 9% five years previously by an additional 1.6 million people. The number who come are, of course, noted by country of origin and their ethnic group, but not their religion. However, a recently published table of the ethnic status of just one year's immigration intake, together with the government "equating" of ethnicity with religion, taken from the 2001 Census, allows an interesting calculation of the broad religious groupings of immigrants in the year 2000.

In 2009, 11% of the UK's population was The Table shows that a third (31%) of these immigrants were Christian at least in name, a quarter (24%) were Muslim, a fifth (21%) had no religion, and the remaining quarter (24%) was spread across other religions of which the largest was Hindu (11%). It is therefore doubtful that the majority of immigrants are Muslim, if this particular year was a representative sample of other

> SOURCES: "Sleepwalking to segregation"? Challenging myths about race and migration, Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson, Policy Press, University of Bristol, 2009; Religious Trends No 5, 2005/2006, Christian Research, Eltham,

Estimated religion of immigrants in the year 2000

Ethnic Group	Number	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	Other	None/ Not state
Mixed	12,600	6,615	88	113	1,222	50	140	4,372
Indian	21,000	1,029	42	9,450	2,667	6,111	378	1,323
Pakistani	9,500	105	0	10	8,740	0	8	63
Bangladeshi	2,400	12	2	14	2,220	0	3	149
Chinese	14,500	3,132	2,190	15	44	0	71	9,048
Other Asian	9,400	1,260	461	2,519	3,506	583	112	959
Caribbean	4,400	3,247	9	13	35	0	31	1,06
African	17,500	12,058	18	35	3,500	18	33	1,838
Other Black	1,100	733	2	4	66	1	8	286
Other	27,100	8,943	4,201	352	6,965	271	514	5,85
TOTAL	119,500	37,134	7,013	12,525	28,965	7,034	1,298	25,53
% of total	100	31	6	11	24	6	1	2

REFLECTIONS

It was an enormous challenge. In fact, her life depended upon it. Was she willing, as we would say, "to put all her eggs in one basket"? Would she risk what Rudvard Kipling called "one turn of pitch and toss"?

Sometimes we have to make a major decision. We don't vet have all the finance or personnel, but should we not start the new building, or the new programme? One major piece of information is missing, and it isn't going to be available immediately. Do we risk all, and go ahead? "Don't be a fool, are you really sure this is necessary?" our inner self whispers. "How can you do this? Isn't it just arrogance on your part, trying to be more than you really are?"

We are given an opportunity to do something. A 79-year old American ex-CEO was asked to become the CEO of a new agency - "I'll do it," he said. John Laing was offered the contracts for building the M1 and the new Coventry Cathedral. Could his firm cope with such a twin challenge? He signed for both on the same day (30th October 1956); the answer was affirmative.

The lady in our opening paragraph was an orphan, without siblings. She was alone, but brought up by a very caring uncle. She was also very beautiful, and was chosen from among all the potential young women to become the wife of the Emperor. She had a secret, however, which she kept from her husband.

In those days, 2,500 years ago, societal rules were very strict. The King was absolute monarch. Noone entered his presence without permission, and to attempt to do so was death - unless at the moment of encounter he deemed otherwise. Esther, the secret Jew, was told by her uncle of a plot to eliminate all the Jews in the Persian Empire. Would she approach the Emperor with a plan to get that thwarted? Only after every Jew in the capital city of Susa spent 3 days in fasting and prayer, she said.

Her uncle, Mordecai, agreed, and said she was probably the King's favourite wife "for such a time as this". We now know she risked all ("if I perish, I perish"), her meeting with King Xerxes was granted, her plan of special feasts was successful, the enemy was defeated, and the Jews were saved from holocaust.

But her challenge remains. Are your plans under God, for such a time as this, worth taking a risk like that which Esther took? Each moment of history brings with it its time of decision. When faced with appalling news from the battlefield, Churchill simply said, "Let us go forward". Exactly so.

Affiliation and Involvement

In 1990 80% of French people would call themselves Catholic, but that was true of only 51% in 2007, a huge decline in a short period. Is that related to the fact that only 58% of French homes have a The British religious mostly specialise in Bible, and only 26% of French people have read it?

In the United States, a 2009 survey of 12

megachurches (those with at least 2,000 on a Sunday) found that attenders' average age was 40 (younger than most churches), that almost a third were single, that many had seen spiritual growth in their lives in the last year (62%), were committed to Christ (92%), but were not active in the church (45% never volunteered to help), nor gave generously (32% gave only a little or nothing at all). This shows that affiliation, even attendance and spiritual commitment, do not necessarily correlate with church involvement.

evangelical churchgoers, but some 9% would call themselves evangelical while not attending. In France, less than 1% of the population is evangelical, though whether themselves evangelical is not clear.

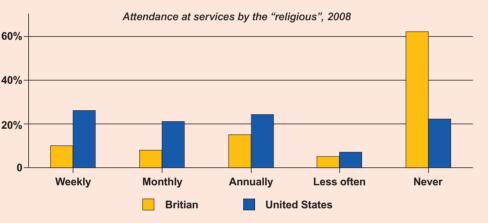
How involved are the "religious", judging involvement by church attendance? This is illustrated in the chart, showing that Britain and the United States are quite different. using British Social Attitudes Survey data.

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never attending, whereas the American religious attend reasonably frequently - on average once every 3 weeks. The British religious attend once every 2 months, varying significantly by denomination -Anglicans once every 10 weeks, others once a month

Does this variation in affiliation make any difference to people's lives? YES, 92% of the religious say that religion helps people gain comfort, whereas that is true only of 80% of the fuzzy and 68% of the unreligious. Should any religious group be able to have their own schools? YES say 56% of the religious, 39% of the fuzzy and 36% of the unreligious.

In the UK some 3% of the population are It affects opinions also. Is abortion wrong only sometimes or not at all if there is a strong chance of a birth defect? YES sav 67% of the religious, 81% of the fuzzy and 86% of the unreligious. Is pre-marital sex this 1% is of churchgoers or those calling always or almost always wrong? YES say 29% of the religious, 10% of the fuzzy and



A gap between affiliation and involvement has long been known, with those identified with a certain position but inactive often being called "nominal Christian/ Catholic/ Evangelical" or whatever. A different Professor David Voas - those who are religious (who may or may not attend regularly), those who are "fuzzy" and those who are unreligious.

In his article in the December 2009 issue of FutureFirst, the percentages for these 3 groups were given as, respectively, 25%, 35% and 40%. In the United States they are 71%, 25% and 4%.

just 3% of the unreligious. Is homosexual sex always or almost always wrong? YES say 50% of the religious, 35% of the fuzzy and 19% of the unreligious.

typology has now been introduced by So the classification is not arbitrary but provides useful indicators as to where people are and what they might think, measured against a somewhat arbitrary but nevertheless real behavioural mode church attendance.

> SOURCES: Article in the Baptist Tim es. 7th May 2010; news item in Great. 26th Report, Alison Park et al. National Centre for Social Research and Sage, London, 2010, Pages 70, 75, 95 and 98.

What some people say

My young grandson called the other day to wish me Happy Birthday. He asked me how old I was, and I told him, 62. My grandson was quiet for a moment, and then he asked, "Did vou start at 1?"

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Catholic elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The nun posted a note on the apply tray, "Take only ONE. God is watching." At the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cakes, next to which, in a child's handwriting, was a sign, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples.'

SOURCE: Emails from Alison Hills, Tonbridge, and Kim Tainio, Borough Green

Sermons

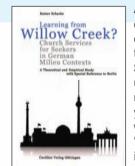
The College of Preachers undertook a survey in 2009 to which 193 people responded from 16 different churches. One sixth (17%) said sermons frequently changed the way they lived, and three-fifths (62%) said they provided a "sense of God's love". Just over half (55%) felt their knowledge of Jesus had improved. How would your hearers evaluate vour sermons?

Cambray Baptist Church in Cheltenham had 423 responses to the question, "If you could ask God one question, and knew He'd answer it, what would it be?" The top three were: Why does God allow suffering? Why am I here? What happens when I die?

These were then made into widely announced sermon topics, which drew 25 visitors the first Sunday. Could your church do something similar?

SOURCES: Articles in the Church Tim es, 22nd January, 2010 and in the Baptist Tim es, 19th March, 2010.

GERMAN CHURCH GROWTH



Schultze has been used in sociologica research for over 25 years by constructing what are called "milieus". Their value is in giving a twodimensional under-

standing of different "clusters" and how they can reflect different life-styles. Rainer Schacke decided to use this method to investigate church growth in Germany for his doctoral thesis with the London School of Theology.

By interviewing church members in several Berlin churches, Rainer identified which of these groups were among its members. In one church, for example, there were four -New Middle Class. Postmaterialists. Modern Performers and Experimentalists, though not necessarily in the proportions shown in the diagram which relate to the entire city of Berlin. Measuring the same 5 years later, in German Milleu Contex ISBN 978-3-86955-104-3.

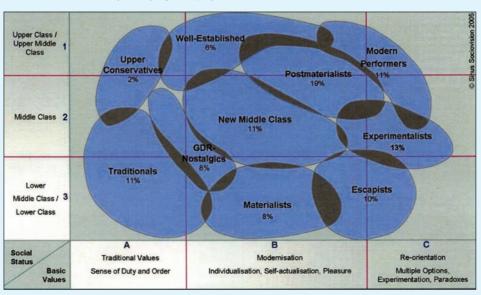
A technique for he found that some now attending the same combining societal church were in a different group, the class and values by Materialists group - an extra group was the German Gerhard being reached, with a different class background and values.

> Some of the churches had planted an extra congregation in the period under measurement, which often reached different groups from those in the original church. How best span the culture differences thus revealed? He also found that the different churches were reaching different groups in different locations. Church leaders thus could compare how they were reaching people in a common group, say the New Middle Class, but some groups, like the Traditionalists, were only being reached by one church.

> The value of this approach is that the domains show the neighbourhood values which help in understanding how to reach people where they currently stand. The author can be reached via the publisher of the book, info@cuvillier.de.

SOURCE: Learning from Willow Creek? Church Services for seekers

One such milieu for the city of Berlin is shown. Each of the 10 groups can be analysed by age, employment, leisure interests, and so on.



continued from page 1

Is the future one of gloom? No. I recognise that being on the edge means that frequently you are in front of the curve. In Suffolk over the past 40 years we have developed a range of solutions to ministry

which have later been recognised by the wider church as innovative. I don't know what we will do but I do believe that we will rise to the challenge.

2026, Office for National Statistics; Projected changes in population, Suffolk County Council citing Dwelling Led Projections, Royal Statistical Society, December 2006

Being Fair

An Ofsted survey asked a group of 130 young people aged 11 to 14 if they were treated fairly, recognising that what "fairness" means will vary from child to child

Most (96%) felt that adults running activities they attended generally treated them fairly, as did 94% of doctors, 88% of teachers and 83% of social workers. Friends followed closely at 82%, and other children or young people at 80%. However, just under three-quarters (72%) of the general public

What made young people treat other young people unfairly? They said if they "look different" (14%), or misbehave (13%), or come from a different culture or race (13%), or act differently (12%) or themselves treat others unfairly (11%).

What made adults treat young people unfairly? That question was easier to answer. A third (34%) said if they misbehaved or got into trouble, followed by their attitude (11%) or were rude or unkind to others

Were things improving? Is the way young people are being treated getting more fair? Three-fifths (60%) said YES, and a sixth (18%) said NO, it was getting more unfair. A fifth (22%) thought it hadn't changed.

What answers would your young people give?

These may be helpful

Books and reports received

Living Dolls, The Return of Sexism, Natasha Walter [a journalist], Virago Press, 2010, already reprinted. A passionate and important book looking afresh at women and girls, at sexism and feminity today. Well researched, frankly stated, debunks common myths and stereotypes about women, though some might find the cover

87th Annual Report of the Irish Council of Churches, for the year ending 2009, with many activity details and lists of committees. available from the Inter-Church Centre, 48, Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9 6AZ.

Faith in the Countryside, by Declan Flanagan, Rural Ministries, Wellingborough 2010. Six key findings from churches across all denominations, focussing on leadership and planning for those wanting to plant and grow churches in rural areas.

Building Better Neighbourhoods, the Contribution of Faith Communities to Oxfordshire Life, by Dr David Jarvis et al, Coventry University Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration, 2010, ISBN 978-1-84600-034-8.

FutureFirst

Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) Methodist men live

for an average of 84

years instead of the

Methodist women to

91 instead of 82, due

to "our emphasis on

physical health and

Dr Richard Vautrev.

2) The top 500

avoiding excess," said

billionaires in the world

collectively are worth

twice as much as the

poorest two billion

people on the earth.

3) 7% of teenagers

aged 15-17 in

Lewisham south

London, conceived in

4) In the year 1972, 7%

married: in 2008 it was

of the population got

2%. Just 40% of the

UK population is

5) The number of

to the 2010 London

Fair.

exhibitors and visitors

Book Fair in April was

32% down on the 2009

6) 40% of Americans

believe the Second

Coming will have

occurred by 2050,

and 46% don't.

7) The weight of

Gorges" Reservoir will

tilt the earth's axis by

SOURCES: 1) Report in the Church Tim es, 2nd July 2010; 2) In His Im age, Andy Matheson, Authentic,

Im age, Andy Matheson, Authentic, 2010; 3) and 4) Fact File UK, Population, The Guardian, 24th April 2010; 5) The Bookseller; 2nd July 2010; 6) Pew Research Centre study

quoted in the Church Times, 25th June 2010 Page 11; 7) National

Geographic magazine, Special issu on "Water", April 2010, Page 128.

China's "Three

nearly an inch.

married today.

2006-8, the highest

rate in the country.

normal 77, and

falling birth rate (though this may

be changing) and the increasing

longevity of life is producing both a

larger population and a significant

In the 50 years from 1971 to 2021 the

proportion of the UK population aged

over 65 is expected to increase from 10%

to 19%, as Table 1 indicates. The increase

in population is not uniform across Britain.

or even the regions and counties. In

Suffolk, the changes, while not dramatic,

are significant especially in the coastal

strip covered by two district councils

(Suffolk Coastal and Waveney). In the

period between 2001 and 2021 the

population over the age of 65 in Suffolk

Coastal is expected to increase by 50%,

The two districts, although different, share

several common elements. Both have

one significant centre of population:

Lowestoft in Waveney, and Felixstowe in

Suffolk Coastal. However, Lowestoft has

significant deprivation and economic

problems. Felixstowe is smaller and is

growing; it has the largest UK container

port, though it, too, has some pockets

common problem of an ageing

population. The coastal strip and small

factors to longevity of life.

as shown in Table 2.

increase in the over 65s.

The Challenge of an Ageing Population Revd Canon Graham Hedger,

Assistant Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

It is no secret that the population Table 1: UK population aged 65 and over, and percentage of total, by gender of Britain is both growing and ageing. The combination of a

	Men		W	omen	lotal	
Year	Millions	% of total	Millions	% of total	Millions	% of total
1971	2.84	11%	2.78	10%	5.62	10%
2001	3.93	14%	5.45	18%	9.38	16%
2021	5.69	18%	7.01	21%	12.90	19%
`						

Table 2: Number of people in Suffolk and 2 Districts, by age-group

		Under 15		15 to 64		Over 65	
	Area	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
2	All Suffolk	124,400	19%	422,600	63%	123,300	18%
0	Suffolk Coastal	20,800	18%	70,500	61%	24,100	21%
1	Waveney	20,200	18%	68,000	60%	24,300	22%
2	All Suffolk	116,200	16%	433,400	59%	184,000	25%
0 2	Suffolk Coastal	17,200	14%	68,000	55%	38,600	31%
1	Waveney	15,900	14%	62,500	56%	34,000	30%

issues for an elderly population. It is known that in many of the villages and towns of the area there are many people over the retirement age who do not have generous (if any) private pensions, and do not have good health. Long term action by the local authorities and the third sector has sought to address this through advice on benefits and the development of outreach services. The churches, working in partnership with many agencies, are frequently the vehicle for bringing people and agencies together so that people can continue to live in their homes for longer periods.

of deprivation. Both districts share a market towns attract recently retired people into the area and a combination of relative affluence and healthy lifestyles may well be significant contributing Such a growth brings with it challenges encouraged to provide helpers.

and opportunities for the local authorities, primary care trusts, the voluntary sector and the churches. One of the advantages of this growing population is that many of the 'young old' are willing and able volunteers in the numerous charities and community groups in the area. This has breathed new life into organisations and helped many communities tackle local need. In the current climate where local authorities will be seeking to move from providing some services to commissioning from the third sector this is welcome news. Good health, relative wealth and ability mask many other

As the population continues to get older we will face increasing issues of health. mobility and access to services. Churches will need to work in partnership with other organisations to promote good neighbour schemes. Frequently these exist (as in Suffolk) where Suffolk ACRE, the rural community council promotes the scheme and so the churches are

There are other issues to be taken into account. Nationally the Church of England is experiencing a decline in stipendiary clergy, and over the next few years there will be significant reductions. This will impact on the whole church but could be felt most keenly in rural churches where often clergy are expected to be responsible for several churches. Providing the fall in stipendiary numbers is matched by an increase in self supporting clergy and other forms of ministry then the problem will not be too severe. But, will this pool of willing and

issues and in particular longer term able people begin to dry up as congregations continue to both decline and get older?

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nallenge of an Ageing Population

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It has always been difficult in small churches to provide a balance of activities and services that attract vounger people If the population in the area is growing older then there will be fewer young people to start with. Add to that the problem of attracting them to church events and it could be a recipe for accelerated decline. The options might include accepting the situation and urging families to travel to larger town churches, or perhaps arranging specialised events on an occasional basis to complement what happens on a regular basis. My experience of four small rural churches is that some of the oldest church members are game for anything and welcome changes to church life. They recognise that not everything on offer is their cup of tea but see it as the way forward.

I believe that as we get to grips with some of the challenges presented by the ageing population we will discover new and innovative ways of meeting the needs. We might start employing church community workers who specialise in care of the older members of a community. We will certainly need to look beyond the local church and think across areas for both this sort of ministry and other specialist roles. We might find that some churches specialise in ministering to specific groups of people (a revision of Donald McGavran's "homogeneous principle" of church growth).

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