

# Idols of Today

Twenty years ago the bulletin *LandMARC* carried a popular series called "Idols of Today" which we have decided to repeat this year, one in every issue, updating them to the second decade of the 21st century. Not many are the same, showing something of the shift in British culture in this period. All the illustrations are being redrawn and we are extremely grateful to Chris Radley for being willing to do this. We are also extremely grateful to Dr Rod Woods, Senior Minister of the City Temple in London, for providing the commentary.



© Chris Radley

"I would feel happy and my life would have meaning if . . ." How you answer that question may indicate idolatry in your life. An idol is anything other than God to which you look for your significance, security, acceptance or worth. In other words, it is anything or anyone we put in the place of God.

This series will examine several modern idols. Idolatry is a serious matter for Christians, a sin that destroys relationship with God. If we find ourselves in idolatry, the solution is to repent – confess your sin and turn away from it. Repentance is always effective because of the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Cross has broken the power of sin and brings forgiveness.

### Materialism

Materialism is the tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as what gives life meaning and value. We will be living the "good life" if only we have certain things – a big house, a better car, smarter clothes, etc. Akin to materialism is consumerism – a preoccupation with the acquisition of "stuff". "I shop, therefore I am." As with pornography, the internet allows people to become secret materialistic idolaters, surfing the net for the acquisition of more things. Online shopping can become an addiction.

What do you spend most time thinking about? For what are you most longing? To what are you devoting your best energies? If the answer to any of these questions involves "stuff", then you may be an idolater.

**Dr Rod Woods**

For those wanting a deeper insight into this whole area, Timothy Keller's excellent book *Counterfeit Gods* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2009) is strongly recommended, though the idols being taken in this *FutureFirst* series do not necessarily follow his analysis as he writes from an American viewpoint, being the founder and senior minister of the Redeemed Presbyterian Church in Manhattan.

## IRISH METHODISM

On Sunday, 25th April 2010 the Methodist Church in Ireland, which covers both the Republic and Northern Ireland, conducted a broad attendance Census of its churches across all 8 Districts, and, at the same time, a more detailed Church Census of two of its Districts (Dublin and Midlands & Southern). Rev John Stephens, a statistician from Central Statistics Office in Dublin who has also worked in The Gambia, was responsible for its organisation and analysis. In total 212 churches took part, representing over 16,000 people. There was no question on churchmanship.

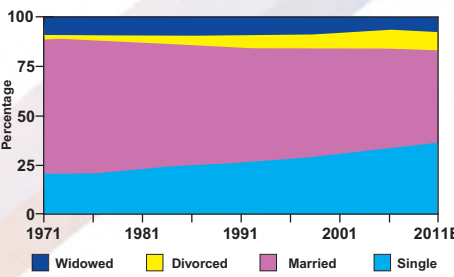
The average congregational size was 80 compared with 48 for Methodist churches in England in 2005. Half (49%) their churches have under 50 people, accounting for just one-sixth (17%) of all worshippers, while a quarter (24%) of churches have 100 or more accounting for three-fifths (57%) of all worshippers. Two congregations had over 300 people, both in N Ireland.

In England, three-fifths (61%) of Methodist churches have under 50 in their congregation, accounting for a quarter (24%) of all worshippers, and a sixth (18%) have over 100 people, accounting for half (50%) of all Sunday attenders. This is a similar kind of split to that in Ireland.

## valentine's Day

Marriage Week is the week leading up to Valentine's Day, 7th to 14th February, irrespective of which weekdays they are. Just under half the population of England and Wales, 47%, were of married status in 2011, a percentage which is steadily declining as the graph shows – it was 68% in 1971. The proportion who are single, which will include those cohabiting, is rising as is the proportion who are divorced.

Marital status of population, aged 16 and over, 1971 to 2011



• Half of divorces take place within 11 years, and half longer, proportions which haven't changed over the last 40 years.

• The divorce rate, number of divorces per thousand married people, 11.2 in 2009, is dropping slightly as the number of married people declines.

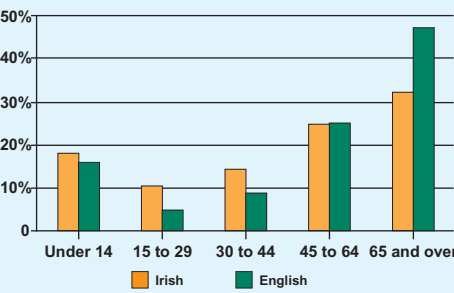
• The average age of a first-time bride was 30 in 2010 and 32 for a groom. People are waiting longer to get married.

• In 2010 only three-fifths (60%) of marriages were first marriages for both partners.

• Most marriages still last a lifetime – in 2001 two-thirds (66%) of first marriages ended only when one partner died.

The proportions by age are shown in the chart, comparing Irish and English Methodists.

Age of Irish and English Methodist Churchgoers, 2010 and 2005



It can be seen that the English Methodists are older on average than their Irish counterparts – 55 years old in England compared with 47 in Ireland. A quarter of the Irish attenders are of family age which supports reasonable child attendance, which the English had 20 years previously. In 1989 the English had the same proportion over 65 as the Irish do now. So the challenge facing the Irish is whether they can avoid what has happened to the English – fewer younger people leading to increasingly elderly congregations.

SOURCE: Article "Making Sense of our Census" by John Stephens, Methodist Newsletter, November 2010, Page 10.

• Most young people would like to be married: a 2004 survey showed 92% of 15 year olds would like to marry one day.

• There were 33,000 people in a civil partnership out of the 21.8 million married people in 2006, rising to 90,000 out of the 21.3 million married in 2011.

• The average number of children per woman was 2.0 in 2009, up from 1.7 10 years previously, the increase largely being due to the number of immigrants.

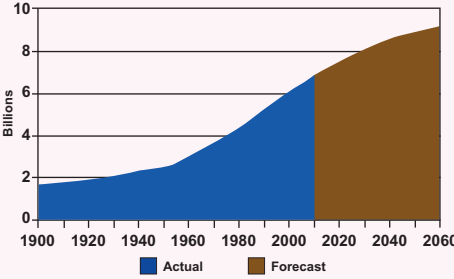
• The percentage of births outside marriage is almost half (46% in 2009).

SOURCES: Population Trends, Number 142, Winter 2010, Office for National Statistics; Pam Iles First, Jan/Feb 2011, Issue 14; Bliss Magazine, 2004.

## The World's Population

In 2011, the world's population officially reaches 7 billion people! It has been rising inexorably for the past century, and particularly rapidly in the last half of the 20th century. The UN forecasts continuing growth, but at a smaller rate of increase, so that while it took only 11 years to go from 6 billion to 7 billion, it is likely to take 18 years to go from 7 billion to 8 billion (in 2029), and perhaps 25 years to reach 9 billion (in 2054). These figures are shown in the chart.

Population of the world in billions



Why is this? Several factors are at work:

• Better health provision, which leads to a reduction in the infant and child mortality rate.

• Women's fertility rate is decreasing – they are having fewer children. The worldwide fertility rate is 2.6 but this varies greatly – by 2020 half the countries in the world will have a fertility rate of under 2.1, the "replacement rate", which means eventually population decrease in those lands.

• Better health care also means people are living longer, which means more people not fewer.

• AIDS/HIV is still rampant in many countries, and while the provision of retrovirals is increasing and giving victims an average longer life of about 12 years, it still claims many people who, if they did not have the disease, would live longer.

• Some of these factors are relevant in the church also. Churchgoers too are ageing – more elderly and fewer replacement younger people. This is broadly a worldwide problem, but much more acute in developed or western countries. However, because their lifestyle is often less addicted to smoking or taking excessive alcohol, churchgoers may live longer than non-Christians. Hence a greater proportion of older people in the church.

• The impact of religion on size of family is relatively small, although can be significant in some countries. Sometimes Roman Catholics have larger families than Protestants, often Muslims have larger families than Christians, but political (for example, the one-child programme in China) and social pressures generally seem to be more determinate than religion.

SOURCE: Article in The World in 2011, The Economist, London, 2010, Page 25.

## YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people are key to today's church as well as tomorrow's church and, in most churches, are more noted for their absence than presence. Over the next 10 years, 2011-2021, the number of 16 to 24 year olds is projected to fall as a percentage of the population from 12.0% to 10.2% because of a drop in birthrate in the mid-1980s, from 7.5 million to 6.8 million, despite a projected general population increase of 7% in that decade. For every 10 men in this age-group there are only 9 women, simply reflecting the fact of more boys being born than girls.

### Family life and school

About 30% of these will have seen their parents divorce or separate before they were 16, and about half of these would have had to live with another adult coming into the family, usually mum's new partner, often with his own children. A significant proportion therefore have grown up without a male figure in the family, and will have met few authoritative male figures in their early years since female teachers are the large majority in both primary and secondary education today.

As children get older they become more unhappy, boys worrying about school and girls about their appearance. A Prince's Trust survey



found that a fifth (22%) of 16-24 year olds feel isolated most of the time, and a further one in 10 (11%) felt like "an outcast". More than half (54%) rarely or never spoke to someone over 40 in their community (especially if not in employment, education or training), and almost half (46%) thought older people were scared of younger people.

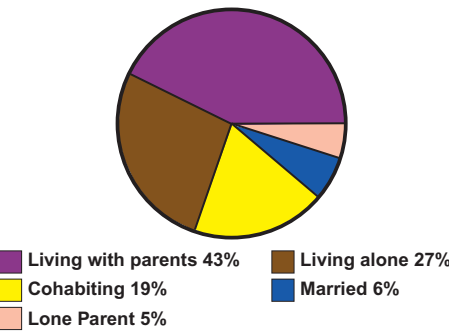
About three-quarters (76%) of women and two-thirds (67%) of men will have been students in higher education, and over half of these will have obtained 2 or more A levels (60% women to 50% men, the performance gap between the two continuing to increase; it was only 2% in 1990).

### Finance and living arrangements

Where the Head of Household is aged between 16 and 24, the average income in 2007 was found by the government to be about £24,000. Both are likely to be working, and the most expensive part of their outgoings would be for their housing, fuel and power (about 17%). However, unemployment among 18 to 24 year olds was 16% in 2009, and likely to be higher now. Two-fifths (38%) of 17-20 year olds had a driving licence in 2007.

Just over two-fifths (43%) of those aged 20-24 live with their parents, as the pie-chart shows, while a quarter (27%) are living alone, and a fifth (19%) are cohabiting. The rest are either married or single parents.

Living arrangements for 20-24 year olds, 2008



### Church involvement

Of the 7.5 million 16-24 year olds in the UK in 2011, probably only 250,000 regularly attend church. Some people talk of "unreached people groups"; this is a major such group right here in this country. Perhaps an additional 120,000 attended Sunday School for an average of 4 years when younger and have dropped out since, mostly when they were transitioning from junior to secondary school, because church seemed irrelevant, boring and "uncool".

There are, of course, some brilliant exceptions where young people have continued to come to

church, especially in churches where a youth worker has been employed. In many larger churches resources have been made available to appeal to the needs of this age-group (energetic activity involving food, fun and friendship). Factors attracting those in their 20s to church are relevant preaching and excellent worship.

If young people of this age-group are involved with a church they tend to give only their loose change, according to an Evangelical Alliance study, and similarly for charities. This indifference is also seen in that a decreasing percentage share their faith with non-Christians.

### Sexual entanglement

This is the age-group where huge amounts of sexual experimentation take place, often without any emotional involvement. A Soul Survivor study found 52% of 18-20 year olds had just kissed a member of the opposite sex (and 31% of 21-24 year olds), 21% and 34% respectively had sexually touched someone else, and 27% and 35% had had intercourse. Many in this sample would probably have or have had a church connection; similar percentages for those without this are likely to be higher.

It is no surprise therefore that three-fifths (58%) of people diagnosed with chlamydia in 2007 were between 16 and 24. Genital warts is the next most common sexually transmitted disease, mostly those aged 20-24, and is about a fifth as common as chlamydia.

### Communication

Four-fifths (78%) of those aged 16 to 24 use the internet every day, and the other fifth (19%) at least once a week. Four-fifths (79%) do so to talk to friends and family who are (already) seen a lot, and two-thirds (67%) to talk to family and friends whom they don't see regularly. Over half (53%) look for old friends and people they have lost touch with. Gen Yers are highly relational, and this needs to be reflected in their church experience. Half (52%) also use the web to listen to music.

### Thinking wider

The town of Bridgend gained notoriety in 2008 with 25 suicides of those under 24 in 12 months. A local minister, Alex Ashton, was deeply concerned and challenged his young people to think where they would like to go for a gap year, helping them in effect to "think outside the box". The concept was a brilliant success, encouraging young people to stay in church and to find God providing for their financial needs.

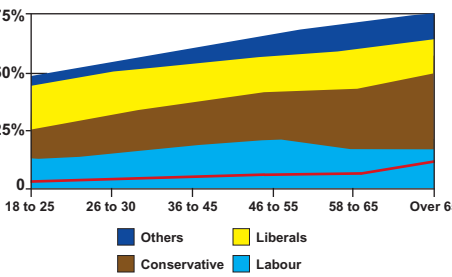
The same is true in a different context. The book *The Faith of Generation Y* found that "the main reason most young people don't give a damn for religion is that they have never been taught any," a far cry from the situation a century ago when more than half the country's young people went to Sunday School. If you are not taught about God, on what basis can you seriously think beyond yourself? Perhaps this is the greatest challenge of all.

SOURCES: Article "Combating the indifference" by Peter Mullen, Church of England Newspaper, 15th October 2010; www.barna.org/teens 14th July 2010; article "The Youth of Today" by Johanna Derry, Christianity, April 2010, Page 53; Population Trends, No 142, Winter 2010, Office for National Statistics, Page 96; Reaching and Keeping Teenagers, Peter Brierley, Christian Research, Eltham, London, 2002; Young People, UK snapshot, Office for National Statistics, 2009; BBC News Education and Family Press Release, 4th December 2010; The 18-30 Mission, A Missing Generation?, Evangelical Alliance, 2010; article in Church Times 15th October 2010.

# SNOWFLAKES

**Age of voters by party in 2010.** The general election in May 2010 resulted in a Coalition Government. Surveys taken before the election showed for which party people intended to vote and applying those proportions to the number who actually voted by age, we get the diagram shown below:

Age of voters by party in 2010 General Election



This shows clearly that Labour support peaks around the age of 50, while Conservative support steadily increases the older a person becomes (as does support for the minority parties). Liberal supporters on the other hand are more likely to be younger people. It is the increasing number of Conservative voters by age which raises overall the proportion voting: the proportion of the population voting at all, and voting for a non-Conservative party hovers around 40% for all ages. If these proportions continue to hold, the voting pattern will be very different in 20 years time, though electoral reform prior to this may well change any such pattern. The same would be true if one excluded the churchgoers contained within these figures shown by the red line.

SOURCE: Article "Polling and forecasting the general election of 2010" by Paul Whitley and others, in International Journal of Market Research, Volume 52, Issue 5, Page 690; Religious Trends No 6, Christian Research, Eltham, Table 12.3.2.

**Volunteers.** One recent survey showed that a third (35%) of the population informally volunteer to help in the community at least once a month (men 31%, women 38%), and a quarter (26%) do so on a formal basis. Those aged 16 to 25 do so slightly more than those aged 26 to 34 (38% to 32%). Three-fifths volunteer (62%) at least once a year. Half (52%) raise money for a sponsored event, and three-fifths (59%) organise or run an event. Other surveys show that churchgoers are 4 or 5 times more likely to be volunteering than others.

SOURCE: Society Now, December 2010, Economic and Social Research Council.

**The costs of living.** The Table shows the percentage 5 different countries spent on the essentials (the top three lines) and non-essentials (the last four lines) of consumer living in 2009, showing that rich countries spend proportionately far less on vitals than in developing countries. The disparity in amounts available to spend is also very significant.

Percentage household expenditure by commodity across 5 countries in one year, 2009

Item %	USA %	Japan %	Germany %	Brazil %	Kenya %
Housing	20	25	25	18	18
Food and non-alcoholic drink	6	15	11	22	42
Clothing and footwear	4	2	5	3	10
Leisure and recreation	8	12	10	3	1
Household goods and services	5	3	8	5	4
Communications	2	3	4	4	15
Other	55	40	37	45	10
Amount to spend (=100%) in £	51,000	37,000	30,000	11,000	1,600

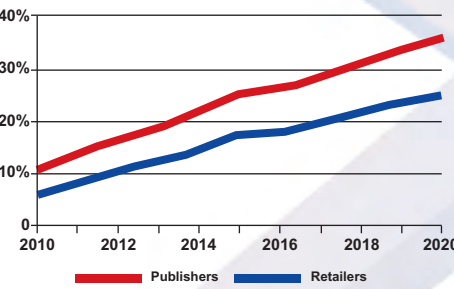
SOURCE: National Geographic Magazine, September 2010, Page 22, taken from Euromonitor International.

**Religious resurgence?** Nassim Taleb, Professor of Risk Engineering at New York University and author of the famous *The Black Swan* book, predicts that by 2025 connectivity and operational leverage will be the key values for survival. "Most of the technologies that are now 25 years old or more will be around; almost all of the young ones 'providing efficiencies' will be gone. So the car, the plane, the bicycle, the voice-only telephone, the espresso machine and, luckily, the wall-to-wall bookshelf will still be with us. ... Religious practice will experience a revival, seen as a conveyor of robust heuristics, cultural values and rituals."

SOURCE: The World in 2011, The Economist, London, 2010, Page 110.

**Digital books.** A survey on the future of digital books asked what percentage of sales would be in digital form over the next decade. Retailers were more pessimistic than publishers as the graph shows, but it is still clear that both reckon on a big revolution in the next decade which must also impact Christian publishers and bookshops – and churches. When does the

Percentage of book sales in digital format, 2010-2020



ipad replace the hymn sheet or the powerpoint projection?

SOURCE: The Bookseller, 19th November 2010.

**Cutting benefits.** One of the findings in the latest British Social Attitudes study is that only a quarter of people (27%) think the government should spend more on benefits. The Chief Executive of the National Centre for Social Research, which carries out the annual survey, Penny Young, said, "Attitudes have hardened over the last two decades, and people are more in favour of cutting benefits and against taxing the better-off disproportionately." Seems like the Government's on track!

SOURCE: British Social Attitudes, 27th Report, Sage and NatCen, London, December 2010.

**Laotian Christians.** A 2010 survey across 12 of the 17 provinces in Laos showed there were 499 congregations and 43,500 Christians, numbers in both cases roughly half the numbers given in Operation World. That suggests that the other 5 provinces have much a greater density of churches, although the number of church members remains just 1.4% of the population. The church, however, is growing, but lacks trained leaders. The Lao Evangelical Church is one of the two Protestant bodies to be recognised by the government, and the largest. The other is the very small Seventh-Day Adventist church.

SOURCES: Personal Christmas letter and Operation World, Jason Mandryk, Biblical, 2010, Page 522.

continued from page 1

Examples of this were certain kinds of non-formal continuing education for ministers and assistance for the bringing together of representatives from a broad cross-section of the Body of Christ for collective (and even whole-nation) ministry strategising.

But would there be a market for these kinds of ministries? Would churches in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland be interested in receiving the kind of help that OC had developed from experience in providing overseas?

### The Rest of the Story

To complete the query as to which gaps in ministry God may be calling OCI-UK to fill, a complementary research project is also nearing completion—the interviewing of scores of randomly selected ministers of churches in Southern England. The hope is to hear directly from ministers what kind of assistance they feel they need. The interview phase of that project produced reams of rich text which has been analysed and from which further conclusions are now being drawn.

Plans for recruiting, fund-raising and promotion will depend upon the results of these two projects as they are processed through prayer under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May God give OCI-UK the direction it seeks to know how to bring its mission home.

### NOTES

1 Martin Lee, Executive Director Global Connections in WEA Connections, April 2010, Volume 9, Number 1, Page 27.

2 Global Connections Member Directory, June 2010. On line at: www.globalconnections.co.uk.

3 Jason Mandryk, Operation World, WEC International and Biblical Publishing, 2010.

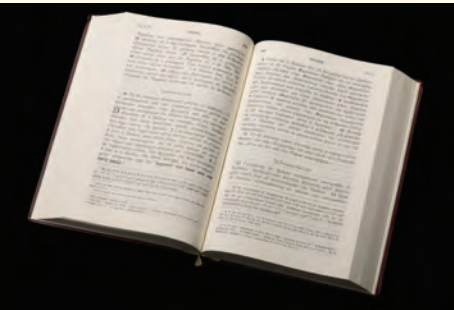
4 Data tables in Excel are available by writing to "research@worksmail.net".

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## REFLECTIONS

### God’s Church in Decline a Poem by Ryan Lane (16 years of age); www.ryanlanewriter.com

Lord, here I kneel before you as a child with a gift of words but an empty mouth.

I have a request in front of me that I hand over to you but hear no reply.

There are just so many ideas, possibilities and questions swirling around in my head and heart.

All of these thoughts are heading towards a funnel in my head, but there is a blockage; a drought.

I don’t want meaningless words lost behind a melody; but I need words that speak your truth.

One answer to my burning question would bring water to a desert. My question is this: why?

Why, when I look outside my window, is there a desperate world with artificial smiles on their faces?

Why is there such a drop in Church attendance, but a doubling in Church leadership?

Why can’t all young people share a strong will power to resist peer pressure?

Why do you seemingly sit back and allow your bride to decay?

Why do Churches that are not growing become content with their number instead of considering new methods of evangelizing?

Why have we allowed ourselves to lose the salt that we were re-born with due to our compromising attitudes?

Why are they happier becoming more of a club with people they know and like, rather than becoming a Church that is open to different people?

But Father, I suppose I have to realize that my queries will not change the direction of a culture. Upon reflection, I know it is righteous anger that erupts from me.

But that anguish is not even comparable to the sorrow you must feel.

I know it must break your heart to see your children stray from your path.

Unfortunately, at this time, they just cannot see what they are missing out on.

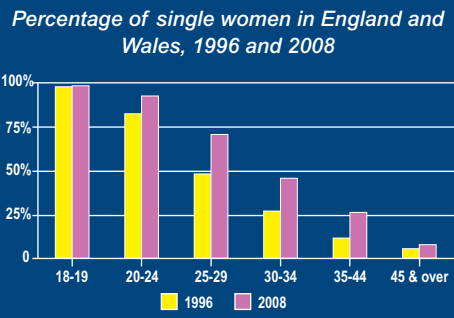
Having a relationship with you is the best thing that could ever happen.

You comfort me in my loneliest hour; you calm my raging seas.

So I’ll continue to have faith that the Great Shepherd of the sheep is still passionately seeking His lost ones.

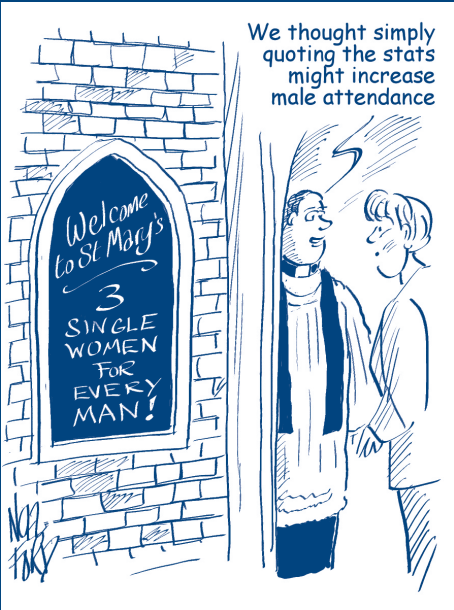
## Single Women

The proportion of women in the general population who are single is increasing, as the bar-chart shows, and especially for those in their late 20s and 30s.



This includes single women who attend churches, many more of whom are turning increasingly to Christian dating websites like Christian Connection. Those most affected by this general rise in singleness are “predominantly women who have good jobs and live in metropolitan areas” said a feature writer in the *Church Times*.

Part of the problem is that London attracts a disproportionate number of churchgoing men in their 20s and 30s. One-third (32%) of all men aged between 20-29 who attend church attend a London church, against only 28% of women in their 20s. The same imbalance occurs for those aged 30 to 44 – 28% of all churchgoing



men in this age-group may be found in a London church but only 23% of women. There are therefore more women aged 20 to 44 going to a church outside London than there are men (310,000 to 225,000) of whom, assuming national proportions hold, 160,000 women will be single against 130,000 men. Not enough Christian men to go round!

As one woman said, “It’s not about being single in your 20s. It’s about being single in your 30s and 40s. That is a whole different ball game – how you live your life without touch, without financial support, without children.” On Valentine’s Day 2010, HTB took questions. One which wasn’t answered was, “If I can’t find a Christian man, can I have IVF to start a family?” But this is a real, tough question for a single

## These may be helpful Books and reports received

Operation World, Jason Mandryk, Biblica, 2010. The definitive daily prayer guide for every nation and people group, with a unique world statistical database.

World of Work Report 2010/11, The 10 burning questions in today’s changing workplace, Randstad, www.randstadinterimexecutives.com.

Household Projections, 2008 to 2033, Communities and Local Government, November 2010.

Young People and Housing in 2010, Identifying key drivers for change, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010.

Priorities: Discerning the Mind of Christ in our Ongoing Evangelism, Rose Dowsett, dickandrosedowsett@googlemail.com

Pressures faced by those in their 20s and 30s, survey summary, www.lookingatlife.org.uk

Lessons from the Financial Crisis, Personal reflections by Dr Andrew Sentence, External member, Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee. Please ask if you would like a copy.

## What some people say

A minister put sanitary, hot-air hand dryers in his church toilets, but took them out after a month. When asked why, he said, “Someone scribbled a sign that read, ‘For a sample of this week’s sermon, press the button’.”

If you’re going cross-country running, start with a small country.

Johannesburg-based Kulula airline announcement: “Thank you for flying Kulula. We hope you enjoyed giving us the business as much as we enjoyed taking you for a ride.”

To guess is cheap, to guess wrongly is expensive.

SOURCES: Grove Jokes, August 2010; Dell Deals, 2010; Email Anne Coomes, August 2010; old Chinese proverb.

### CORRECTION

In the “Dependent Children” article in the December 2010 issue of *FutureFirst*, under the “Households” section it was stated there were 59 million households in Great Britain in 2009. The correct figure is 24.5 million. The 59 million is the population of those households. Apologies!

woman who longs for a Christian man, but finds there isn’t one around.

One male teacher in his 20s, having just been moved on promotion, phoned his father and said, “Do you know, Dad, this is the first church I’ve attended since I left college where there’s someone else in their twenties who attends?” Getting another promotion and moving again, he deliberately joined a large church so that he could find a suitable young lady to marry – and did!

SOURCES: Article “Looking for a soulmate” in the *Church Times*, 5th November 2010; Religious Trends No 6, Christian Research, Eitham, Tables 12.3.2 and 12.47.3 and 4; Population Trends, Office for National Statistics, No 142, Winter 2010, Pages 101 and 102

## CHRISTIANITY IN AMERICA

What are some of the major themes which emerge from North American religious research over the last year? George Barna, the veteran investigator, suggests there are six. It is obvious that these apply to British Christianity also.

1) *The Christian faith is becoming less theologically understood.* Barna found that only a minority of Americans associated Easter with Christ. Research in Britain for The Times 20 years ago showed that half the population associated Easter with the passion of Christ; their most recent study, 2 years ago, showed that less than a third now did so.

2) *Christians are becoming more ingrown and less outreach-oriented.* “Christians are becoming more spiritually isolated from non-Christians than a decade ago,” writes Barna. A survey on mission last year in Britain indicated that less than a third (31%) of respondents agreed that “mission” includes outreach. One of the emphases of the 2010 Lausanne Congress was the primacy of outreach.

3) *Growing numbers of people are less interested in spiritual principles and more desirous of learning pragmatic solutions for life.* When teenage Americans were asked what matters most to them, they answered education, career development, friendships and travel. Adults stressed lifestyle comfort, success and personal achievement. Faith is not absent, but takes a back seat to other considerations. The same is doubtless true in the UK.



4) *Among Christians, interest in participating in community action is escalating.* “While we remain more self-indulgent than self-sacrificing, the expanded focus on justice and service has

struck a chord with many,” says Barna, but warns of the importance of churches embracing a strong spiritual basis for such service. This is also seen in the UK, as different secular surveys evaluating the contribution of volunteers repeatedly show the huge contribution made by Christian and other faith communities, especially black churches, but the proclamation element is not always present.

5) *The postmodern insistence on tolerance is winning over the Christian Church.* This is a more subtle finding, but comes out of Biblical truth illiteracy and lack of spiritual confidence. American (and British) Christians wish to avoid being labelled judgemental. This is much less true in N Ireland where the Free Ulster Presbyterian Church in particular has sought to identify which parts of the Christian faith are non-negotiable, and therefore involve confrontation with secular or other church authorities.

6) *The influence of Christianity on culture and individual lives is largely invisible.* The faults of the church are readily portrayed by the media, and, suggests Barna, “the Christian church is in desperate need of a more positive and accessible image.” When 80 key UK Christian leaders met in December 2008, they looked at the five major social institutions underpinning the structure of society: the economy, family, education, law and government, and religion. All had changed radically over the previous decades and “this had changed Britain from its centuries-old Judaeo-Christian heritage to a polycultural, multi-religious society with no fixed standards of personal or social morality.”

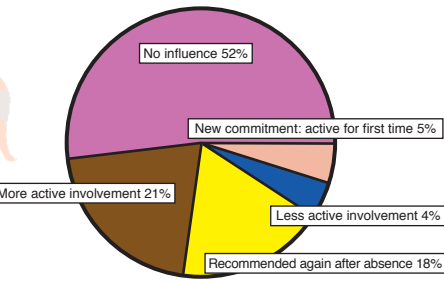
What are the implications of such a slide? George Barna has identified five: (1) The absence of a shared vision of the future; (2) Confusion regarding appropriate values for decision-making; (3) The elimination of a sense of the common good; (4) The deterioration of respectful dialogue and the fruitful exchanging of competing ideas; (5) The abandonment of moral character and personal decency. A possible sixth is the usurpation of Judaeo-Christian ethos by increasing Islamisation.

### Other relevant findings from American research

Does having children increase the likelihood of changing a parent’s involvement with the church? The results are shown in the pie-chart,

and show that for one parent in 20 there is a likelihood of a new willingness to attend, as well as more active involvement by a fifth of parents. Could the same be true in the UK?

### How parenthood affects church involvement



Leaving the faith. Leslie Francis and Philip Richter have done much research into people leaving the church in Britain, but less research has been done on leaving the faith. In a long-term study reported in 2010, Barna found that 12% of ex-churchgoers in America were actually ex-Christians. A third of these had left the Christian faith in their teenage years and a further third in their 20s. Why had they done so? The top reason given was what they had learned in their school/college education (that is, knowledge). After that it was feelings of disillusionment and so on (that is, emotions).

Ex-churchgoers still believe. Barna’s research coincides with the findings in Britain that many who have left the church still have orthodox Christian beliefs and theology. They have been hurt or frustrated in their church involvement but might be willing to return if invited to do so, something which the “Back to Church” initiative in the UK every September majors on.

Where faith is most active. In a “pot-pouri” piece of US research, Barna found that those in the largest churches are most involved in Christian activity, those attending home groups are most likely to read the Bible regularly, religiously active people are more likely to have conservative politics (except the New Churches), single adults are mostly missing from our congregations, evangelicals are more likely to be involved in Christian activity outside Sunday worship, and that “women drive most faith participation.” Some of these findings are also true in the Western world generally.

SOURCES: Articles accessed on www.barna.org on 15th March, 13th April, 26th May, 28th June, 21st August, 21st December 2010.

## BOOK REVIEW Growing Up Christian

Why young people stay in church, leavechurch, & (sometimes) come back to church by John P Bowen, Regent College Publishing, Vancouver, British Columbia, 2010. 216 pages, ISBN 978-1-57383-431-5

John Bowen is the Associate Professor of Evangelism at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, with a deep concern for young people and Christian family life. This book is based on a survey of over 300 young adults who had attended the leadership programme associated with Pioneer Camp over the past 30 years, a camp operated by the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, which 1,000 or so young people aged between 5 and 15 attend each summer.

He found there were six groups – those who had remained active in their faith, those who had dropped out of church but returned, those who had dropped

out of church but still called themselves Christian, those who were still involved in church but were not sure if they were still Christian, those who would no longer call themselves Christian and those who didn’t fit any of these categories. It is obvious this study goes where few other studies reach, and hence its importance.

John looks at respondents’ relationship with God, with their local community and the impact of Camp life. He comments on practical factors and what helps people stay on the faith track, and the importance of mentors and personal devotions. He asks why people leave, their feelings on leaving, and how they think they stand now spiritually. Why do those outside the church still believe? Why do believers leave the church? What brings them back? What are the characteristics of churches which seem to lose fewer people?

Some of the issues of leaving and returning to church have been studied by Philip Richter and Leslie Francis in the UK, but this book covers new ground, and, though written from a Canadian viewpoint, has huge amounts of commonality with the British situation. Well-written, with an easily signposted text, this is an important read for church leaders in the UK.



## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

### SNIPPETS

1) It is estimated that the earth’s oceans are home to more than a million species, of which less than a quarter are described in scientific literature.

2) There were 51,000 churches in the UK at the end of 2010, up 3,000 from the previously published figure because of the number of new Pentecostal and Fresh Expressions churches.

3) 19% of phones sold in 2010 were smartphones: 45% of 15-24 year olds own a smartphone.

4) 25 pubs have closed every week on average over the five years 2005 to 2009; 52,000 remain in Britain.

5) An Office for National Statistics survey of 250,000 people showed 1% were homosexual and ½% were bisexual.

6) At least 2.5 billion copies of the King James Version Bible have been sold, and the complete Bible had been translated into 457 languages by 2010, covering about four-fifths of the world’s population.

7) 47,000 houses were repossessed in the UK in 2010, equivalent to one every 11 minutes.

SOURCES: 1) The 2010 Census of Marine Life, quoted from article in *Third Way*, Jan/Feb 2011, Page 23; 2) Church Statistics, ADSC Publishers, 2011, Page 1; 3) Business News in *The Daily Telegraph*, 11th November, 2010; 4) *Manager* on Today, November 2010, Page 18; 5) Office for National Statistics’ Integrated Household Survey, 2010; 6) www.scotlandsondunscotlandman.com accessed 15th January 2011; 0peration World, Jason Mandryk, Biblical Publishing, 2010, Page 1 and Wycliffe Bible Translators; 7) *Stewardship* magazine, November 2010.

## Mission Coming Home

by Larry Kraft, Senior Research Consultant, OCI and Katharine Kraft, Researcher

“Cross-cultural mission no longer means just ‘going’. Mission agencies, who previously worked ‘over there’, have established ministries in the UK. Mission has become from everywhere to everywhere, with a huge variety of expressions and meanings.”<sup>1</sup>

OC International-UK is an example of such an agency (OC was formerly called Overseas Crusades). Birthed in 2003 as a hosting base for workers of sister organizations sent from overseas to serve the church elsewhere in Europe and as far as Central Asia, in 2007 OCI-UK began to recruit and send out missionaries from the UK to overseas from its own base in Worthing. In 2008, the Board of Directors took the strategic decision to investigate the possibility of developing ministries to serve churches within the UK. They desired to see OC’s worldwide vision of healthy churches working together to reach all nations including British churches.

But where to start? What services were being offered to local churches throughout the UK through existing ministries, and where were the gaps that OCI-UK might help fill? In an attempt to begin to answer these queries, OC’s Worthing-based research team undertook an analysis of the 293 Christian ministries which were affiliated with Global Connections<sup>2</sup>, the UK network for world mission.

### A Bit of History

OC International is an interdenominational faith mission in structure, interchurch in ministry, and international in vision. With more than 500 missionaries worldwide, deployed from 10 mobilization centres around the world, OC is involved in evangelism, discipleship, leadership training, church growth, missions, and support services. Promoting the values of team, family, partnership, multiplication, servanthood, and freedom to innovate, OCI-UK wondered how it might assist local churches to fulfil their mission to reach the UK for Christ effectively.

### A Bit of Context

Currently the population of the United Kingdom is 62 million. According to the latest data published in the 2010 edition of *Operation World*<sup>3</sup>, approximately 37 million people, or 60% of the UK population, are Christian, at least nominally. An estimated 8.8% would consider themselves evangelicals. In addition, there are about 52,000 churches in the UK, of which approximately 16,000 (31%) are evangelical. Thus, for the purpose of this analysis, OCI-UK defined its potential field of service to be about 16,000 congregations.

### Methodology

Since the research question focussed upon services currently available to churches in the UK, the 143 Christian ministries which were listed in the June 2010 Global Connections Member Directory that did not offer services to local churches were eliminated from the analysis at the start. Many of these were local churches, seminaries, or Bible colleges. Others were organizations that only do fund-raising for overseas work. The remaining 150 organizations were analysed with regard to the kinds of services they offered UK churches. This was accomplished through the creation of a spreadsheet into which primary, secondary and tertiary services were extracted from each GC member organization’s written ministry description.<sup>4</sup>

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### Analysis

The data thus revealed the range of services provided by these organizations. A profile was then created by grouping those services according to kind. Thirty-two general groupings emerged and are described in the Table below (some organisations providing more than one):

No of Orgs	Services Offered
48	Missions – Short Term Trips
28	Missions – Long Term
22	Ministry Leader Support
18	Evangelism – Resources, Training & Development
17	Bible – Studies, Tools & Translation
14	Missions Awareness, Education & Prayer
13	Missions Resources
13	Youth Ministry Support
10	Cross-cultural Training
9	Service – Vulnerable People Support
8	Literature Distribution
6	Discipleship – Resources
5 each	Design & Printing; International Students & Campus Ministries
4 each	Church Planting; English Language Ministries; Financial Services; Fundraising Assistance; Leadership Training; Research; Vision Building/ Organizational Strategy
3 each	Christian Living Support; Conservation; Political Activism – Religious Freedom, Sanctity of Life
2 each	Legal Services; Medical – Fellowship; Sports – Clinics & Youth Programmes
1 each	Home School Resources; Human Resource Consulting; Israel Trips; IT Services; Media Analysis

### Limitations

Clearly the element of human bias was introduced into the study at the moment each GC member organization’s self-description was reduced to three service categories (i.e. primary, secondary, and tertiary). Some organizations provided a breadth of services far greater than this. In addition, there is self-selection evident in the Directory itself. Only organizations sympathetic to mission would be attracted to membership in a network such as Global Connections, and so the table reveals a mission emphasis that is possibly skewed but entirely expected. Nevertheless, the table does reveal that many mission organizations also see it as their responsibility to bless and help the churches in the home base.

### Conclusions and Questions

OCI-UK was pleased to find some overlap between a number of its historic ministries and the current range of services offered to churches in the UK. Elements of OCI’s philosophy of ministry were reflected in the service profiles of 32% of the organizations offering assistance to UK churches. These include ministries that support and train leaders, equip members for missions, promote discipleship and research. This communicated to the Board that there was commonality of vision between what OC teams offer in other locations and what UK churches currently utilize.

Perhaps equally important, however, was the discovery that several historic OC ministries, as well as the practice of synergistically coupling certain kinds of ministerial activities, were largely unobserved.