



## REFLECTIONS

He had incredible hands – and incredible tenderness. Outside was a critical crowd, inside grief-stricken parents, three dazed disciples and a 12-year old lifeless girl. A young girl, nearing marriageable age, was by convention not touched by any man outside her family except her (future) husband. Dead people of any age or gender were not touched because the toucher became defiled and made unclean thereby (Lev 21:1; Num 19:11). Jesus walks into the room, unhesitatingly takes her by the hand, raises the daughter of Jairus to life and asks the parents to give her a meal.

Not made unclean? Shortly before, a woman in the crowd had touched him. She, too, was unclean (Lev 15:25) and normally when the unclean touched the clean, the clean was defiled (Lev 22:6). Not with Jesus; a different law operates here. The Holy One sanctifies the unholy.

Not long before that, Jesus was going into the town of Nain where he met a sad party coming out of the town gates en route to a burial. He touches the bier (Lk 7:14), the bearers stand still and He raises the young man on it to life. Likewise Jesus touches a man with leprosy (Lk 5:13), lays His hands on those with varying kinds of diseases (Lk 4:40), takes the hand of Peter's mother-in-law when she was feverish (Matt 8:15), strokes the eyes of two blind men to restore their sight (Matt 9:29), and places His hands on a woman crippled for 18 years to heal her (Lk 13:13). These hands, literally “the fingers of God” (Lk 11:20), transmitted power but also visibly showed a heart of tender, loving caring.

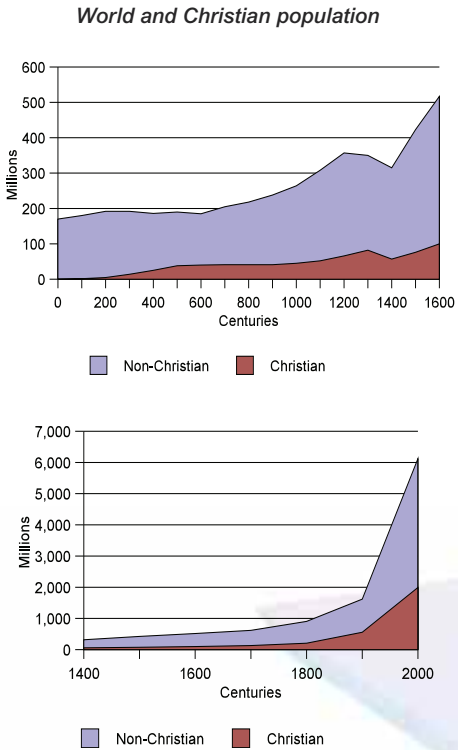
His touch was recognised as something special. Parents deliberately brought their children to Jesus, “that He might touch them” (Lk 18:15). These hands transmitted blessing. His touch gave instant healing as when He restored the ear of the High Priest's servant cut off at the time of His arrest (Lk 22:51). These hands multiplied two fish and five loaves into a meal for 5,000 people (Matt 14:19).

His hands were special in other ways also. Deliberately on entering Jerusalem, Jesus sat on a colt which had never been ridden before (Lk 19:30), but He instantly rode it and, amid a cheering crowd (likely to frighten an unbroken colt), rode it all the way into Jerusalem. An experienced jockey exclaimed, “He must have had extraordinary hands to control a colt like that.” Those hands transmitted calm.

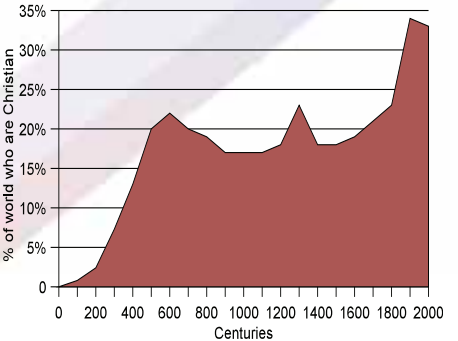
Jesus' hands are wonderful hands, but are marked with a hole in each of them, which Thomas was invited to touch (John 20:27). His hands may be scarred for eternity out of love but they are strong enough to hold the seven stars (Rev 2:1) and to open the seven seals of the Book of Life (Rev 6:1, 3 etc.). Incredible hands, whose Owner still touches our lives in tenderness, love, healing, power, peace and authority today.

## World Population

Christians have been a significant part of world history ever since Jesus started His ministry. The following charts, derived from the numbers in *The Future of the Global Church*, show the size of the world population and the number who were Christian at the start of each century.



These charts have different scales for the vertical and horizontal axes. The fall in population in the 14th century reflects the ravages of the Black Death, which affected the Christian population also. The Christian figures include millions who just called themselves Christian, but the dramatic growth in the 19th century reflects the wider response of the church to the Great Commission facilitated by progress in mobilisation and communication.



The third chart shows the increasing (and decreasing) percentage of the world's population who said they are Christian. The peak in the 13th century reflects a recovery of previous decline in western Asia and some Catholic expansion into China and Korea, all hit by massive persecution under Emperor Timur as he sought to establish the Muslim Mongol Empire in the following century, killing in the process about 5% of the world's population, 17 million people (and many Christians). Today, 2012, the Christian percentage of the world's population is marginally less at 33% than at its highest point (34%) in 1900.

**SOURCE:** *The Future of the Global Church*, Patrick Johnstone, WEC and Authentic, 2011, Section 2; relevant web-sites. If any reader would like the actual figures on which these charts are based, please just ask.

## ATHEISM ON THE MOVE?

WIN-Gallup International is an American-based organisation which is a network of survey agencies. Recently it issued the results of an international study of atheism, showing that in 2012 7% of the entire world population claim to be atheists, up from 4% in 2005. While that rise in atheism may be correct, it may also reflect a greater willingness of people to call themselves "Atheists." In 2009 a Pew survey found that 5% of Americans did not believe in God but only a quarter of these called themselves atheists. Perhaps more would now.

There is now an informal movement known as "New Atheism," encouraged in part by the activities of Richard Dawkins and others attacking Christianity publicly. Mr Dawkins especially encourages people to declare their disbelief, as witness their bus advert campaign in the UK last year.

Atheism is getting a greater public airing in the United States than it used to. Democratic convention-goers in the States were greeted by a group called American Atheists who claimed that Christianity "promotes hate" and exalts a "useless saviour." Most American religious trends come to the UK after a few years, and especially this one as Prof Dawkins is a British biologist. Apparently the organisation tried attacking Mormonism for the Republican convention but no-one would sell them advertising space.

The Gallup survey is based on the results of interviewing 57,000 people across 50 countries in the world. The percentage of atheists, 7%, is much greater than the 2% recorded in the World Religion Database (WRD) housed at Gordon-Conwell University. But the WRD also puts Agnostics at 9%, so the Gallup figures may be a part-combination of the two.

There is, however, a key difference in these two measurements. The Gallup Poll says atheism is increasing as a percentage of the world population, while the WRD say it is decreasing. The WRD database is based on far more than 57,000 people and comes essentially from the population censuses around the world. It also seeks to measure the strength of every religion and annually publishes figures for the number of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jews, etc.

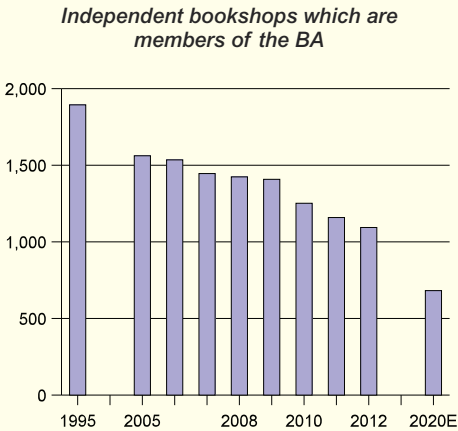
Gallup Poll's president, Jean-Marc Leger, seemed surprised at the result. In Gallup's press release, he is recorded as saying, "Despite the immense impact of technology and an emphasis on worldly affairs, the 21st century overwhelmingly espouses a religious faith and atheism is in a minority." Gallup found that 59% of the world's population claimed to be religious. Gallup also said that no religious data existed with which to compare it! *The World Christian Encyclopedia*, on which the WRD is based, was first published in 1982, giving very firm information world-wide for 1970, subsequently updated for 1995.

So is this new survey a worry for British Christians? Not really, as the figures revealed are roughly what we have in the UK. Is their trend important? It could be, but it needs to be confirmed by more measurements, presumably in 2015 or 2020. Is the growth of Atheism a concern for British Christians? It certainly must be, as more and more people are swayed by such as Richard Dawkins and "blinded by the god of this world."

**SOURCES:** Articles in *The Economist*, 25th August 2012 and the *Church of England Newspaper* 19th August 2012.

## Bookshops and Reading

While the four big bookshop chains, W H Smith's, Waterstone's, Foyles and Blackwell's, may be surviving and supermarket sales increasing, independent bookshops are finding it more and more difficult to stay viable. This includes Christian bookshops. Buying though Amazon or other web sources, buying and reading e-books on Kindle or other iPads, all mean that fewer shops are able to remain profitable and open. The trend in the number of independent shops belonging to the Booksellers' Association (BA), shown in the chart, tells its own story.



The loss of independent bookshops, however, will be felt by half, 46%, of the public who buy some books from them. However, two-thirds of book-buyers, 64%, say they get their books from Waterstone's, two-fifths, 42% from supermarkets, and another two-fifths, 37%, from W H Smith. Five shoppers in six, 83%, though, buy their books from Amazon or other internet sources. All these percentages are higher for British people as opposed to immigrant book-buyers.

## TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

A survey by the University of Cambridge found two-fifths, 38%, of teenagers (10 to 18) saying they sometimes feel "overwhelmed" by the impact of modern communication technology and wanting to escape from it. A third, 34%, of those aged 25 to 34 felt the same. A quarter of respondents, 24%, feel this technology can distract them from personal relationships, since, despite the plethora of communication tools, most people still prefer to communicate face-to-face.

On the other hand, this survey of UK mobile technology elicited the following responses:

82%	Makes me feel safe and secure knowing I can easily get help if I need it
76%	Makes day-to-day life in the UK safer
62%	It's easier to be away from the family
61%	Gives me access to a larger group of potential customers
50%	Distracts me when my children are ready to play with me

Which aspects of mobile technology are most used? In the UK, 53% say text messaging, 40% say having a mobile internet, 35% a built-in camera, and 33% a GPS navigation system. Is such technology essential? Only a sixth of those in Britain, 17%, say it is, the lowest percentage out of the US (18%), S Korea (24%), Brazil (37%), China (46%) and India (57%). Virtually everyone uses their mobile for phone calls, but the UK is the

Another part of the picture in the decreasing number of bookshops is the number of people who have reading difficulties or who are just not interested in reading. 5% of the English population in 2010 could barely read headlines (up from 3% in 2003), and a further 10% have a literacy level below that of an average 11-year-old. One-sixth of adults between 16 and 65 in the UK, virtually 7 million people, have difficulty reading. How many of these might go to church? The number is not known, but probably only a very small proportion. Reading skills are almost an integral part of Christian activities. Even so, there will probably be some people in church on a Sunday who can't read the words on the screen, or the Scriptures, or on the weekly newsheet, because they have difficulty in reading.

The National Literary Trust (NLT) in its annual survey of some 21,000 children aged 8 to 16 found that 38% of children read in their spare time when the survey was first undertaken in 2005. This dropped to 32% in 2009 and 31% in 2011. More than half of children, 54%, however, preferred watching television to reading. Computer games were also very popular. If children do read books, half, 48%, read fiction. The decline in reading is due to poor attention spans, it has been suggested. It has been found that reading outside lessons and academic achievement are linked.

It is not just book reading which is declining. 78% of children read magazines in 2005; 57% do so now. 51% read comics in 2005; 28% read them in 2011. The NLT survey also found one child in 6 was too embarrassed to read in front of their friends in case they were labelled a "geek," defined by Wikipedia as an "odd or non-mainstream" person. Some of these children may be churchgoers. Does this mean that fewer will read, say, the Narnia series in days to come? More importantly, how can we best help non-readers to know, understand and love the scriptures?

**SOURCES:** Article in the *Daily Telegraph*, 7th September, 2012; articles in *The Bookseller*, 26th November, 2010, Page 18, and 15th June 2012.

smallest user of these countries for sending or receiving emails, even if half of them do so (46%). UK owners also use them least for games, though still a quarter (28%) do so.

What are the implications of mobiles for building relationships? A sixth, 17%, of respondents said they will check their phone at every meal time regardless of whom they are dining with. Two-thirds, 68%, of owners put their mobile next to their bed at night, and only 13% put it in another room. Some church youth leaders keep regularly in touch with church youngsters through sending text messages while they are at school, encouraging them in their daily walk with God.

A third of UK owners, 34%, use their mobile while playing with their children, 35% when attending a party, half, 53%, when using public transport or watching TV (57%). A quarter use it when eating in a restaurant (26%). Over a quarter, 28%, say their mobile sometimes comes between them and their spouse. One is reminded of the comment by Diana, Princess of Wales, when her marriage failed, "There was always a third person present." Does the unseen interrupter threaten our conversations, our concentration and our commitment?

Three-quarters, 77%, of those in Britain feel it is good for children to learn about technology at an early age, while a quarter, 23%, says it's a distraction from studies and other responsibilities. Yet two-thirds, 65%, of parents believe such devices make them better parents, and feel a child should own a mobile when they are 13 years old.

Those in the UK use their mobile for work purposes less than people in other countries. One in eight,

## SNOWFLAKES

**Age of earth uncertain.** A survey of American ministers found 82% agreeing that Adam and Eve were literal people; just half, 52%, believing the earth was about 6,000 years old, and only 25% agreeing that God used evolution to create people. Fewer College graduates believed in a young earth, but younger ministers were more likely to do so.

**SOURCE:** Article in *Answers Magazine*, April/June 2012.

**Parenting keeps men happy.** A psychologist at the University of California analysing the World Values Survey found that parents had higher happiness, satisfaction and meaning-of-life scores than non-parents. She decided to test this with a survey of her own and it produced the same results. Parents are more emotionally positive than non-parents, especially fathers, and this came through activities which involved them with their children.

**SOURCE:** Article in *The Economist*, 19th May, 2012, Page 75.

**Ethical guidance and abortion.** The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes asked first from where people obtained their ethical guidance and then whether there was anything wrong in abortion if there was a defect in the baby. Those saying it was not at all wrong got their ethical guidance from:

- 70% Whatever contributes most to the community
- 68% Whatever is fairest to all people
- 65% Whatever does least harm to people
- 64% Whatever best protects people's rights
- 59% The laws of society
- 58% Whatever contributes most to enjoyment
- 21% Teaching of their religious organisation
- 15% The Scriptures.

Australians get their ethical guidance from looking at the consequences of their actions – unless they are Christian.

**SOURCE:** Article in *Pointers*, Christian Research Association, Vol 22 No 1, March 2012, Page 20.



12%, said they work remotely more often, but globally 25% of respondents said they did this. Britain had the largest percentage saying they didn't know if their mobile made their country more efficient in doing business, but a quarter, 26%, said they felt guilty if they didn't promptly respond to a work-related message outside normal work hours.

Clearly technology is here to stay, while our present civilisation lasts, and for most people it enhances their lives and the way they live. Most of us depend upon it. However, the heart of Christianity is a relationship, upon which we model our relationships with others. Does our technology help deepen those relationships or hinder them? While the technology itself may be neutral, its usage can either be positive or negative for the Kingdom of God.

**SOURCES:** Article in *Time*, 27th August, 2012, Page 38; *Kingsway International Christian Church*; *FamiliesFirst*, July/August, 2012.

**Fresh Expressions analysed.** There are many different types of Fresh Expressions, but little analysis has been undertaken of these types. The Church Army Sheffield Centre looked at all those started in the Liverpool Diocese, some 78 since 1992, and analysed them as follows:

- 13% Messy Church
- 36% Major focus on children
- 63% All-Age, which includes the previous group
- 21% Adults only
- 8% For those shut in because of infirmity or old age

That this list adds to more than 100% simply re-inforces how difficult it is to be precise as to what a Fresh Expression actually is. Half, 53%, met weekly, 12% met fortnightly and 35% met monthly. Average attendance was 37 people, 22 adults and 15 children. Two-fifths were non-churched people, a third were de-churched, and a quarter were Christians (including the initiating team of mostly between 3 and 13 people). Numbers tended to grow to their current level fairly quickly and then plateaued. Two-fifths, 39%, met in a church, a quarter, 23%, in a church hall, and the remaining 37% in a secular venue. Most, 86%, met within their existing parish, and for 90% support came from the initiating parish.

**SOURCE:** *TSC Research Bulletin*, George Lings, Church Army Sheffield Centre, Summer 2012.

**Sunday Shopping.** Whatever the decision the Government will make on whether to keep the extended Sunday trading hours initially introduced just for the Olympic Games period, opinions by shoppers vary. A YouGov poll found 45% of shoppers would like longer Sunday hours, while 16% said they would like shops closed altogether. An earlier poll for *The People*, found that 35% thought Sunday should still be a day of rest, with 20% saying no Sunday shopping, but 48% said they would like to shop more. Being able to spend more time with the family was the key reason why people disliked the thought of extending the Sunday trading hours.

**SOURCES:** Article by Nigel Nelson in the *Church of England Newspaper*, 2nd March, 2012; report in the *Daily Telegraph*, 7th September, 2012, Page 2.

**Colour of hair.** A curious finding from a 2007 survey has been republished. It looked at the colour of the hair of the chief executive of the top FTSE 500 companies and found that CEOs were more likely to have black and less likely to have blond hair than in the population generally, as

the Table shows. What colour hair do church ministers have?!

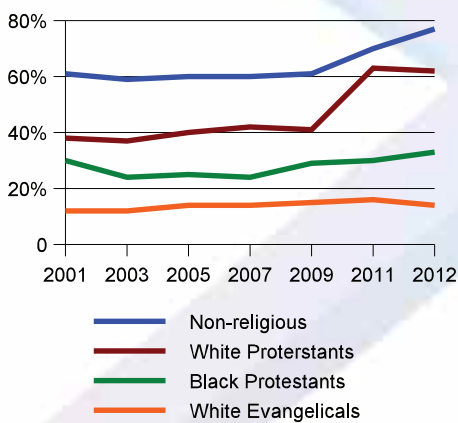
Colour	CEOs %	Population %
Black	22	6
Blond	5	25
Brown	69	68
Red	4	1

**SOURCE:** *Professional Manager*, Sept/Oct 2012, Page 36.

**Employment worldwide.** A study of employment in 2010 in three-fifths of the world's countries, but unfortunately omitting India and most of Africa, found that two-thirds (65%) of the population were in the labour force. Of these 40% worked full-time, 31% were self-employed, 12% worked part-time but wanted a full-time job, a further 10% worked part-time but didn't want a full-time job, and 7% were unemployed. The biggest employer was the United States Dept of Defence (3.2m), followed by the Chinese Army (2.3m), then came Walmart (2.1m) and MacDonald's (1.7m). The fifth and sixth were Chinese energy companies, but seventh was the English NHS with 1.4 million employees in 2010.

**SOURCE:** *The Economist*, Special Report, 10th September, 2011.

**Same-sex marriages.** White Protestants are swinging in favour of same-sex marriage in America, a Pew Research Center survey has found. The trend in the graph is very clear; Catholics were very similar to "White Protestants" and are not shown separately. Black churchgoers and evangelicals are much less favourable (33% and 14% in 2012 respectively).



**SOURCE:** Article in the *Church Times*, 18th May, 2012, Page 9.

## TWO GENERATIONS

An interesting survey was undertaken by the secular research company Opinion Matters earlier this year on behalf of the Sleep Council. It compared the habits of grandparents and their grandchildren aged 7 to 14 in terms of evening activities.

Comparing grandparents and grandchildren aged 7-14		
Activity	Grandchildren	Grandparents
Play outside during the day	30 minutes	3 hours
Going to bed	20% 8 to 8.30pm	24% 7 to 7.30pm
Before bedtime	30% read a book	54% read a book
Before bedtime	58% watch television	50% watch television
TV in bedroom	63%	34%
Ate dinner	38% before 6.00pm	70% before 6.00pm
	51% between 6 and 7.30pm	

This shows younger people stay inside much more today (thus getting less exercise), eat later, go to bed later, and watch TV rather than read books. The Sleep Council said this was detrimental in getting a good night's sleep. Church leaders might ask, "What does this mean in terms of imbibing a societal cultural worldview?"

**SOURCE:** Article "The Modern children who sleep less" in the *Daily Telegraph*, 28th August 2012.

**P4:FUTUREFIRST|1012**

**Correction.** We apologise in making Mitt Romney a Democrat in our article "Voting for a President" in the August issue. He is very definitely a Republican!

*Continued from page 1*

them out into missions or to plant new churches. The specific need most frequently cited was for "training" (for example, for children's work, nurture groups, outreach, etc.). The need for "people" and "mentors" was also recognized. Several ministers weren't sure where to start, although they recognized the need for more lay people to assume leadership roles.

**Missions and Evangelism.** A few churches shared that they were not involved in local or foreign missions. Some stated that they felt they should start something but didn't know what, or were waiting for the Holy Spirit to bring the need to them. Many, however, were quite involved locally, offering activities such as parent/toddler groups, youth clubs, Harvest services, Christingle services, Brownies, etc., as well as in local outreach, such as to the homeless.

• Evangelism was nearly exclusively carried out through the development of community activities.

• There was little mention of training church members in evangelism.

A considerable number of churches were involved in overseas missions, especially in Asia and Africa.

**Prayer Ministries.** More than half of the respondents stated "No" or "I don't know" when asked how their church develops its prayer ministries. One interviewee said they didn't have enough corporate time for prayer. Another stated they didn't want to "get stuck in a prayer rut." Many did appear to see this as a failing. They stated they would like to see more prayer in their churches and wanted to develop this area throughout church life. They expressed openness to new, fresh ideas. Some of the prayer ministries in current use included prayer meetings on weekdays, prayer prior to worship services, once-a-month prayer times on Saturday mornings, prayer retreats, and annual 24/7 prayer campaigns. A higher level of commitment to prayer appeared to be characteristic of the older churches.

**Youth Ministry.** Assistance with youth ministry was the most frequently identified need. A third, 30%, of all interviewees reported they were currently seeking a youth minister for their church. Many churches lamented that they didn't have a youth programme in place at this time. Ministers who did not currently have youth, nor active ministry for youth in their churches, still felt the need for a youth minister, presumably to help change that reality. Few churches reported offering specific training for lay people to work with their youth.

### Conclusions

The interviews revealed needs that are not being adequately met in the churches. These included means for creating greater relevant contact with the community, raising up and training lay leaders, developing effective youth engagement, and discipling new believers. Many church leaders expressed contentment with their current ministries while simultaneously expressing a desire for assistance.

The primary focus of this article was to give voice to opinions regarding numerical and spiritual growth. The desire for growth seems strong. However, there appears to be uncertainty as to how to get there.

This article is an extract from a longer research report. For more details contact authors on [larrykraft@oci.org](mailto:larrykraft@oci.org).



## C of E forecast to shrink: “Will you not revive us again?”

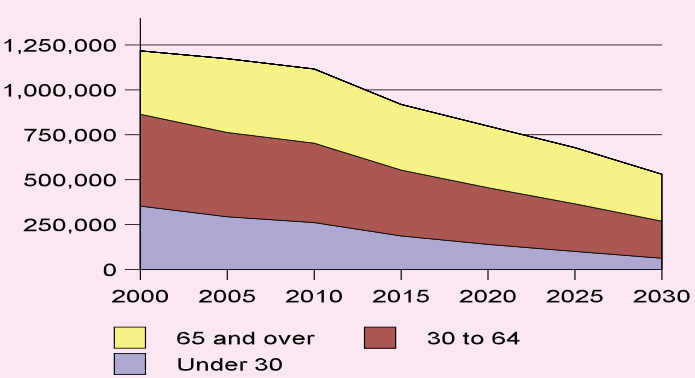
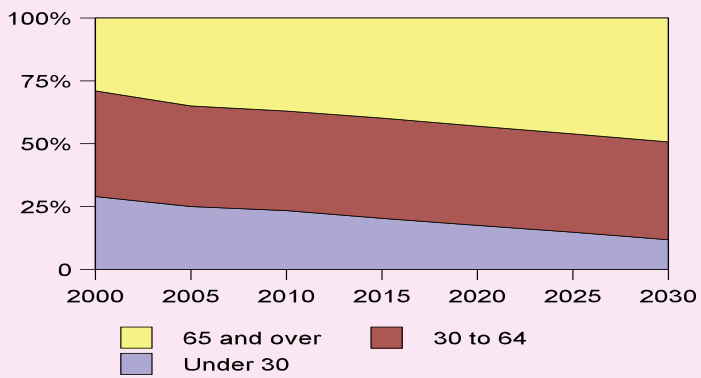


The Rev Dr Patrick Richmond, speaking at the Church of England's General Synod in York in July 2011, claimed that the average age of an adult attender “is 61 now, with many congregations above that.” *The Daily Telegraph* reported this under the headline, “Church of England will be dead in 20 years.” The Research and Statistics' Department of the C of E quickly challenged the figure of 61, saying it was too high.

That the C of E has an “ageing” problem has been well known for some time. The 2005 English Church Census (ECC) found that 35% of all attenders (not just adults) was 65 or over, and that the average age for attending Anglican adults was 58 then (which projects to 59 in 2010). After the York 2011 Synod, the C of E rightly deemed it important to ascertain whether the problem was as serious as suggested, and actuarial advice was sought. Actuaries frequently require information broken down by age-group, but the C of E does not usually collect such data, so some of the information from the 2005 ECC was used instead. The outcome of these investigations was given at the July 2012 General Synod, also in York.



Average weekly attendance in the Church of England, 2000 to 2030, percentage and actual



In the Church Commissioners' annual report given at this General Synod, the First Church Estates' Commissioner, Andreas Chittam Smith, reported on the church's investments which had had a difficult year. He then turned to the demographics of congregations and said that, assuming the recent declines in younger people continued, the number of worshippers "would fall from 1.2 million in 2007, to half a million in 2030, and 125,000 in 2057." He then described the actions the Commissioners had taken to ascertain the factors associated with church growth, obviously to see if these projections could be revised upwards in the future.

The 1.2 million figure mentioned is that of the Average Weekly Attendance in the C of E, that is, Sunday attendance plus those coming during the week, which does not differentiate between those coming on a Sunday as well as coming in the week. A drop from that 1.2 million to a tenth of that figure (125,000), means an almost 90% decline in overall attendance in the 45 years between 2012 and 2057! That is a horrific rate of decline, but a scenario put forward by a senior Church of England figure, and highlighted by the Bishop of Manchester, Nigel McCulloch, when he said, writing in the September issue of his Diocesan magazine *Crux*, "alarming recent projections ... suggest that unless we start growing our congregations at 3% each year, we will decline into near oblivion."

The detailed ages of weekly attenders are not known, but the age of Sunday attenders by age-group has been known from the various English Church Censuses for over 25 years and can be projected forward fairly robustly. If the weekly attendance follows the age pattern of Sunday attendance (and it might not), then the first chart shows the changing percentages in attendance by age since 2000, and the large expected increase in the proportion who are 65 or over. While this increase broadly follows the ageing trend of the general British population, the percentage who are 65 or over in the Church of England is at least double that in the population as a whole.

The second chart translates these percentages into actual numbers. It shows that the number attending church who are 65 or over drops only a quarter in these 30 years while the number under 30 declines more than 80%. In 2000, Sunday attendance was 79% of the total of Sunday and weekly attendance. That percentage dropped to 75% in 2005 and to 73% in 2010. It is likely to continue to decrease as more and more people seem

to prefer attending church on a weekday, and by 2030 it could be that just 60% are attending on a Sunday. That would mean about 300,000 people attending C of E churches on Sundays.

If the statistical implications of Mr Chittam Smith's forecast are calculated, it would mean not only that by 2030 average weekly attendance would have dropped to 500,000, but also that the number of larger C of E churches (attendance over 300) in England would have probably declined from about 200 to 100, some Cathedrals might need to have been "decommissioned," perhaps 9,000 of the current 16,000 churches will have closed as "unviable", with large numbers therefore of redundant church buildings, half the 8 Theological Colleges will have had to close, several (many?) Dioceses merged, the numbers of Bishops reduced, and so on, unless God revives His work again.

Unfortunately, Mr Chittam Smith's projections to 2057 make the above scenario even worse. He took pains to make the point, however, that if young adults can be encouraged back into the church (and a rate of increase of 3% per annum was assumed in their calculations) then the decline would be arrested by about 2040 – numbers continuing to decline till then because of the deaths of so many elderly people. How far, though, would the closures of churches, Theological Colleges and Dioceses by then be irreversible?

These figures are huge challenges for the Church of England, requiring clear strategic thinking to work through their consequences and the courage to take perhaps risky actions in an attempt to reverse them. The Church of England is not alone in facing such problems, although it is the largest; other major denominations such as the Church of Scotland, the Methodists and the Roman Catholic Church have similar issues ahead as well.

Do we take the situation as a cause of despair or turn it into urgent prayer? Do we look at these statistics and accept their interpretation as an inevitable forecast of what will happen or cry out to God in repentance for mercy, healing and renewal? MUST this happen? While goals, programmes and action are vital, undergirding such must be our response to God's word, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, and seek my face ... then I will hear from heaven" (2 Chron 7:14).

**SOURCES:** Article *Church Times*, General Synod Supplement, 13th July 2012, Page 8; *Church Statistics*, 2010/11, Archbishops' Council, 2012; *Religious Trends* No 6, 2006/2007, Christian Research, Table 5.6.2; UK *Church Statistics* 2005-2015, ADBC Publishers, 2011; article *Church of England Newspaper*, 2nd September 2012, Page 2.

## RELIGIOUS v SPIRITUAL

What is the difference between being religious and being spiritual? Are people “either/or” or can they be “both at once”? While some religious people might also describe themselves as spiritual, would some spiritual people also describe themselves as religious?

A possible definition of the terms could define “religious people” as submitting to and adhering to the authority and practice of any established religion/set of religious beliefs. “Spiritual people” on the other hand could be defined as experiencing, or being aware of, either within or without an established religion, a reality beyond the physical, mental and tangible. Professor Steve Bruce of Aberdeen University suggests in his book *Secularization* that spirituality has three features: a belief in some sort of supernatural force or entity, a perception that being spiritual changes how one sees and feels about the world, and an ethical dimension that being aware of our spiritual nature should make us better people.

In a recent American academic paper, such a distinction was not defined which may, for some, make the figures given in the Table below (to which UK figures have been added) lacking in meaning and significance.

Germany		Spiritual?		
		YES	NO	Total
Religious?	YES	10%	31%	41%
	NO	11%	48%	59%
Total		21%	79%	100%

United States		Spiritual?		
		YES	NO	Total
Religious?	YES	41%	23%	64%
	NO	24%	12%	36%
Total		65%	35%	100%

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

Attempts to interpret these results may not always be valid. For example, in Germany the “religious” percentages are much higher if a specific religious

event has occurred in a person's life, such as a “conversion experience,” perhaps baptism or confirmation, becoming a church member, taking first communion. This would result in the top line 10% and 31% of the Table becoming 25% and 42%, and the second line, 11% and 48% becoming 12% and 21%.

In the United States, such a situation seems rarer. In other words, the “religious” percentage (which is higher than in Germany) is not significantly increased by a specific religious event in a person's life. On the other hand, those describing themselves as spiritual may become disaffected and consequently the percentage is decreased by some kind of active disaffiliation.

Such disaffiliation seems more common in the United States than elsewhere, according to another piece of academic research. Nearly half, 44%, of those who have “deconverted from Christianity” said it was because of “interpersonal dissatisfaction” which is academic-speak for people saying that God did not help them in times of trouble. Rather more, 84%, said they left the church because they were “frustrated by Christian beliefs” or not getting honest answers to difficult questions. Very few ex-Christians were drawn away from Christianity by non-Christian friends or relationships.

The dissatisfaction is probably age-related also. Three times more Americans in their 20s than in their 60s feel that religion in American life is less important now than 5 years ago.

While detailed explanations are lacking for the UK figures, those given are closer to Germany than to the US. It could therefore be inferred, perhaps, though some might regard this as a sweeping generalisation, that a number of Europeans become “religious” through a specific event even though they have had a childhood without faith, while Americans may lose their childhood faith, in which they have been brought up, as they grow older. However, until such terms have a clearer definition, and wider research has been carried out, such implications can only, at best, be regarded as tenuous.

**SOURCES:** Article “Spirituality” as Privatized Experience-Oriented Religion” by Heinz Streib and Ralph Wood, in *Implicit Religion* Vol 14 No 4, 2011, Page 440; summary report of “Christianity and the University Experience,” 16th February 2011; *Secularisation*, Prof Steve Bruce, OUP 2011, Page 103; article in *Church Times*, 20th Mar, 2011, Page 13; *Religion Watch*, March/April, 2012, Page 5.

## Good parents

Rev Nick and Lucy Crawley currently lead a church in Bristol called Crossnet, a successful Fresh Expression type church. They both feel discipling is incredibly important and have written on how that makes for wise parenting. They would say good parents:

- Prepare their children to leave home
- Strike a balance between control and freedom
- Prepare children to take responsibility, to make good decisions of their own, and to form healthy relationships
- Give children the freedom to fail
- Adapt to the different phases of a child growing up
- Delight in their children's differences (from themselves and from their siblings)
- Impart values by teaching them and modelling them
- Act as guides and friends throughout a child's life
- Depend on their grown-up children when they need to in exercising humility and modelling teachability.

**SOURCE:** *Encounters on the Edge*, No 53 Crossnet, George Lings, Church Army, February 2012.

*FutureFirst* is a bimonthly bulletin for those concerned with the future of the church published by Brierley Consultancy. Editorial board: Rosemary Dowsett, Anne Coomes and Peter Brierley. The acceptance and publication of copy does not indicate editorial endorsement. Readers are welcome to quote items provided they give the source.

Established 2009. UK subscriptions £20 per annum; overseas £32 per annum. Make cheque out to ‘Peter Brierley’, or contact for BACS details and send to Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PW. Email: peter@brierleyres.com www.brierleyconsultancy.com

☎ 01732 369 303

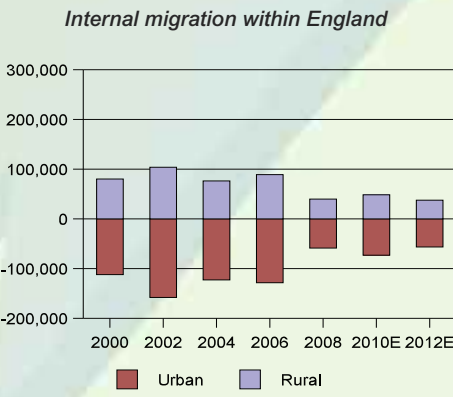
ISSN 2040-0268

## Greenshifting declines

Between 2000 and 2004, 352,000 people moved from urban living to “remoter” rural living, according to the Countryside Agency. Younger people able to earn their living via the web were as likely to move as older people. Some of those who moved were Christians and joined in the life of their new local church. The extent to which this happened was such that some rural areas saw the numbers attending church grow, like Ryedale in North Yorkshire, where church attendance increased 3% between 1998 and 2005. Ryedale has good commuter links with the city of York and this probably helped.

Such was the number of young families which thus “greenshifted,” as this phenomenon is sometimes called, that the percentage of children under 11 attending church was higher in remoter rural areas in 2005 in England than in any other kind of environment.

Figures for internal migration from the relevant Government department confirm this rural movement, but in the last few years these numbers have decreased, partly because of economic reasons, as the chart shows.



**SOURCE:** Pulling out of the Nosedive, Christian Research, 2006, Pages 81,82; Statistical Digest of Rural England, Dept for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Government Statistical Service, June 2012, Page 12.

## Humour

A doctor was addressing a large audience in Tampa. “The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here years ago. Red meat is awful. Soft drinks corrode your stomach lining. Chinese food is loaded with MSG. High fat diets can be disastrous. And none of us realizes the long-term harm caused by the germs in our drinking water. However, there is one thing that is the most dangerous of all. Can anyone here tell me what food it is that causes the most grief and suffering for years after eating it?”

After several seconds of quiet, a 75-year-old man in the front row raised his hand and softly said, “Wedding cake.”

**SOURCE:** Email from Jim Brierley, Australia, 22nd August 2012.

## These may be helpful Books and reports received

“Teaching secondary RE at faith schools in England and Wales”, Leslie Francis and Mandy Robbins, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, Vol 32, No 2, 2011.

“Religious effect among adolescents in a multi-faith society”, Andrew Village et al, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, Vol 32, No 3, 2011.



## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

### SNIPPETS

1) There are just four round churches in England: Temple Church in London built by the Knights Templar in 1185, the Holy Sepulchre Churches in Cambridge and Northampton, and at Little Maplestead in Essex, the latter 3 probably built about 50 years earlier.

2) Almost two-thirds (64%) of British people could not identify Matthew as the first book in the New Testament when shown a list of four names.

3) A quarter of the working population between 30 and 60 worked an average of 7 hours unpaid overtime every week in 2011.

4) Amazon has 75% of the market share in the UK for e-books, and 63% of that in the USA.

5) There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand in the Sahara Desert.

6) The three richest people in the world own more assets than the 600 million poorest.

7) In the coming American Presidential election 30% of voters will be Christian women, representing 79% of Christian women. Only 52% of non-Christian women will vote. The respective figures for men are 20%, 76% and 60%.

**SOURCES:** 1) *I never knew that about London*, Christopher Winn, Bury Press, 2011, Page 68; 2) Survey by the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science quoted in *Plain Truth*, Spring 2012, Page 11; 3) *Third Age Matters*, Spring 2012, Page 23; 4) *The Bookseller*, 25th May 2012, Page 5; 5) *He made the Stars also* by Prof Stuart Burgess, Day One Publications, 2008; 6) Article “Called to account” in *The Tablet*, 7th July 2012, Page 5; 7) *Barna Update*, www.barna.org/culture-articles, downloaded 28th August 2012.

## Numerical and Spiritual Church Growth in Southern UK

Larry & Stephanie Kraft, OC International

What is church growth and how can it be promoted? During 2010 and 2011, the OC International-UK Research Department interviewed a representative sample of church leaders in south-eastern UK counties to understand their perspectives on growth. The goal was to discover how they perceived growth occurs and what might stimulate it. The churches were randomly chosen from the more than 1,400 in the area. Seventy-one hour-long interviews were completed over a six-month period.

Over three-quarters of the respondents were pastors, vicars, and ministers. Another 15% were lay leaders and 9% were administrative staff. The interviewees had worked an average of 7 years in their current church or parish, but some had served the same local body for nearly 30 years. The majority (79%) were male and 72% were over the age of fifty.

The cross-section of churches included all major denominations, a variety of worship styles, rural and urban, and different sizes. They varied in age from starting 1,375 years ago to one year. Different theological positions were represented, including evangelical, middle-of-the-road, liberal, traditional, Catholic and Pentecostal. The average ages of the members were higher than that of the general population, consistent with the common perception of churches in the UK at large.

The survey inquired about past growth and expectations for future growth, numerical and spiritual. Approximately 90% of those interviewed expected to see spiritual growth, and 80% expected numerical growth, over the next five years. This optimism was surprising in that the percentage that expected to see future numerical growth was much higher than that which had experienced growth in the past. A greater portion of the churches reported experiencing past spiritual growth than numerical growth.

	Numerical Growth		Spiritual Growth	
	Past	Expected	Past	Expected
Change	5 years	5 years	5 years	5 years
	%	%	%	%
Strong decline	1	0	0	0
Some decline	23	4	6	0
Static	31	15	15	3
Some growth	29	51	55	43
Strong growth	16	30	24	54

When comparing membership and attendance figures of growing churches with static or non-growing churches, a clear correlation is seen. The static churches have 26% fewer people attending than they have as members, and the churches which are growing have 6% more attendees than members. This seems to support the common assumption that one way to increase growth is simply to get more visitors from the surrounding community to come into/have contact with a church.

### CONTENTS

Numerical and Spiritual Church Growth	P1
World Population	P2
Reflections	P2
Atheism on the Move?	P2
Bookshops and Reading	P3
Technological change	P3
Snowflakes	P3
Two Generations	P4
C of E forecast to shrink	P5
Religious v Spiritual	P6
Greenshifting declines	P6
Good parents	P6

The bulk of the interviews featured open questions about a church's numerical growth, spiritual growth, leadership development, missions and evangelism, prayer, and youth ministries. The following is a summary of the most common opinions expressed:

**Numerical Growth.** The majority of the interviewees affirmed they wanted to see numerical growth. Those who sought growth often expressed this through a desire to interface with the local community and draw people into the church, either by making their buildings and worship more inviting or by getting church members involved in the community. The most frequently expressed need was for additional staff, full-time, part-time and volunteer. Needs were also expressed for more youth, prayer, community contact, evangelism and intervention/empowering by the Holy Spirit. Many ministers wished to see greater numbers in their churches and more trained people to work with them. It was noteworthy, however, that at another point in the survey, when a question was raised as to specific plans for growth, there were virtually no plans in place to effect the expected change.

**Spiritual Growth.** Apart from house groups, there was no mention of regular adult learning opportunities other than regular attendance at worship services. When asked how new believers learned the basics of the faith, the most common response was “The Alpha Course.” A few stated they had created and use their own “in-house” materials. In many cases small groups/cell groups, when they existed, provided for both discipleship of new believers as well as on-going spiritual development. There was admittedly very little offered by the churches in terms of training and empowering small group leaders to provide this for their members.

The most specifically articulated need for enhancing spiritual growth was for “leaders.” Interviewees felt they needed more, and more Biblically literate, leaders who could mentor (disciple) others, model commitment, and stimulate prayer. Not surprisingly, this was followed by the stated need for more Bible exposure including Bible study, Bible knowledge, and simply greater interest in the Bible.

**Leadership development.** The question “How do people become leaders?” consistently elicited the response that they were elected or chosen by existing leadership, by church meetings, or by the local diocese. Some interviewees stated that the development of new leaders was “ad hoc.” People were given leadership responsibilities by meeting with the current pastor or, in one case, the church just “let it happen.” The question about how leaders were trained often revealed that the minister sought to empower lay leaders on some level. A number offered in-house programmes and courses, while others took advantage of resources provided by other churches. The most common practice appeared to be that leaders were either elected, volunteered or got invited to lead based on their being responsible people. Once chosen, many ministers helped these leaders through mentoring or directing them to structured training.

The larger, faster growing churches occasionally offered leadership training prior to a member being chosen to lead. There was no mention of developing leaders in order to send