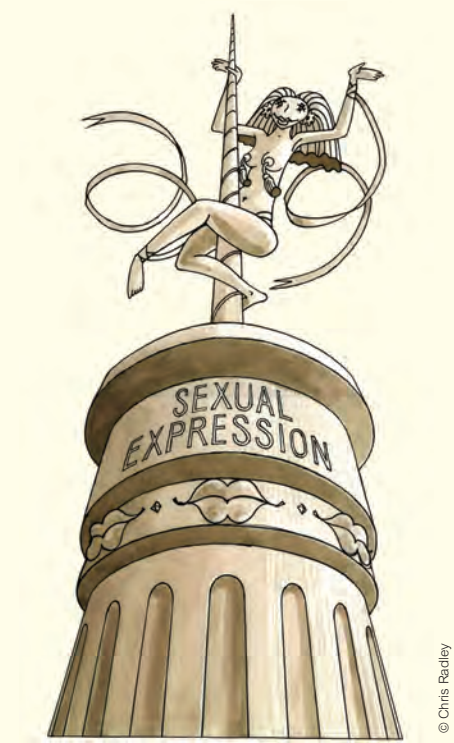


# Idols of Today

Dr Rod Woods, of the City Temple, muses on how our modern obsession with sex can ruin so many lives ...

Society is saturated with sex. Pervasive pornography, sex before and outside marriage and multiple sexual partners have become the norm. Almost anything goes regarding sexual expression. Even paedophilia has become more common. What the Bible calls sexual immorality is considered essential to living the good life. Sex has become one of our society's primary idols. As an idol, sex creates a number of illusions that intoxicate and deceive people.



Sex can give the illusion of identity. If you have several women, then you are a "real man". If you experience deep affection for a person of the same gender, then you must be "homosexual". If you have not had sex with another person then somehow you are "incomplete". These lies hinder deep friendships and prevent people from finding their true identity in Jesus.

Sex can give the illusion of intimacy. People long to be known and accepted. Sex will masquerade as real intimacy, making people superficially feel close to others without the time, effort and genuine love that real intimacy requires.

Sex can give the illusion of control. When people have a sexual relationship, they often feel in control of their lives. Many men who use pornography do so because it gives them a sense of control over women.

Sex can give the illusion of comfort. Many people use sex as a way to escape their pain. The release of sex can provide a powerful anaesthetic.

Used as God intended, sex is God's good gift for the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. Outside that context, it becomes a destructive idol.

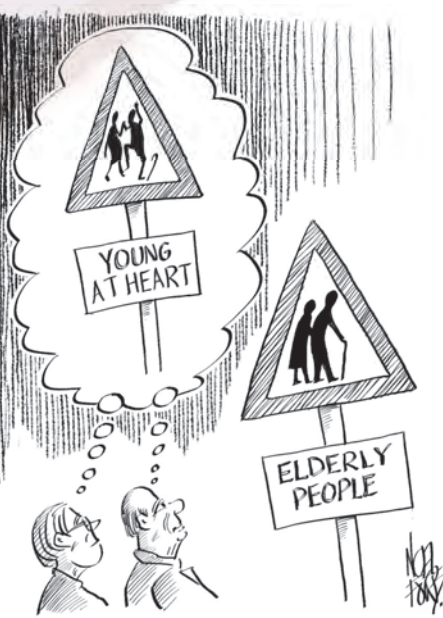
# How old do you feel you are?

This fascinating question was asked in the British Social Attitudes Survey in 2009 of a sample of 1,800 people. The Survey asked if people felt they were "young", or "30 something", "middle-aged" or "older" and then analysed the answers by people's actual age. The Table gives the results.

Actual age of people by the age they felt they were								
Actual age	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70/70+	All	
Actual felt	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Young	92	34	20	13	6	5	28	
30 Something	3	62	37	17	6	2	25	
Middle-aged	2	3	42	62	58	30	31	
Older	3	1	1	8	30	63	18	
Base (=100%)	281	353	292	299	247	314	1,786	

While a few of those in their 20s felt older than they were, the large majority of people felt younger than they were, including 5% of those 70 or over saying they felt "young". A third (34%) of those in their 30s still felt young, and more than half of those in their 40s (57%) did not put themselves in the "middle-age" bracket, as did almost a third (30%) of those in their 50s. Three-fifths (58%) of those in their 60s said they felt middle-aged, as did a third (30%) of those in their 70s.

As on average we are now living longer, does that mean we think of ourselves naturally as more youthful? Does our description of ourselves relate to the energy we feel we have, not our chronological age? Churches often have a meeting for "older people" or "senior people". Perhaps we should not so describe



The Church of England Diocese of Guildford has a monthly newspaper called *The Way*. Recently it undertook a readership survey and asked what features readers liked most and liked least. Apart from adverts, the top answer in the "liked least" section was "Overseas News".

The Council for World Mission has a magazine called *Insideout* and last year conducted a poll on their website about mission. One question asked was, "What's the biggest barrier to your congregation being involved in mission?" and the top answer by 20% of respondents was, "It's just not a priority for most people."

Mixed headlines greeted the launch of the Evangelical Alliance's survey *21st Century Evangelicals*. Ruth Gledhill, Religious Correspondent of *The Times*, put it as "Evangelicals lose the appetite for outreach."

What is happening? A recent survey showed that Christian understanding of "mission" has changed over the last 10 years or so. It indicated that:

- A majority of Christians, especially evangelicals, would not now see "mission" as meaning proclaiming Christ, or helping people to find faith, or like activity. Only older people thought that was still the meaning of mission.
- Instead, the majority see "mission" in 2011 as being primarily community development or relief work or reducing poverty or caring for the environment in a Christian context. Those engaged in such are not antagonistic to the older meaning of mission but simply see other concerns as having greater priority as a way of serving the love and compassion of Christ.

- Mission used to be seen as primarily working overseas in a Commonwealth or foreign country.

them, but instead give them names more appropriate to the activities held, like "discussion time" or, more simply, "the Monday club", or whatever. Would more then attend?

Conversely, older people tend to like things more geared to their physical age as deserving respect and attention, but with the proviso that mentally they are considered as active and capable as those younger.

If we describe ourselves generally as younger than might be expected, how can churches best use that latent energy? A long-serving Chief Executive of one organisation gave it up when offered a similar position with another agency. "I'm looking forward to it," he said, "I've only just had my 79th birthday!" Attitude is more important than chronology!

SOURCE: British Social Attitudes, 27th Edition, edited by Alison Park, et al, NatCen and Sage, 2010, Page 183.

No longer. Mission today is seen as being just as important in the UK as abroad. Shown an attractive new brochure produced by one of the largest mission agencies, a 34-year old Christian said he wouldn't think of supporting it – it had no work in the UK! (It has now).

Another, associated, change has also occurred. In 2001, almost two-thirds (63%) of the UK's mission workers served with the larger societies (those with more than 100 such workers). A current comparative figure is not available but almost certainly the percentage would now be much smaller as in the last 10 years numerous very small agencies or mission societies have been formed, often by individual churches for just the mission workers from their church. The *UK Christian Handbook* (last published under that title five years ago) tried to list most of the small mission agencies, but, even if an up-to-date volume were available, there would likely be several hundred such small agencies that would not be in it.

More than a fifth of mission workers today (22%) are independent of any major agency, serving with no agency behind them or just one of these small societies. Of course, this makes the larger societies much more vulnerable and the past decade has seen several mergers, of which that between SAMS and CMS has been one of the largest.

The mission world is therefore changing – in its administrative structure, in its geographical reach, and in its theological interpretation of "mission". These are important and significant

# STUDENT RELIGION

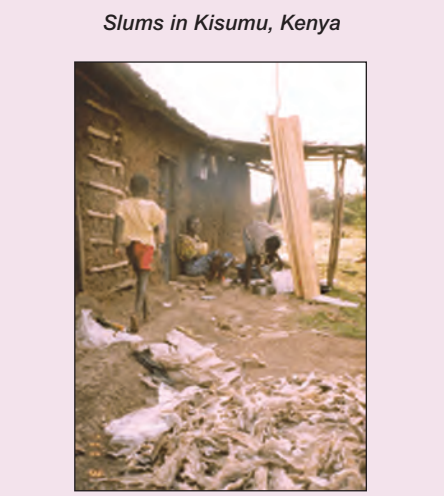
Information about student religion is fairly scarce, so it is good to know that a major study "Christianity and the University Experience" [CUE] is under way across some 13 participating English universities. By February 2011 some 3,600 students had responded to an initial questionnaire, which showed that over half the students (53%) identified with Christianity, 36% with no religion, and 11% with other religions.

Practice and identity, however, are not the same. The study found that:

- Three-quarters (72%) of the "Christian" students had attended church prior to coming to university.
- Half (50%) of the "Christian" students did not attend church while at university.
- Two-thirds (70%) of "Christian" students attended church on vacations, thus having church associations with home or family tradition.
- Under a third (30%) of Christian students are involved with weekly Christian activities such as church or Christian groups.
- Those that are involved will usually attend the

# What is "Mission"?

changes. Perhaps mission as our forefathers knew it has been at least partly derailed in the process. Some churches, especially in the Reformed and Affinity traditions, have not been so caught up with these changes, but the traditional evangelical (including Baptists and many conservative or mainstream Anglicans) and the more charismatic denominations (like the New Churches) have tended to follow the trends described.



The UK is not alone in these trends, some of which are especially seen in the United States. In a far-reaching analysis of the American mission movement, Michael Jaffarian in 2008 wrote, "Not long ago, few gave much thought to any pattern of missionary tenure other than long-term service. Now the scene is dominated

Christian Union, prayer groups and so on as well as church.

- About two-thirds (65%) of "Christian" students do not support the drinking culture encountered at university.
- 40% of "Christian" students think sex between two adults of the same gender is wrong, but 45% do not see it as wrong at all.
- Half (50%) of "Christian" students agree that terminally ill people should be legally permitted to take their own lives if they choose to.

All responding students (not just the "Christian" ones) were asked if they were spiritual or religious. One in 9, 11%, were unsure if they were either, but ignoring these, and assuming those indicating they were religious were as spiritual/non-spiritual as the non-religious, then the Table shows the mix of spirituality and religiousness:

		Spiritual?		
		YES	NO	Total
Religious?	YES	12%	15%	27%
	NO	34%	39%	73%
Total		46%	54%	100%

A quarter (27%) of students felt they were religious, but almost half (46%) felt they were

by mission-trip participants, most of whom serve for two weeks or less at a time. ... Not long ago, few would have anticipated the reality we now see of more money given to ministries of compassion than to ministries of evangelism, church planting, and the like."

In reporting a more recent Barna survey the comment was made that "many churches are worried about offending people by sharing the gospel," and that the most positive contribution of Christianity was helping "poor or underprivileged people to have a better life."

Last October the Third Lausanne Congress was held in Cape Town. One key product of this gathering of nearly 5,000 people was "The Lausanne Commitment". In describing the integrity of mission it says, "All our mission must therefore reflect the integration of evangelism and committed engagement in the world, both being ordered and driven by the whole Biblical revelation of the gospel of God." One senior evangelical leader, looking at today's trends, said, "We are in danger of reversing the order of the two great commandments." Perhaps over the next decade, the evangelical world will note these trends, and move yet again to put the Great Commission foremost in its actions.

SOURCES: The Way, February 2011, Issue 48, Page 8; Insideout, January 2011, Issue 59, Page 22; Ruth Gledhill in the Church of England Newspaper, 14th January 2011, Page 16; Mission Workers in the 21st Century, ADHC Publishers, March 2011; article by Michael Jaffarian in International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol 32, No 1, Page 35; www.barna.org/faith-spirituality, 25th October 2010; The Cape Town Commitment, a declaration of belief, Section 10 (c).

spiritual. Roughly half the religious thought they were also spiritual, but only a quarter of the spiritual thought they were also religious. Such answers probably show a confusion of meaning of the words as well as uncertainty as to where they stand.

The overall figures seem generous. There are approximately 1.6 million university students in England, about half of whom are in their late teens/early 20s. If half of these claim to be Christian, and 30% of the Christians claim to be involved in Christian activities that would suggest that there are maybe about 120,000 active young Christian students. This seems too high a figure. The 2005 English Church Census indicated that there was a total of about 230,000 people in their 20s attending church – could half of these be students? Perhaps Christian students are more likely to be involved with campus Christian activities and less likely to attend a local church.

Whatever the correct number, Christian students are an important part of the churchgoing population and need to be given much support and encouragement towards deeper discipleship in their formative years.

SOURCES: Regional Trends, Office for National Statistics, No. 40, 2008; Summary Report of CUE, 18th February 2011.

# SNOWFLAKES

**Israeli Growth.** The population of Israel was 7.6 million in 2009, up from 5.1 million in 2000. Three-quarters (76%) are Jews, a fifth (20%) are Arabs, and most of the remaining 4% are Russian immigrants not recognised as Jews. Three-fifths (60%) of the Arabs live in the north of Israel. The average Jewish fertility rate is 2.9, well above the replacement level of 2.1, but is less than that of the Muslims where it is 3.7. Israel is a young nation – over a quarter (28%) are under 14 years of age, compared with 17% in most Western countries. Three-quarters (72%) of Israelis were born in Israel. There are now more Jews in Israel than in the United States (5.8 million to 5.2); some see this as a fulfilment of the prophecies of Ezekiel 20:34 and 36:24.

SOURCE: Israel and Christians Today, January 2011, Page 2.

**The English Language.** Google started scanning books in 2004 and 5 years later had digitised some 15 million of the 130 million printed since Gutenberg invented the printing press. A sample of a third of these was taken, all published between 1800 and 2000, and the different words included then analysed. Numbers, acronyms, dates, misprints (like "beacuse") were excluded, and anything which appeared less than 40 times. The results showed that there are over a million words in English, more than double the number in the Oxford English Dictionary. What is interesting, however, is that half a million new words have been added in the last 50 years, though not all will necessarily survive! Perhaps, to remain contemporary, we all need to go on a training course in New English!

SOURCE: Article "Reading by numbers" in The Economist, 18th December, 2010.

**French Megachurches.** There were 4 megachurches in France in 2009 according to researcher Sebastien Fath, three of which are in the Paris suburbs. They each had attendance between 2,000 and 4,000 people and were Charismatic or Pentecostal. In addition there are about 30 new evangelical communities experiencing fast growth, some approaching 1,000 worshippers on a Sunday. These churches emphasise modern equipment, multiple activities and a high level of commitment. Fath found they were "in tension with wider French society and isolated from other Protestant churches," because the French find such niche churches hostile to what is expected of religious correctness.

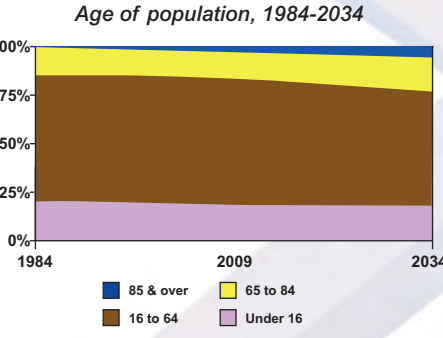
SOURCE: Religion Watch, September/October 2010, Volume 25, Number 6, based on www.frenchwindows.hauteffort.com.

**Book publishers had a mixed year in 2010.** The largest company, Hachette Group, had a turnover of £260 m in 2010, down 11% on 2009. Part of Hachette is Hodder, mainly publishing Christian books, which accounted for a third (32%) of Hachette's turnover in 2010, and which dropped 4%. The second largest, Random House, had a turnover of £230 m in 2010. These

two companies control almost a third (29%) of the total book market (15% and 14% respectively). The largest wholly Christian publisher not part of a bigger group is LionHudson, which had a turnover of £1.3 million in 2010, down from nearly £1.8 million in 2009.

SOURCE: The Bookseller, 21st January 2011, Pages 20 and 25.

**Population projections.** The latest population projections, based on the 2008 population, shows that the number of people in the UK increased 9% in the 25 years 1984 to 2009 (to 62 million), but is likely to increase by a further 17% in the next 25 years so that there could be 72 million people in the UK in 2034. The age composition of the population is also changing quite rapidly with more people who are 85 or over, as the chart shows. Previous estimates suggest there could be as many as 36,000 centenarians alive in 2034 (one person in every 2,000), a three-fold increase on the 12,000 in the UK in 2009 (one person in every 5,000)!



SOURCES: Population Trends, Office for National Statistics, No 142, Winter 2010, Page 8, and No 96, Summer 1999, Page 11.

**Women Priests.** While the number of women priests in the Church of England increases (19% of the total in 2008 against 12% in 2000), the number of parishes voting for what are called "Resolutions A, B and C", essentially against female ministry, about one-sixth of the total, has hardly changed in these 8 years, up +1%.

Number of parishes voting for different Resolutions, 2000 and 2008

Resolution	2000	2008
A: No woman taking communion	836 6.4%	802 6.3%
B: No woman as incumbent	980 7.5%	966 7.6%
C: Request for Alternative Oversight	296 2.3%	363 2.9%
Total number of A/B/C parishes	2,112 16.2%	2,131 16.8%
out of total number of parishes	13,033	12,702

SOURCE: Church of England Research and Statistics Dept, article in the Church Times, 29th October 2010, Page 4.

**Poor people more religious.** An international Gallup Poll study across 114 countries last year suggests a positive correlation between the socio-economic status and religiosity of a population. 95% of those with an average per

capita income of £1,400 said religion played an important part in their lives compared with only 47%, half as many, in countries where the per capita income is £17,000 or more. However, the survey also showed that this general result was not true of Britain, or Japan, France or Russia, and nor of the United States which is the reverse (rich and religious).

SOURCE: Article in the Church Times, 10th September 2010; www.gallup.com/poll/world.aspx

# Poverty Mindset

Living Hope is a major complex of buildings in Sun Valley, south of Cape Town, South Africa, which Rev John Thomas, pastor of Fishhoek Baptist Church, now called King of Kings, started 8 years ago to help provide hope for the poor living in the surrounding community. It has grown to become an enormous resource for the poor, the addicted and the helpless. One project on the site is the poverty programme, led by a deeply caring young man called Richard Lundie.

In an impromptu talk Richard described the key features of poverty as:

- 1) No plans for the future
- 2) Addiction to alcohol or drugs
- 3) Inability to speak up for themselves
- 4) Inability to see creative opportunities
- 5) A "cracked" view of themselves
- 6) Inability to dream
- 7) Lack of qualifications and skills
- 8) Frequent sickness and ill-health
- 9) Feeling they are stuck in a box and can't get out

When asked which of these was the most important Richard said the first. He said, "Poverty starts in the mind," and he sought to give those in his care the opportunity to do something, however small or simple, so that they could see they were being successful in some direction. He offered information and training with the aim of getting people employed in some capacity.

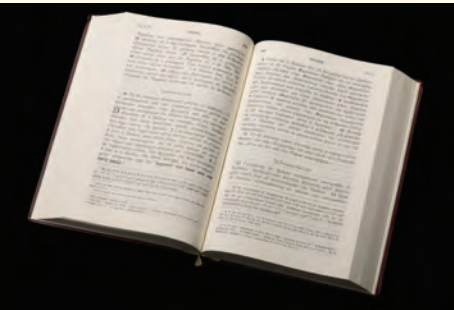
SOURCE: Richard Lundie, Living Hope, www.livinghope.co.za

continued from page 1

Using recent attendance data from the Church of England it now appears that the reproduction potential is higher still and close to the revival threshold. Although Church of England attendance is still declining, it has slowed in such a way that suggests its attendance will start increasing slowly again. Perhaps the church is at last seeing the fruit of the charismatic renewal from the latter part of the 20th century?

One clear principle emerges from the church growth model: If the church seeks to renew its spiritual life, and spread this among believers, then conversions and growth follow. As it says in Acts 2: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching... Every day they continued to meet together... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.





## REFLECTIONS

Those now in charge had no interest in past promises or previous arrangements. Legal ownership of property or land was worthless, as the owners were either dead or deported. It was like the Nazis entering Warsaw in World War II – they simply took what they wanted, and destroyed the rest. As a consequence, house and land prices hit an all-time low. No-one thought of property transactions in the 6th century BC.

But God did. “Go, buy your uncle’s field in Anathoth,” He said to Jeremiah at the height of the final siege of Jerusalem where freedom to move or do anything was extremely restricted. Jeremiah did as God said and, some while later, he was able to wave a transaction document saying this field now belonged to him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem must have thought him mad, but it was a physical statement undergirding Jeremiah’s assurance that, despite the appalling circumstances, normality would one day return to Jerusalem. God’s people would reclaim their land and have the opportunity to buy and sell food and produce and the city would flourish again.

Sometimes we are asked to do something that seems totally illogical. “Go and preach to those dry bones,” God said to Ezekiel. He did so, and a new Israel was formed to inhabit a new Jerusalem. A church meeting in an old curry house in Watford heard a prophecy in 2003 of a new building with “wells of spiritual refreshing”. Impossible – no money, no land! But they believed it would somehow happen. Then in 2007, the Council offered them the site of an old pub, and when they took it and cleared the land they found an old well. The Kingdom Bank provided financial support, and later this year, 2011, the Wellspring Church opens with Tim Roberts as its minister.

A baptism service is held at a well-known Baptist Church. Each candidate has given personal testimony to their faith to the minister, and then a public affirmation of their trust in Christ. At the end of the baptisms, and a very moving service, the minister gives a call to the packed church – not does anyone wish to receive Christ like these have, but does anyone else wish to be baptised this evening? A lady comes forward, confesses her faith in Christ when in the water, and is duly baptised. The sense of the presence of the Lord was overwhelming.

Why do God’s people do unexpected, sometimes illogical, things? Simply, it is the word of the Master, maybe audibly given as it was to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but that is not essential. Having a tuned ear, learning to practise His presence, a willingness to be scoffed at, a firm belief that this is His call – and you take an irrevocable step of faith. Your world is never the same again. You have looked negativity in its face and acted positively. You have said, “No” to NO. Essentially it’s the ability to hear and the willingness to obey. Time may be a commodity in short supply, but unless we are constantly in His presence, both in our special times and throughout the day, we may miss both His whisper and His challenge.

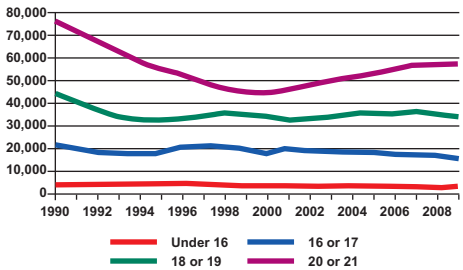
## Teenage Births

Britain has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe. While the precise population varies from year to year, the average population of girls aged 13 to 15 over the 20 years 1990 to 2009 was 970,000, and because abortions as well as births are recorded by age of mother, the actual number of babies conceived in this period is also known. They averaged 7,900 a year, that is, the percentage of girls aged 13 to 15 becoming pregnant was 0.82%, or 1 woman in every 120.

Since that’s an average figure for each year, the number is like supposing a class of 40 girls aged 13 in a school who continue as 40 girls aged 14 the following year and as 40 girls aged 15 the year after. In one of those 3 years, on average one of those girls will get pregnant. Also, on average, between 1990 and 2009, 54% of these pregnancies were aborted, meaning that on average 3,600 babies were born in England and Wales to a mother aged between 13 and 15. (This includes the very small number of children born to mothers aged under 13).

It is legal to marry at 16, although very few actually do so. The average number of women aged 16 or 17 between 1990 and 2009 in England and Wales was 660,000, and each year on average 5% of these became pregnant (98% outside marriage), and 44% of these pregnancies were aborted. That leaves 19,000 babies per year born to a mother aged 16 or 17.

Number of births to women aged 13 to 21, England and Wales, 1990 to 2009



The pregnancy rate increases to 9% for women aged 18 or 19, and the abortion rate is lower at 38%, meaning 35,000 children each year have a

## What some people say

### Ponderisms:

Do Lipton Tea employees take coffee breaks?

If a pig loses its voice, is it disgruntled?

If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren’t people from Holland called Holes?

If it’s true that we are here to help others, then what exactly are the others here for?

Ever wonder what the speed of lightning would be if it didn’t zigzag?

If lawyers can be disbarred and clergymen defrocked, can electricians be delighted, models deposed and dry cleaners depressed?

Why isn’t the number 11 pronounced unity one?

SOURCE: Email from Dawn Moor 20th February 2011.

mother aged 18 or 19 (90% outside marriage). So between 1990 and 2009 on average there were 2.3 million women aged 13 to 19 alive each year. Between them in that period they averaged over 200,000 pregnancies (a rate of 8.9%, or 1 in every 11), and gave birth to almost 120,000 babies (an average abortion rate of 42%).

By comparison, an average of 190,000 women aged 20 or 21 become pregnant each year, and with an abortion rate of 26%, some 55,000 children are born to them.

The graph shows the actual number of births over the 1990s and 2000s to women of different ages. The number of births to girls under 16 has not varied much over the past two decades (despite much government spending seeking to curb teenage pregnancies), while the number born to those aged 16 or 17 dropped a little in the mid 1990s and has declined slowly over the last 4 years. Numbers born to women aged 18 or 19 dropped quite substantially in the 1990s, but increased somewhat around the turn of the century and has kept fairly constant since.

Children born to those aged 20 or 21 fell dramatically in the 1990s (from 76,000 in 1990 to 45,000 in 2000), but has steadily increased since then. Some of these more recent babies will have been born to immigrants newly in Britain.

The actual number of girls involved in conception and abortion will be slightly lower than the numbers given in the official publications, as some will have had multiple pregnancies and multiple abortions, even by the age of 19.

What does all this mean for the church? Some of the teenagers reflected in the graph will have been churchgoing children. So the need to teach the Biblical standards of marriage, and for moral behaviour between those of opposite sex is obvious. However, there is also the need to teach how to resist temptation, and, if having succumbed, the power of forgiveness not only to others but of oneself also. Some of the teenagers who have given birth will need to learn parenting skills, as well as how to cope on probably inadequate financial resources.

SOURCES: Relevant issues of Population Trends, Office for National Statistics, especially Number 142, Winter 2010, Tables 1.4 and 4.1; article in the Daily Telegraph 14th June 2010.

## These may be helpful Books and reports received

*The Life and Death of a Church Plant*, Dr Neil Summertown, a description of the origins and ultimate closure of The 145 Church in North London, available from neil.summerton@ruralinternet.co.uk.

*The View of Scripture taken by the Church of England*, paper by Dr Martin Davie, Theological Consultant, House of Bishops.

*A Profile of Mennonite Church Planters*, 1990-2005, by Conrad Kanagy, MissioDei, Number 17, www.MennoniteMission.net.

*Children in Need in England*, Graham Know, Department for Education, OSR28/2010, 30th Nov 2010, www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/index.shtml



### London is:

- The capital of the UK
- Home to 8 million people in inner area, 14 million in greater metropolis
- A world city
- A leading financial centre, yet its financial services account for only 9% of the local economy
- Chosen by over 100 of Europe’s 500 largest companies for their HQ location
- The digital capital of the world
- The most visited city in terms of international visitors (New York has more but many of them are Americans)
- The only UK county to see church attendance increase significantly in the 21st century

### London has:

- The highest GDP of any city in Europe
- The busiest air space of any urban area
- 43 Universities and degree-awarding colleges
- More students than anywhere in Europe
- More orchestras than New York
- More museums than Paris
- The most visited modern art gallery in the world (Tate Modern)
- The most popular music venue in the world (O2 Arena)
- Its bankers giving £31 billion a year in taxes to government
- Over 4,000 churches, a quarter Anglican and a quarter Pentecostal

### London will:

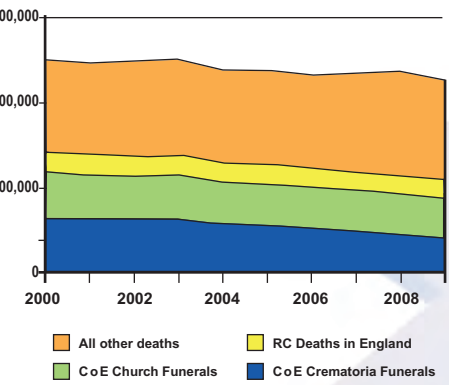
- Have 25,000 apprentices in 2011, up from 16,000 in 2010
- In 2012 become the first city in the world to host the Olympic games 3 times in its history

SOURCES: Interview with Boris Johnson by Chris Blackhurst in M magazine Today, January 2011, Page 30; Religious Trends No 6, 2006/2007.

## Funerals

As we are living longer on average, there have been fewer deaths in the population the last 10 years. About three-quarters of people dying are cremated, the rest buried in a secular or church burial ground. Most cremations and burials are accompanied by a service, and the Church of England has been foremost in conducting these services either in a crematorium or a church. The chart shows how the numbers have changed since the start of the century.

Deaths by denomination and service location, England, 2000-2009



The number of Roman Catholic deaths is fairly constant over the years shown, varying between 46,000 in 2000 to an estimated 42,000 in 2009. The number of funerals taken by Church of England clergy has declined over this period, from 46% of all deaths in 2000 to 38% in 2009. The number of Crematoria funerals taken was greater than the number of Church funerals for the years 2000 to 2007, but there were more Church funerals in 2008 and 2009, a trend which could continue. The number of Crematoria funerals taken by clergy dropped by -33% between 2000 and 2009, but Church funerals declined only by -13%.

Why the decline? Partly because many people prefer a “secular” service when parting from their loved ones, and more people are specifically asking for a non-religious funeral. Is it anything to do with the fact that space in churchyards is running out? Or that Church of England funerals/burials cost too much? Or the cost (in time and money) of upkeep of graves in Church or other cemeteries? Nevertheless, funerals still represent a huge opportunity to help hurting hearts and to provide as Canon Alan Billings suggests “a religious evaluation of a person (which) may be very different from the utilitarian assessment of human lives of a secular culture.”

SOURCES: Research and Statistics Department of the Archbishops’ Council, publications and website, for the Church of England figures; Digest of Statistics of the Roman Catholic Community, edited Anthony Spencer, Pastoral Research Centre Report for the Roman Catholic figures; Population Trends, Office for National Statistics for the total number of deaths; Secular Lives, Sacred Hearts, Alan Billings, SPCK, 2004, Page 96.

## Generational Change

In Chapter 3 of the book *Religion and Youth*, Professor David Voas writes, “We need to look at three possible explanations for the changes in religious involvement between generations. The challenge is not only to measure the relative importance of these factors but to explain what produces them. These factors are:

- Value changes among parents (reducing the priority they give to transmission of religion)
- Value changes among young people (reducing the importance of religion to them)
- Social changes that may have an impact on religion even if values remain the same.”

He then goes on to explain what these changes are. He suggests that “parents have become less committed to conformity in their children”, because autonomy or religious choice has increased, and the “practical utility” of religious affiliation has declined. Increasing divorce interrupts religious transmission, and religiously mixed marriages undermine transmission.

Young people are spending more time in education, although “churchgoing is often positively correlated with education.” With more women working, alternative networks are formed as a consequence, lowering the need for church involvement. There are other, “contextual”, factors, however, such as the need to believe and belong (because of insecurity or lack of meaning), pressures on time (many secular activities), worldviews promoted by the media, the commitment of belonging, and so on.

Geographical mobility probably has a negative impact on churchgoing, as old ties are not replicated in the new location, especially likely for young people who feel released from family norms. On the other hand, the church may be a good place to meet potential partners for marriage or business (but this perhaps is more true for men than women). Other studies suggest that the number of “de-churched” people may perhaps be three times the number of church people.

David Voas seeks to distinguish between the religious impact of three types of change – a person’s age (do people become more religious as they get older?), societal change over generations (were people more religious 100 years ago?), and the cohort effect (do those in their 20s today think differently from those in their 20s say 50 years ago?). Distinguishing between these effects is extraordinarily difficult, but at the same time very important.

SOURCES: Explaining Change over Time in Religious Involvement, David Voas, via voas@manchester.ac.uk; Hollinghurst, Tearfund Survey, 2007.

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## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

## SNIPPETS

1) The UK Post Office uses 2 million rubber bands every day.

2) Every week 80,000 people attend the Friends of Israel Biblical Baptist Tabernacle in El Salvador, the largest church in the country, 1.3% of the 6 million population less than half of whom identify as Catholic.

3) What is a small income in Britain? A survey said £12,700 per year (£240 per week). A large income was seen to be £40,800 a year (£780 per week), 3 times as much.

4) 80% of those who come to Christ were said to do so by the age of 18 and a further 10% by the age of 25, according to the 2010 Bible Society Youth World Assembly.

5) In the United States, a quarter (27%) of homes use only a mobile phone – no land line phone. In Europe it’s a similar percentage (25%).

6) 7% of UK adults received an e-book reader for Christmas in 2010, doubling the proportion who now have one (13% or 6 1/2 million). 3 1/2 million own a Kindle, 2 million a Sony e-reader.

7) There are more than 2,000 robots fighting in Afghanistan alongside the human Allied troops.

SOURCES: 1) The e magazine, 4th March, 2011, Page 8, Page 17; 2) Article in The Economist, 5th February, 2011, Page 51; 3) British Social Attitudes, 27th Report, Alison Park et al, NatCen and Sage, 2010, Page 7; 4) World in Action, Bible Society, Spring 2011, Page 2; 5) Article in Research, Market Research Society, February 2011, Page 21; 6) Article in The Bookseller, 11th February, 2011, Page 6; 7) Article on “2045 Singularity” by Lev Grossman in The e magazine, 21st February, 2011, Page 27.

## Church Growth and Spiritual Life

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For the last fifty years or so most Christian denominations have had to come to terms with almost unrelenting decline. This has caused some people to look back to past periods of growth, particularly times of revival, and ask what was different compared with the contemporary church situation. The defining feature of these revivals was the church’s vibrant spiritual life, that is, its prayer life, witness, and devotion to worship and the Scriptures. But how does this spiritual life influence growth, and how can it be increased?

### Mathematics and Church Growth

For fifteen years there has been a project at the University of Glamorgan to model church growth using mathematics, so that principles can be established to assist the growth of the church. The basic thesis is that the church grows through the action of enthusiasts, the Christians who spread the gospel through their contact with unbelievers. Although they are a small subset of the church, around 10% even in large revivals, nevertheless their activity is sufficient to produce rapid growth much like an epidemic of a virulent disease. The enthusiasts are the “infected” believers passing on the fire of the faith to those they meet.

### Reproduction Potential and Thresholds

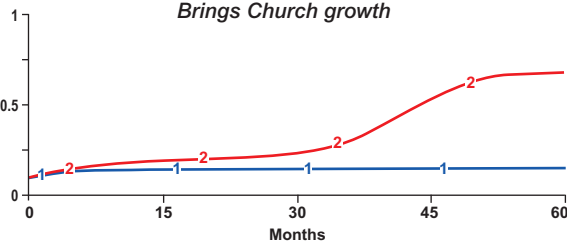
Key to church growth is the reproduction potential of the enthusiasts, a measure of how many new enthusiasts they can make. The higher this potential, the greater the growth of the church, even if some enthusiasts subsequently become inactive. If it exceeds a threshold, then the number of enthusiasts increases, and rapid church growth, typical of revival, occurs.

However, if the reproduction potential is under a lower threshold, then the church declines towards extinction. The enthusiasts’ ability to reproduce themselves is insufficient to make up for losses from the church. Sadly this is the position of many mainstream denominations in the UK.

### Charismatic Renewal and Critical Mass

Although the dynamics of church growth is similar to that of a disease, it differs in one important respect, that is, the source of the enthusiasts or infected believers. Enthusiasts not only make enthusiasts from new converts, those who have never had the “disease” of religion, they can also infect those Christians who are inactive, giving them enthusiasm, either for the first time, or renewing them back to a former experience.

Figure 1: Critical Mass of Enthusiasts Brings Church growth



Vertical axis: Church as a fraction of society  
Curve 1: 3% church initially enthusiast  
Curve 2: 5% church initially enthusiast

This renewal enables a church to grow even when the reproduction potential is too low for revival growth, provided there is a critical mass of enthusiasts. Figure 1 shows a church with such an inadequate reproduction potential and a church with a measure of charismatic renewal. Curve 1 is with 3% of the church initially enthusiast; the church fails to grow because it cannot generate sufficient enthusiasts. However, increase the initial enthusiasts to 5% and the church grows moderately for a while, and then tips into rapid revival growth (Curve 2), becoming more than half of the community in less than 5 years. A critical mass of enthusiasts can sustain themselves through renewal, and lay the ground for future revival growth, even if delayed.

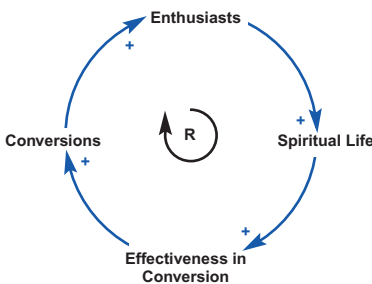
### Spiritual Life and Accelerated Growth

All the above has assumed that the reproduction potential remains constant. However, the essence of revival is not just an increase in the number of enthusiasts, but also an increase in their effectiveness. The reproduction potential can increase, enabling the church to be tipped over the threshold for revival growth with a lower critical mass of enthusiasts.

When enthusiasts gather together they pray, study the Scriptures, encourage each other to deepen their spiritual lives and share experiences. As this spiritual transformation takes place they become more effective in generating enthusiasts, the reproduction potential rises, and the church is tipped into growth.

Thus spiritual life is part of a feedback loop (Figure 2). The more enthusiasts, the more the spiritual life, thus the greater their effectiveness in conversion and thus the more converts and enthusiasts. This reinforcing effect accelerates the growth of the church and enables growth from a small number of enthusiasts.

Figure 2: Spiritual Life Accelerates Church Growth



This is the story of the Acts of the Apostles, and every revival. A small number of enthusiasts gather together. Through the Holy Spirit their spiritual lives, and their witness, are enhanced. Inactive believers are renewed to enthusiasm, and subsequently there are conversions and rapid church growth.

### Church of England and Future Growth

What evidence is there that the reproduction potential increases in the church? Using data from the Christian Research surveys, the Church of England was shown to have a reproduction potential below the threshold of extinction in 2000. However, following the 2005 survey, it had increased to the point where extinction was just being avoided.

continued on page 4