

Indicators of Poverty

A fascinating (and misleading) graph was published in a 2005 book about happiness: it compared two lines – the percentage of Americans describing themselves as “very happy”, which was about 40% in 1961 and slowly reduced to about 25% in 1996, and the average income per person which increased steadily, almost tripling in the same period. The conclusion drawn that wealth = happiness is of course incorrect, both lines being correlated with many other factors. Nor is the opposite necessarily true: lack of wealth = unhappiness, as any visit to one of a number of African countries will quickly confirm.

Poverty is much more complex than a simple relationship to money, even if it is defined in terms of money, or lack of it. Much UK research has focussed on this broad topic. Poverty, as defined by income, varies with age. Young people who have left home are likely to be worse off in their first year than those still living at home. Those living with a partner, married or otherwise, are likely to be better off than those living by themselves.

Having children is associated with a greater risk of poverty, especially in the year after birth. Across Europe, this “poverty penalty” is highest in the UK, a research project by Joseph Rowntree found. While getting a job obviously can protect against poverty, it is actually keeping a job that is the key factor.

Poverty also relates to housing conditions, such as state of repair, inadequate toilet facilities, etc. A quarter, 27%, of English homes are judged “non-decent” by the assessment authorities, and 10% are in serious disrepair. In many parts of the world, and again especially in



Africa, lack of access to piped water can be a serious definition of poverty. Poverty is frequently connected with poor health as well.

Poverty is often related to education, or the lack of it. The fact that about 80% of young people aged 16 to 18 in the UK are studying either at school for GCSE or “A” Level, or are in other training, is good, but poses immediate questions about the future prospects of the other 20%. They may get some qualifications later, but 8% of the UK population in 2007 had no academic or vocational qualification at all. A British study published in 1999 by the BBC found that “a fifth of adults in England have severe problems with basic literacy and numeracy”, a percentage on a par with the 19% found in the 2001 South African Census.

The British government defines poverty as having an income of less than 60% of the median income (that is, the income level at which half the population are above, and half below). In 2006 the UK median income was £362 per week, so receiving less than 60% of this (£217 per week or £11,300 per annum) would be defined as “poor”. In 2006, 18% of the population were in this category (and 22% of children). The difference is seen, for example, in such facts as that in 2005, 31% of all children but 56% of poor children did not have at least one week’s holiday away from home with their family. However, one survey found that 41% of adults thought there was very little real child poverty in Britain today.

The Rowntree Foundation monitors some 56 factors relating to poverty, broken down by age, in which financial factors are only half the total. Poverty and social exclusion often go hand-in-hand, and with increasing numbers unemployed, poverty is likely to increase. Poor people also often worry more about being a victim of burglary or violent crime. Some churches offer debt counselling services, which are frequently much appreciated. Can churches do more than this to support those in their local community who may be struggling with various indicators of poverty?

SOURCES: Figures taken from various tables in *Social Trends*, No 38, 2008 edition, Office for National Statistics; “Public attitudes to child poverty” research summary by the Department for Work and Pensions, 2008; Joseph Rowntree research reports on “Youth poverty in Europe” October 2007, “A minimum income standard for Britain” July 2008, “Monitoring poverty and social exclusion” December 2008; Marjorie Froise’s 2004 DTh Thesis “Is Christianity in South Africa a label or a spiritual and ethical value system?”; article “How much can money buy happiness?” by Christo Alboir, in *Radical Statistics*, No 38, 2009 quoting from *Happiness: lessons from a new science*, by R G Layard, Allen Lane, 2005.

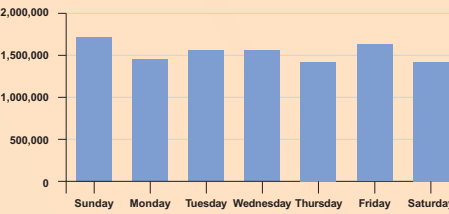
Going to Church at Christmas

The Church of England recently published figures for attendance at Christmas services for 2007. These totalled some 2.7 million people and came with the comment, “The numbers are lower when Christmas does not fall on a Sunday”. Total Christmas attendance figures have only been collected since 2000, with only one year (2005) when 25th December fell on a Sunday, so the conclusion, while true for the years 2005 (Sunday) and 2007 (Tuesday), is really only based on a sample of one.

However, the Church of England also collects figures of Christmas communicants, a figure which runs at less than half the total of Christmas attendance. Christmas communicant numbers have been collected for much longer, since 1960, though not for every year. There are 34 years between 1960 and 2007 in which Christmas communicant figures have been published, and the bar-chart gives the average number of communicants by

day of the week on which Christmas Day falls.

Number of Christmas communicants by day of the week on which Christmas falls

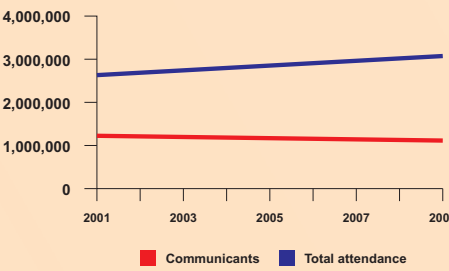


The chart shows that communicant attendance has indeed been greatest when Christmas Day fell on a Sunday, followed by Friday. This will be good news if this pattern is followed in 2009, as Christmas Day is on a Friday this year. Communicants were least when Christmas Day fell on a Thursday or Saturday. The difference is bigger than it probably looks on the chart – some 16% between the highest and lowest.

The number of Christmas communicants is declining – halving in the last 47 years – with the figures varying up and down somewhat from year to year. Against the

trend in this decline, very small in recent years, shown in the graph, is the increase in the numbers going to church each Christmas, as the trend shows, despite the fall in 2007. Both sets of figures ignore the millennium year 2000 which was extra special with much larger numbers involved. Is Christmas attendance just a national sentimental journey to the manger or indicative that the Day, whether Sunday or not, has spiritual implications for at least part of the population?

Trends in Christmas attendance in the Church of England, 2001-2009



SOURCES: Successive volumes of *Church Statistics* published by what is now the Research and Statistics Department, Archbishops’ Council, Church of England, in various years since 1980, and an article in the *Church Times* 20th February 2009. A letter in the *Church of England Newspaper*, 25th January 2008, suggested Christmas attendance figures would be much larger if those attending carol services in school and community events were included.

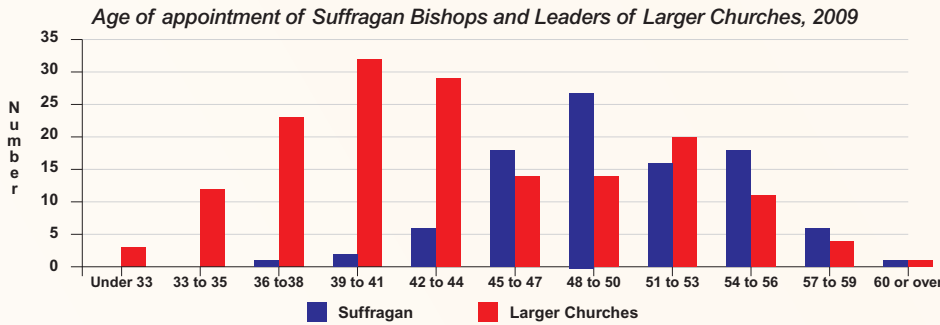
AGE OF APPOINTMENT

With the appointment of two leaders of larger churches to be bishops in the 6 months from October 2008 (Andrew Watson of St Stephen’s, Twickenham, as Bishop of Aston and Paul Williams of St James Fulmer, Gerrards Cross, as Bishop of Kensington) it may be of interest to look at the age at which leaders of significant responsibility are appointed. This is only possible for Church of England clergy since it is only Anglicans who publish the age of each minister.

The bar-chart compares the age of appointment of a Suffragan Bishop (irrespective of whether he is still a Suffragan) and the age of appointment of leaders of larger churches in their present church. The length of time in such positions will vary, as two-thirds of the 43 Diocesan bishops in 2009 were previously Suffragan Bishops, but not many incumbents of larger churches move on to lead another larger church.

The bar-chart shows that many leaders of larger churches were appointed between the ages of 36 and 44 – just over half, 52%. A quarter, 24%, however, were appointed to their present position in their 50s. The average age of appointment to a larger church is 44, the youngest being 30 at the time and the oldest was 63.

Two-thirds, 64%, of Suffragan Bishops on the other hand were appointed roughly 10



Length of service in years as larger church leader or bishop, 2009						
	0 to 4 %	5 to 9 %	10 to 14 %	15 to 19 %	20 or over %	
Year of appointment	2005-09	2000-04	1995-99	1990-94	Before 1990	Base
Bishops	22	38	23	13	4	110
Larger churches	20	33	26	13	8	163
						Average Length
						9 years
						10 years

years later, between the ages 45 and 53. A quarter, 26%, were also appointed when they were older, 54 or above. The average age of appointment as a Suffragan is 50, the youngest being 37 and the oldest was 61.

How long have people served in their particular roles as leader of a larger church or as a bishop? The Table shows the proportions in five year intervals.

Bishops and leaders of larger churches have served in that capacity for much the same length of time on average, larger church leaders slightly longer as

they are appointed younger on average. The longest serving bishops are the Rt Rev Tom Butler, Bishop of Southwark, originally appointed as Bishop of Willesden in 1985 and the Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Manchester, who was appointed as Bishop of Taunton in 1986. The longest serving leaders of larger Anglican churches are the Revd Canon Christopher Rutledge, responsible for St Mark’s, Talbot Village and St Saviour’s, Wallisdown in Bournemouth and the Revd Jonathan Couper, responsible for Christ Church, Bridlington, both since 1981.



Stand in the Dunce’s Corner, Dan Brown

The nature and quality of the teaching given in churches is one of the top 6 features of a growing church (the others are: warmth of welcome, clear vision, variety of worship, strong leadership and a friendly congregation). However, relatively little research has been undertaken on the kind of preaching actually given.

One enterprising piece of Canadian research was a textual analysis of a random sample of 76 sermons in different churches on Easter Sunday 16th April 2006. A quarter of these sermons cited unorthodox views of the accounts of Jesus’ death and resurrection (especially from Dan Brown’s book *The Da Vinci Code*), and in all but one sermon these views were condemned.

Two-fifths of the sermons contained one or more direct references to popular culture, such being more likely in Protestant sermons than Catholic. All these references, apart from Dan Brown’s book, however, were to news reports of accidental deaths, murders, terrorism, wars, epidemics, all of which were used to illustrate the theme of resurrection. Virtually all of these references were given a negative connotation. There were no references, for example, to fashion, food or dance. Five of the 76 sermons cited Mel Gibson’s 2004 film *The Passion of Christ*.

Almost half, 35 out of 76, of the sermons were from Evangelical pulpits. In 29 of these 35 at least 5 direct quotations were made from the scriptures, of between 2 and 14 verses each. The bulk of conservative Protestant sermons were discussions of specific biblical verses, but in the mainline sermons the content was primarily personal anecdotes, humorous stories, historical and literary allusions, and mentions of popular culture. Only one mainline sermon contained 5 quotes from scripture, although most contained one or two references. Roman Catholic clergy quoted scripture about as much as the mainline Protestants. In general, clergy did not say that people should believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection because it was the Word of God.

SOURCE: Article “Defending the Faith: Easter sermon reaction to pop culture discourses” by David Haskell, Kenneth Paradis and Stephanie Burgoyne in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 50, No 2, December 2008.

SNOWFLAKES



Living longer

An American speaker, Professor Dale Matthews, told the Christian Health Convention in Germany in March 2008 that regular churchgoers have an average life expectancy of 82 years compared with 75 for non-churchgoers. Meanwhile, the UK Civil Servants’ Pension Scheme January 2009 report showed that civil servants at 40 can expect to live to 89, 29 years beyond their normal retirement age of 60 – one third of their life in retirement!

SOURCES: Report in *Idea*, German Evangelical News Agency, June 20th 2008; article in *The Times*, 28th January, 2009.

Too many Pentecostals!

The countries of Ghana and Kenya require that churches register before operating. In Kenya in 2005, 443 new Pentecostal churches were registered. By September 2007, the number of registered churches in Kenya was 8,520, the number of unregistered churches 6,740 and 60 new applications were being received every month. The procedure for vetting new bodies was overwhelmed and systems had totally broken down.

SOURCE: Article by Prof Paul Gifford in the *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol 8, No 4, 2008, based on a report in Kenya’s *Standard* newspaper, 4th September 2007, Page 6.

Top authors crucial

For the first time the names of the top 50 authors have been published (previously only the top 10), “top” being judged by their 2008 UK revenue. Top of the list is the chef Jamie Oliver who made £11.5 million last year, beating cook Delia Smith who came 5th with £7.6 million. J K Rowling, who had been easily top in 2007 (over £43 million) was fourth in 2008, down to £8.1 million. Enid Blyton was 24th with £4.5 million. *Dreams of my Father* sold so well in the UK last year that it netted Barack Obama, with his other books, £3.9 million; he came 36th in the list! The top 50 authors accounted for about £250 million worth of sales in 2008, one-seventh, 14%, of the total £1.7 billion book sales; the other 119,950 authors accounted for the other 86%, averaging £12,000 each!

SOURCE: *The Bookseller*, 20th March 2008, Pages 25, 27.

Irish priests could reduce in numbers drastically

An analysis in *The Irish Catholic* newspaper earlier this year suggests that the 4,752 Irish Roman Catholic priests could decrease by more than two-thirds in the next 20 years, reaching only 1,500 by 2028. This is partly because of the age of existing priests (average 61 against Church of England clergy at 54), the decline in attendance, and the “loss of the Church’s authority” because of the sex-abuse scandals. “The situation is very grave,” said Fr Eamonn Burke, Dublin director of vocations.

SOURCE: Reported in *The Times*, 27th February, 2008.

Cutbacks in giving

George Barna, a key American researcher, has investigated the amount that people downsized in their giving to churches. A quarter, 26%, have not cut back at all, but another quarter, 22%, have stopped totally. The overall average has been a reduction in giving of 42%. Younger people have cut back more than older people. A different study, undertaken before the present crisis, compared giving across generations, finding that those aged 35 to 49 in the year 2000 gave only 80% in real terms what those of a similar age would have given in 1973.

SOURCES: Barna Update, 1st December, 2008, www.barna.org/FlexPage;ReligionWatch;July/August;2008;Vol23No6;Page6.

Income Tax

In 2007/08 there were 8,000 people in the UK who earned at least £1 million that year, paying an average of £780,000 in tax! The largest number of taxpayers, however, 6.7 million, earned between £20 and £30,000, paying an average tax bill of £3,700. There were 2.5 million people in the smallest tax-band, £5,225 to £7,500, who paid just £107 on average. Should Christians tithe? If so, should they do so before or after paying tax? Should it depend on the initial salary level?

SOURCE: *Social Trends*, No 38, 2008 Edition, editor Abigail Self, Office for National Statistics, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Table 5.11, crown copyright.

State of the Nation

80 Christian leaders met in the House of Lords on 11th December, 2008 and issued a statement about their deliberations on 1st February 2009. The meeting was jointly chaired by Lord Anderson of Swansea and Lord Forster the Bishop of Chester. The statement begins, “Our nation is in trouble, deep trouble; far more than most people realise or our Government wishes to acknowledge. The financial crisis has highlighted the culture of debt that has ensnared the nation. It has also exposed the underlying problems that are rooted in the values of society.”

The full text may be downloaded as a pdf from www.worldprayer.org.uk.

International Year of Astronomy

The United Nations has declared 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy as it is 400 years since Galileo began to explore space with his homemade telescope and discovered the largest 4 moons circling the planet Jupiter, concluding that if moons go round a planet, then the planets must go round the sun.

SOURCE: *News from the Faroes*, Postverk Føroya, 2/2009.

Going to church can make you happy!

A massive survey of 42,000 Americans shows that the more often you go to church the happier as a person you are.

One-third, 32%, said they were “very happy”, just over half, 56%, said they were “pretty happy” and a small minority, 12%, said they were “not too happy”. These percentages, broken down by the regularity of religious attendance, are shown in the Table:

Happiness and religious attendance						
Attendance	Weekly %	Monthly %	Seldom %	Never %	Overall %	
Very happy	40	31	27	25	32	
Pretty happy	51	57	60	57	56	
Not too happy	9	12	13	18	12	
Base (=100%)	14,226	6,710	14,329	6,269	41,989	

The Table shows that the proportion who are very happy declines with declining church attendance, with the obvious implication that these two things are related. Likewise the percentage of those who are not too happy increases with declining attendance. It may just be, however, that well-being (as measured by happiness) and church attendance, rather than being directly related to each other, may both be related to something else, such as size of family or economic status.

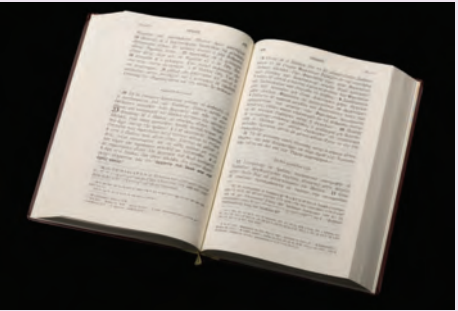
The difference between weekly attendance and never going when one is very happy is 15%. That percentage difference is 18% for men and 13% for women, and is 17% for those under 30 but 12% for those 70 and over. The difference was 15% for Protestants, 13% for Catholics, but 21% for Jews. These variations suggest that while happiness and church attendance are undoubtedly related, other factors mitigate that straight-forward relationship.

This analysis does not define “happiness”, but some British research looking at the happiness of rural Anglican clergy did, and found that the top 4 endorsements of happiness were the statements:

- 94% I find beauty in some things
- 78% Life is good
- 76% I feel that life is very rewarding
- 75% I am intensely interested in other people

The General Social Survey (GSS) in the United States is similar to the British Social Attitudes in the UK, and regularly asks about the respondent’s happiness.

SOURCE: Articles “Faith and Happiness” by Rodney Stark and Jared Maier in *Review of Religious Research*, Volume 50, Number 1, September 2008, Page 120, and “How happy are rural Anglican clergy?” by Christine Brewster in *Rural Theology*, Volume 6, Part 1, Issue 70, 2008, Page 50.



REFLECTIONS

From his youth, he was sure that God had destined him to high office. But his first two jobs after leaving farming, being a musician and then a soldier, were fairly mediocre. Except that he found he was quite good at both of them.

As a musician, he learned to adjust the style of his music to his hearers. That meant he had to listen to them speaking to find out what sort of mood they were in, and then devise suitable matching music. He also found he was good at writing poetry, and then songs and hymns. He found he had the skill to understand human nature, and the ability to translate that into artistic forms.

As a soldier, it was soon evident he was a good leader, and quickly had the responsibility of looking after a large group of men. He built on his ability of understanding people and gave extra duties to some of his more courageous men. He learned to think quickly when crises arose. He also explained to people what his strategy was, and his operating values, so that they could understand what he was doing and why, and thus go along with him. He found time to relax with his family and friends, and formed some really deep friendships.

In many ways, he was a natural leader. Ready to take the initiative, a willingness to listen to others, not taking all the credit for success, using different people according to their talents. He was also deeply religious – praying, singing and talking to God – and obedient to God's will. A keen, committed, spiritual man of integrity who was trusted by an increasing number of people aware of his abilities.

After a number of years, he did achieve high office – the highest office – and consolidated his responsibilities, giving people security, prosperity, forming a first-rate Cabinet and beginning the building of effectively a cathedral. Colossal potential for good, quality influence – until King David looked over his wall one day and it all began to unravel. Once his integrity had gone, the power of his model leadership, both in his family and wider afield, was compromised as well. We must be constantly alert to shun anything which may compromise our leadership and grieve the One who has called us.

Models of Churches

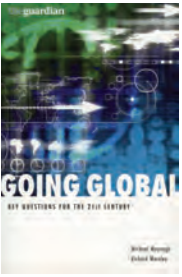
Feature	In the box	Out of the box	Beyond the box
Image	Stuck and dying	Thriving and growing	Radically innovative
Attendance	Maintained	Added to	Multiplying
Change	Avoids change	Comfortable with change	Embraces change
Helpers	Members	Volunteers	Discipled servants
Staff	Staff are doers	Staff are equippers	Equipping culture
Leadership	Looking for help	Holistic growth	Pursuing opportunity
Culture	Survives/protects heritage	Institutional effectiveness	Kingdom orientation
Framework	Slave to constitution	Ignores constitution	Flexible guidelines
Impact	Struggling	Growing	Plants new ministries

Two authors writing a few years ago were exploring the changes in church life required to reach out in a post-modern culture, and drew up some of the characteristics which they perceived to apply to older models of church (“in the box”), those exploring fresh models (“out of the box”) and those they felt were necessary to evangelise today's generation (“beyond the box”). The characteristics they give are highlighted in the Table.

category, but probably perhaps 20 or even 30% in the second category (in 2005 34% of churches had grown since 1998). The emphases on holistic growth and equipping people are especially seen in an increasing number of churches. The “beyond the box” churches, however, are far more than just a list of features as given but these are rather a reflection of a church inspired by its senior leadership, this, rather than size, being the critical factor for a “beyond the box” model.

SOURCE: *Beyond the Box: Innovative Churches that Work*, Bill Easum and D Travis, Group Publishing, Loveland Co, 2003, and also quoted in Marjorie Proise's 2004 DTh Thesis 'Is Christianity in South Africa a label or a spiritual and ethical value system?'

There are few British churches in the third



BOOK REVIEW

GOING GLOBAL: Key Questions for the 21st Century by Michael Moynagh and Richard Worsley, A & C Black, London, 2008 242 pages, £12.99, 978-0-7136-8866-5

The two authors are responsible for the Tomorrow Network and have written other similar books. This book is similar in terms of their treatment of issues, different in the issues they consider. Although written before the onset of the current recession, many of their answers and comments are still relevant for church leaders.

Thirteen topics have been chosen and each is handled in the same way - a chapter devoted to telling “the story so far” setting the background, a chapter on “what will shape the next 20 years” and then a final chapter looking at “what might be the implications”. Each is handled allowing users a quick read or a dive into detailed explanations. Each topic is backed up with statistics and diagrams, and there are references throughout to enable readers to follow up items of interest.

The topics covered include: Will the emerging economies catch up with the West? Will the gap between the richest and poorest countries narrow? How will the world feed its growing population? What will happen to global migration? How will global communications affect people's lives? How will the world be governed? Who will win “the war on terror”? Will global crime get the upper hand? How will the world manage climate change? Will we have enough energy? The overall focus is global rather than national, future more than present, but also personal and qualitative as well as economic and quantitative.

The book is an ideal reference volume about world issues for preparing talks, sermons or presentations.

Continued from page 1

Sunday” and several churches reported their attendance had more than doubled that Sunday. The BU also heard of many newcomers finding faith, or later getting married or baptised in the church to which they returned. So what lessons can be learned for the 2009 initiative which has the invitation “Come as you are”?

- If all church members were as involved as those in the smallest churches, there would be a much greater return rate.
- It may be obvious, but if people are to return to church, they have to be invited first!
- Further research is necessary for the second year to see how the impetus for the project can be sustained.
- Confirmation of the newcomers who stay for 6 months or longer would also be helpful and how many of these are lapsed members returning or total outsiders.

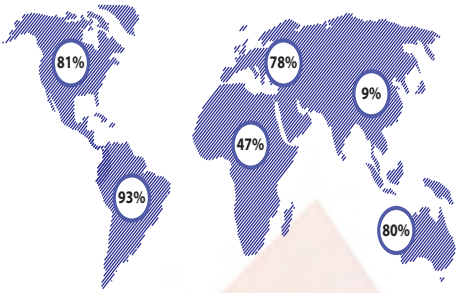
Future plans

The BU is very hopeful that there will be a great increase in the number of churches supporting the 2009 “Back to Church Sunday”. Some analysis to follow this up will be done after 8 months to assess the number of people remaining in church. The stories heard are encouraging, but it would be marvellous to hear many more of people's journeys to faith. It would be interesting to ascertain how many people declined an invitation, but the whole exercise proves that many people will come to church if only those who are part of church life “invite someone they like to something they love”.

The Church Worldwide

The world is growing at the rate of 230,000 people every day! The church is growing at about one-third of that, 80,000 people a day. The figures, for mid-2009, are the latest estimates in the annual update provided by Dr David Barrett for his *World Christian Encyclopaedia*. Both figures are net, that is to say, they are births less deaths, and in addition for the Christian figure, conversions less those leaving the church.

The “conversion rate”, if that is how it might be expressed, is slightly above the overall proportion of the world's population who is Christian, 34.6% to 33.3%, a very small difference but when multiplied by a large number it becomes significant. The difference indicates that the Christian community is growing very slowly around the world.



How does the percentage of Christians vary by continent? The map indicates that the old “developed” world of Europe, Oceania and North America are still hugely Christian if only nominally, and Latin America has a higher percentage still. In terms of actual church attendance the percentages are probably at best a third or a quarter of these proportions, although Barrett would put the proportion higher.

David Barrett estimates that there are 3.8 million congregations worldwide across 40,000 denominations. With a total of 2,272 million Christians that works out at 600 people each, which is 7 times greater than the average UK congregation! He also reckons there are 12 million Christian workers (lay and ordained nationals), 59% male, or one for every 190 Christian people. In addition there are 460,000 mission workers, 54% male. He also suggests that there are 20 Christian martyrs somewhere in the world every hour, or 180,000 in total for 2009, but, unfortunately, like his other figures, the assumptions behind his data are not given.

SOURCE: Article “Christian World Communions” by Dr David Barrett, Todd Johnson and Peter Crossing, in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 33, No 1, January 2009.

“Worshippers become Witches”?

A piece of research reported in the *Church Times* last year and which ended up in the popular media under the heading “Buffy the Vampire slayer is causing women to leave the church and become witches” has now been published as an academic paper in the *European Journal of Women's Studies* under the title “Evangelical Christianity and Women's Changing Lives”. The author, Dr Kristin Aune, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Derby, examines the increasing rate at which women are leaving the church, especially in their middle years.

Age-group	1989-1998 Change per annum	% F	1989-1998 Change per annum	% F
15 to 29	-31,300	72	-21,900	53
30 to 44	-18,000	56	-21,500	72
65 & over	+1,400	86	-100	n/a
Total all ages	-114,200	57	-78,400	65

Between 1989 and 1998 57% of those who left the church were women, and between 1998 and 2005 65% of the leavers were women. In the earlier period a higher percentage was seen among those aged 15 to 29, but in the later period this changed to those aged 30 to 44. (The numbers of those 65 and over are different in that between 1989 and 1998 the number of older people coming to church increased, and of that increase 86% were women. Between 1998 and 2005 the number of those 65 and over

coming to church hardly changed, with the gender balance only varying marginally).

Dr Aune particularly researched one local Newfrontiers congregation near Derby, interviewing some of the women who attended with two or three year lapses in between, and she found that some of those who left did so because of the gender theology of this denomination. She also found clear differences between single and married women with the former often feeling marginalised. While Dr Aune emphasises that loss should not be interpreted as apostasy, and that the decline could be due to fewer new women joining the church, movement to other churches or simply not attending so frequently, she also found a further reason for the change.

She suggests that the women most affected in this recent period, 1998 to 2005, break down into three broad groups: the “home-centred women” who stay committed to the church, the “career women” who are least committed to the church primarily because they do not have the time, and the “jugglers” who combine part-time work with family life and who may stay involved with the church but whom she found were increasingly “taking up alternative forms of spirituality, such as yoga, reiki or healing groups”. It was this latter comment which generated the wild headline in the press!

SOURCES: Article “Why women don't go to church any more” in the *Church Times* 22nd August 2008, and the paper mentioned which is in Vol 15, No 3, 2008.

THESE MAY BE HELPFUL

Books and reports received

The Ties that Bind Us, Strengthening the extended family in 21st century Britain, Michael Clark, Relationships Foundation, 2008.

The Triple Test, Integrating economic, environmental and social policy, Paul Shepanski et al, Relationships Foundation, January 2009.

Rescuing Darwin, God and evolution in Britain today, Nick Spencer and Denis Alexander, Theos, 2009.

TellUs3 National Report, Survey of children and young people in Years 6, 8 and 10 in England, Ofsted, September 2008.

Bible Reading Survey, Congregation of St John's and Emmanuel, Mayford, September 2008

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

“In Britain, after [George Beverly Shea had sung] the solo ‘It took a miracle to hang the world in space,’ a complaint was lodged about the arrogance of the singer who had claimed that “It took America to hang the world in space”!

SOURCE: Article by Richard Bewes on the 100th birthday of George Shea in the *Church of England Newspaper*, 6th February 2009.

It is estimated that in one year a golfer walks 900 miles and will drink 22 gallons of alcohol. Pretty good going really – 41 miles per gallon!

SOURCE: Bryan Moor, Dumfries & Galloway.

Two statisticians, both with three children, were talking to each other.

“What do you feel is the ideal number of children to have?”

“I would say an even number – not exceeding the number of parents!”

FutureFirst is a bimonthly bulletin for those concerned with the future of the church published by Brierley Consultancy. Editorial board: Alan Rogers, Rosemary Dowsett, Dr Peter Brierley. The acceptance and publication of copy does not indicate editorial endorsement. Readers are welcome to quote items provided they give the source. *FutureFirst* is pleased to accept advertising or loose inserts. Established 2009. Subscriptions £18 per annum; make cheque out to ‘Peter Brierley’, and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: peter@brierleyres.com ☎ 01732 369 303 ISSN 2040-0268



Providing Facts for Forward Planning

SNIPPETS

1) More than half the population live more than half an hour's drive from their children.

2) The number of text messages sent and received *each day* exceeds the population of the planet.

3) India has more honours children than America has children (25% of India's population have high IQs).

4) Biggest risk that managers say they have: electronic attack (so said 56% of managers in a survey).

5) The UK has 334 airports with paved runways.

6) In 20 years half of all the clergy will be women.

7) A Jehovah's Witness's evangeliser “faces a 95% chance of failing to convert any strangers in any given year”.

SOURCES: 1) Michael Clarke, Relationships Foundation, January 2009; 2) and 3) Sony video “Do you know?”, June 2008, www.releaseplatform.com; 4) Survey by the Chartered Management Institute, reported in *Professional Manager*, Volume 18, Issue 2, March 2009, Page 13; 5) *The Daily Telegraph*, www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/dls play; 6) *The Church Times*, 24th August 2007; and 7) *Religion Watch*, Volume 24, Number 2, Jan-Feb 2009, Page 3.

CONTENTS

Baptists go back to church	P1
Indicators of poverty	P2
Going to church at Christmas	P2
Age of appointment	P2
Snowflakes	P4
Going to church can make you happy	P4
Book Review	P5
Reflections	P5
Models of churches	P5
The Church Worldwide	P6
“Worshippers become Witches”?	P6

Baptists go Back to Church

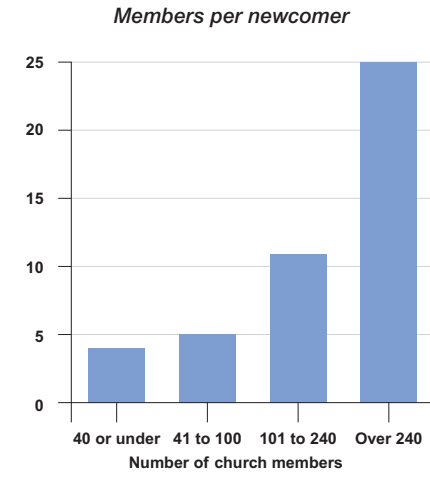
by Rev Ian Bunce, Head of Mission Department, Baptist Union of Great Britain

September 28th 2008 saw 450 of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's 2,000 churches taking part in “Back to Church Sunday”. The members of these churches were encouraged to invite someone they cared about to something they loved. If there was a patron saint of “Back to Church Sunday”, it would be Andrew; it was he who encouraged others to “Come and see Jesus”.

“Back to Church Sunday” began in the Diocese of Manchester and over the past few years has covered most Anglican Dioceses and gone ecumenical. The Baptist Union (BU) was the first main denomination to join the Anglicans in this initiative after a trial with one Association in 2007. Under the VIP logo, the initiative saw 30,000 new people come to church. The BU's own analyses, based on 167 returns from churches that took part, saw 6,000 invited people arrive at church that Sunday. The survey has highlighted some interesting variations based on both church size and geographical location.

Size of church

It has been said that “evangelistic activities are often more effective in the smaller churches”. The analysis does not contradict this finding. The smaller churches (up to 40 members) had a return rate of about one newcomer for 4 members (25%) while the largest churches (over 240 members) saw one newcomer for every 25 members (4%). The biggest change was between the medium-size churches (101 to 240) with one newcomer for every 11 members and the largest churches. It was interesting to note that the actual number of newcomers was often about the same whatever the size of the church – the largest churches had the same number come for the first time as many of the smallest churches.



Geographic location

The take up of the initiative varied from Association to Association. The lowest take up was from the North West where the initiative had been piloted, with many

churches repeating the project but not registering centrally. The highest participation was by the South West Association where more than 30% took part. Overall more than a fifth, 22%, of churches participated.

There were great geographic variations as to the number of newcomers. Interestingly the reporting churches in the North West saw the fewest number; this could be because this is the second year that churches in that Association have taken part. The Northern Association, whilst a relatively small sample, saw the largest number.

Impact

The Diocese of Lichfield has done some extensive research as to whether the newcomers stay: the general outcome was that about 25% of newcomers were still in church after 6 months. If the BU has been able to achieve the same result it will have seen a growth of 1,500 new people from this one initiative. Some churches made huge gains from “Back to Church