

# REFLECTIONS

## Ordinary Time

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One great phrase of the Church of England, which is little-known but carries a wealth of rich meaning, is “ordinary time.” While the seasons of Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Advent all have their fixtures and moments for focus and concentration, the bulk of the summer months is “ordinary time”! A very evocative phase – nothing particularly to focus on or to celebrate.

Just because it is ordinary it does not mean it is not important or of no significance to how God wants us to use our lives. For most of us life is lived between high and low points: we look forward to something on the horizon or we are seeking to recover from something. So it should be no surprise that ordinary time is the longest season in the Church calendar. Abraham Lincoln once said that “God must love ordinary people because he made so many of them”!

Ordinary people, it seems to me, need “ordinary time.” Sundays and week days in-between, to sense God’s presence with us in the day-to-day mundane, and ordinary comings and goings of life. He is there in the heights of resurrection joy and celebration. He is with us in the vulnerability and frailty of human weakness, modelled in the incarnation. He is with us in our efforts to discipline ourselves and be moulded by Him (Lent) but He is also with us whenever we are conscious of life just being ordinary. When our eyes are opened to these things we will see what an extraordinary God we have!

SOURCES: Quoted with permission from parish magazine *Perspectives*, No 50, Summer 2013

Row	Factor	Unit	2001 to 2011	2011 to 2021
1	Number of Christians at start of period	Millions	35.3	31.5
2	English population at start of period	Millions	49.1	53.0
3	% who are Christian		72	59
4	Additions to church	Millions	+1.0	+0.8
5	Deaths from church	over 10 years	-4.3	-4.5
6	Other leavers		-0.5	-0.6
7	Total change in period		-3.8	-4.3
8	Number of Christians at end of period	Millions	31.5	27.2
9	English population at end of period	Millions	53.0	56.9
10	% who are Christian		59	48

Rows 1, 2, 8 and 9 come from National Population Census and projections; Row 3 is Row 1 as percentage of Row 2; Row 7 is total of Rows 4, 5 and 6; Row 8 is total of Rows 1 and 7; Row 10 is percentage Row 8 is of Row 9.

funerals (since their number is so much larger than the Methodists).

These figures can also be interpreted in another way. When the 2011 Population Census figures were released they showed that the number of people calling themselves “Christians” had decreased by some 3.8 million people between 2001 and 2011, resulting in the “Christian” proportion in England falling from 72% to 59%. The main reason for that decline was not people leaving the faith or dropping out of church, but simply “Christian” people dying.

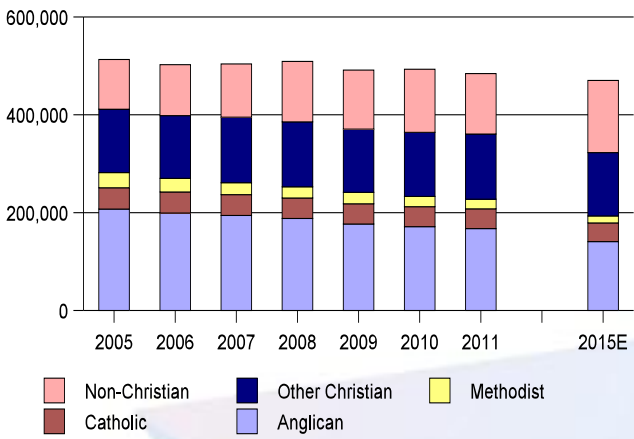
The percentage of churchgoers 65 and over is about a third of the total, about double the proportion of this age in the general population. As

# “Christian” Deaths

The Church of England revised its statistical collection procedure after a review by the then Bishop of Wakefield, the Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch, was accepted and agreed. Since then it has each year collected the number of funerals taken by the clergy in every Diocese, both in church and in crematoria. The Methodist Church has collected the same information from 2007. The Roman Catholics publish the total number of their deaths each year.

Collectively these three denominations accounted for 62% of church members in England in 2010, but it is unlikely that the other denominations had funerals or deaths in an exactly similar proportion as their members on the whole are younger. Suppose total funerals in the other denominations is only 90% of the pro rata figure. It is then possible to calculate, given the total number of deaths per year from the Office for National Statistics, the denomination of church funerals and the number of non-Christian funerals. The estimates are shown in the graph.

Number of deaths/funerals by denomination and others, England, 2005-2015E



There is much estimation in this chart, but it shows that the number of deaths overall is declining (the official government count). But within that, the proportion of secular and other funerals is increasing, from 20% in 2005 (a fairly firm figure) to almost a third (31%) by 2015 if present trends continue. Some of those trends are fewer funerals being taken by Anglican and Methodist clergy, in part because of general decline in their membership, while the number of Roman Catholic and other denominational deaths are about the same proportions each year.

Thus the increase in secular funerals is largely because of the reducing number of Church of England

minuses together and you get the decline of -3.8 million already mentioned.

The question then comes, what of the future? The churches will continue to engage in a wide variety of evangelistic activities and people will continue to be converted, but as the church generally ages, the number joining the church between 2011 and the next Census in 2021 may be fewer, say, only 0.8 million new faces. The number dying, however, is likely to be greater, probably up to 4.5 million, and the number who leave for other reasons might be slightly larger also, say 0.6 million.

Put these pluses and minuses together, and it is likely that over the next Inter-Census decade, the drop in the number of people who might have ticked the “Christian” box on the 2021 Census form could be as much as -4.3 million, as the Table shows in Row 7. In 2021 the English population is forecast to be almost 57 million, so that the percentage who are “Christian” declines to just 48%, that is, we become a minority in England for the first time probably in several centuries. This view, though not necessarily the detailed figures, is supported by a different analysis by the Office for National Statistics which looked at the number of Christians in England born overseas.

Though all this highly speculative, in a strange sort of way, Christianity is now being defined more by the deaths in its community than converted people joining as churchgoers! The “deaths” line is just so much larger than “additions.” (Row 5 to Row 4).

And this analysis is only possible because of the new counts introduced 13 years ago.

## Clergy Stress

A 2011 survey of over 600 rural Anglican clergy responsible for at least three churches was undertaken by Professor Leslie Francis and Rev Christine Brewster, who served in the Church in Wales, to assess the implications of stress caused by their work, especially over time. A third (36%) of these clergy looked after just three churches, a quarter (27%) four, and the remainder five or more.

The researchers found there were five factors, out of a total of 84 presented to the participants, which a majority of the clergy agreed were stressful:

- Being unable to respond to the needs of everyone (59%)
- Doing separate paperwork for several churches (56%)
- Nurturing and retaining volunteers in several churches (52%)
- Being expected to be involved in several communities (51%)
- Giving attention to detailed matters in several churches (51%)

The research found that the stress present with three churches did not greatly increase with more churches, a finding somewhat different from a study in East Anglia in 1991 which found four churches was the tipping point in stress assessment. It also found that the theological position of the clergy involved made no difference to the stress levels incurred.

Women clergy, however, found the stress harder to take as did younger clergy, findings which had been replicated in other studies. Those more prone to anxiety were also likely to have higher levels of stress.

What this research showed was the historical model of Anglican ministry, of a minister living in and sharing the lives of the people in a particular community, fails in a multi-parish setting, with no alternative theological position making the new situation coherent. Given that multi-parish ministry is increasing, this need of a relevant and achievable theology becomes urgent. “Collaborative ministry” or “team ministry” does not necessarily meet this requirement.

SOURCES: Article in *Rural Theology*, Vol 10, No 2, 2012, Page 170.

## What we value

The Co-op did an interesting piece of research when it asked its customers what they valued most in life. Answers were:

- 46% Family (and 91% said their family would most likely make them smile)
- 40% Partner
- 34% Pets (“they’re our best friends, even surrogate kids.”)

They also asked what people had which was of highest (financial) value, after their house, and these answers were:

- 67% Car
- 32% Computer (one man said, “I can watch movies and keep in touch with mates on my lap top – when it gives me beer too, my life will be complete”)
- 24% Jewellery (women much more than men)

Some three-fifths of respondents said they collected things – music was the top item, especially singles and albums, then came special editions of books or stamps, and thirdly came coins.

It would appear that their respondents did not include many religious people as God, faith or the church were seemingly not mentioned, or at least not very frequently.

SOURCES: Feature in *Share*, the Co-op magazine, Summer 2013, Pages 30,31.

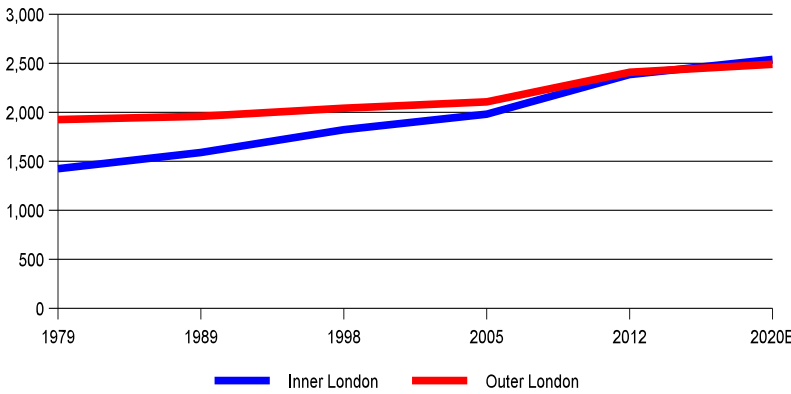
# CONGREGATIONAL INCREASE



Over the last seven years two new congregations on average have been started across Greater London every week, which is 100 a year, so that the total has increased from 4,100 churches in 2005 to 4,800 churches in 2012, a 17% increase, and a number which is projected to continue to increase by a further 5% in the next 8 years (to just over 5,000 by 2020).

While this is across all denominations, in reality the spectacular growth is seen mostly in two groups: 500 new Pentecostal and 300 new Immigrant churches have started in London since 2005, although another 200 have been started by other denominations, especially Anglicans and Independent churches. There have also been some 300 church closures, a quarter of which have been Pentecostal, mainly of churches started long before 2005.

The graph shows that the numbers have increased more quickly in Inner London than Outer London, so that the two areas had virtually the same number by 2012, and Inner London is likely to have slightly more by 2020. Pentecostal and Immigrant churches have expanded slightly more in Inner London than Outer London.



### Black Majority Churches

Roughly two-thirds (63%) of the increasing number of London’s congregations are among the Black Majority Churches (BMCs), most of which are Pentecostal. Pentecostal congregations have increased from 1,005 in 2005 to 1,450 in 2012, and nearly all of that has occurred in BMCs. The gain is seen especially in Boroughs like Lewisham and Southwark, where the 2011 Population Census shows many black people live. That is to say, those starting new churches are doing so among those who might be expected to come to a nearby church, epitomised by the fast-growing Redeemed Christian Church of God which deliberately seeks to start a new congregation “within 10 minutes of where people live,” and which has started over 450 congregations nationally in the last 20 years.

SOURCES: *London’s Churches are Growing!*, ADBC Publishers, forthcoming book.

# SNOWFLAKES

**Books for Young Adults** (YA). Teen books were originally produced as a sequel to children’s books which are obviously designed for younger children. But YA books appeal to much older people than teenagers, and of those sold in 2011 and 2012:

- Only 16% were bought by those under 18,
- 35% were bought by those aged 18 to 29,
- 27% by those aged 30 to 44,
- 11% by those aged 45 to 54, and
- 11% by those 55 or over.

Might some “youth programmes” used in churches be effective in reaching adults?

SOURCE: Article in *The Bookseller*, 25th January 2013, Page 9.

**Heaven is for Real.** The most purchased religious book in the United States in 2011 was *Heaven is for Real*, the story by Rev Todd Burpo of his son’s experience of the afterlife when seriously ill in hospital. Nearly two million copies were sold in the US although only 9,200 were in the UK. Another book on a similar theme is *90 Minutes in Heaven* by Don Piper, published in 2005.

SOURCE: *The Bookseller*, 16th March 2012; Amazon website.

**Racial morality.** 1,100 church-going adults in the US were randomly selected by Gallup in 2005 and asked if they supported a number of morally contentious activities. The answers were analysed by whether they attended a multi-racial church (defined as having at least 20% of its members belonging to a race different from the remainder) or a “homogeneous” church (which is what 93% of American churches are), abbreviated respectively to MR and HG. Answers show that in each instance the multiracial congregational members were more permissive:

Activity	MR %	HG %	ALL %
Use of alcohol	45	38	39
Premarital cohabitation	39	27	30
Premarital sex	34	25	27
Gay sex	28	20	21
Planned unwed pregnancy	29	17	20
Euthanasia	25	17	19
Use of marijuana	16	8	10
Viewing pornography	12	8	9
Extramarital sex	5	2	2

SOURCE: Article in *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 55, No 2, June 2013, Page 365.

**Viewing Facebook.** Facebook “prioritises content based on time, type and relationship, ... while Twitter is based purely on time.” What makes a Facebook page attractive to viewers? This is an important commercial question and a large sample of 6,400 users was asked in 2012 to view a selection of pages which was sent to them for at least 3 minutes each in a non-responsive way. They were then asked about their experience. The percentages agreeing with different experiences were:

47% “This stimulated my curiosity”  
46% “This made a strong impression on my visual or hearing senses”  
40% “This made me think”  
36% “I experienced strong positive emotions while viewing this”

Four-fifths (80%) of those whose curiosity was stimulated said they were likely to view the brand website, which was only true of 69% of those who experienced strong positive emotions. In the light of this, how might churches or agencies design their Facebook content?

SOURCE: *Impact*, MRS, Issue 1, 2013, Page 13; Article in *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol 55, Issue 3, 2013, Page 363.

**Impact of Persecution.** How much did the persecution of evangelical believers (including Baptists and Pentecostals) in Russia under Stalin (1929-39) and Khrushchev (1959-64) actually impact numbers? A careful analysis of such records as exist showed the following pattern:



In terms of number reduction, repression under Stalin was far worse than under Khrushchev, but while numbers recovered quite strongly after Stalin, they did not do so after Khrushchev. Stalin forced church registration, introduced a six-day week (with 1/6 of the labour force off each day), sent many to labour camps, and closed churches when their pastors were arrested. Khrushchev targetted Christian families, taking children away from “unfit” Christian parents and putting them in government orphanages, and used youth organisations to indoctrinate children into atheism. Large numbers of Christians remained after both purges, however.

SOURCE: Article in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, Vol 29, July-Sept, 2012, Page 143.

**e-readers.** Research of American pastors found that their use of e-readers tripled between 2010 and 2012 from 14% to 44%, a trend very likely in the UK also. Interestingly, however, reading printed books increased by more than 50% with those using e-readers than those not doing so! They also found that Christians over 30 prefer to buy from Christian bookshops than via the web primarily because of the “selection available.” 20% of American adults own an e-reader.

SOURCE: Barna research “Reading Habits in a Digital World”, June 2013, web-site: *Impact*, MRS, Issue 1, 2013, Page 37.

**Why use a publisher?** Authors were asked what they liked about the service given by publishers. Easily top of the list was their editorial expertise (72%), followed by prestige (61%), copy editing (59%) and their links to bookshops (59%). What they disliked most were long lead times (46%) and inadequate payments (also 46%). This last factor could be responsible for three-quarters (74%) not using a publisher at all but going direct to Amazon instead in the future.

SOURCE: Article in *The Bookseller*, 25th May 2012.

**Execute them!** A 2012 survey of Muslim opinion showed strong agreement in some countries of those supporting sharia law to execute those who leave Islam.

Country	Execute %	Severe %	Support %
Egypt	86	70	74
Jordan	82	57	71
Afghanistan	79	81	72
Pakistan	76	88	84
Malaysia	62	66	86
Lebanon	46	50	29
Iraq	42	57	91

where “Execute” = Execute those who leave Islam; “Severe” = Severe corporal punishment for criminals; “Support” = Supporting sharia law.

SOURCE: *The Economist*, 4th May, 2013, Page 58.

## These may be helpful

Books and reports received

*The Quality of Management and its effect on Employee Engagement in Christian Youth Work*, Leon Coates, May 2013, available from leon.coates@amaze.org.uk.

*A New Day: The Resilience and Restructuring of Religion in Canada*, Professor Reginald W Bibby, Project Canada Books, 2012.

## Long Term

“There are times as a manager when you need to understand all the detail, but a lot of the time it’s important to be strategic; to stay above it; to think about the big picture; and not be deterred by one day’s headlines. You’ve got to think for the long term.” (Lord O’Donnell, Secretary to the Cabinet 2005 to 2011).

Continued from page 1

was connected, but three quarters of the leaders felt that up to 10% of their church was currently disconnecting. This is a similar proportion to that found in the *Living the Christian Life* survey last year.

“Connection” is different in each denomination, whether “connection” be to God or to a church, or to a denomination. Two-thirds, 70%, of those people who reconnected did so to a different denomination, and three-quarters, 75%, to another church with a different leader. It seems that some reconnectors change their denomination to fit perhaps a changed theology, a changed style of worship, a changed church ethos, etc..

Chris Justice, Senior Pastor at Beaconsfield Baptist Church, said, “The church has to present itself more as a family than an organisation if it wants to attract and hold people. It has to recognise that people are different, both in their abilities and their personalities, and not everyone fits the ‘boxes’ our churches sometimes assume.” He pointed out, “It is rare that a person will reconnect with his/her original church, unless the cause was a disagreement with one particular individual, and there has been some reconciliation. ... It is more likely that a ‘reconnector’ will find their way back into church life in a new situation where they don’t have embarrassment and awkwardness to overcome.”

Bishop Graham Cray felt the most important result of this research was the differing perceptions of why people leave between church leaders and the leavers themselves. George Fisher, Director of Mission at Lichfield Diocese, was deeply concerned at the lack of pastoral care in churches. He felt that churches needed to be more aware of joiners and leavers and is a keen advocate of small groups.

Some disconnectors find substitute communities, such as on-line church groups, Christian radio and TV, parachurch activities, business or social communities to meet their needs. A few who are thoroughly disaffected put renewed energy into careers, family, adventure and sometimes “wild living.” Christian friends need to stay in touch, not to judge, to pray for them, and to accept that they will now have lower expectations of leaders and church.

So will the UK Church abort her mission, ending as an “unsuccessful failure,” or can it engage in contemporary outreach and discipleship to avoid an ominous and catastrophic short circuit?

Note: The full research is available to view at [www.connect4life.org.uk/survey](http://www.connect4life.org.uk/survey)



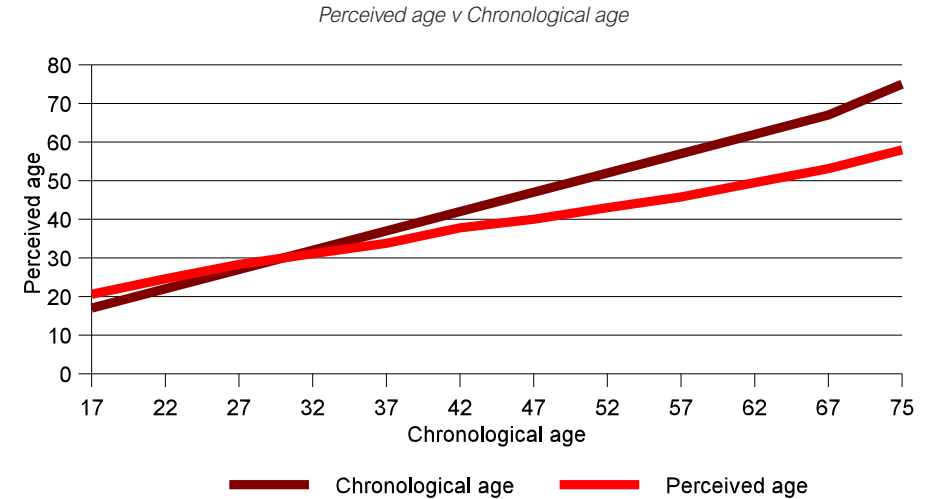
# HOW OLD DO YOU FEEL?

Many people do not feel as old as they actually, chronologically, are. Research has identified four factors in the process:

- “Feeling age” – how old a person feels they are
- “Looking age” – how old a person feels they look
- “Doing age” – the extent to which what a person does reflects a certain age-group
- “Interest age” – the extent to which a person’s interests reflect a certain age-group

Two media researchers showed that, in regard to watching television, chronological age was a poor substitute for how old a person sees themselves as. In addition to asking respondents about the four characteristics above they also asked about a person’s perceived age with regard to those they mixed with, their thinking processes, their mental energy, their physical energy, the nature of their ambitions, and the type of people they identified with.

They came to an interesting conclusion – younger people perceive themselves older than they are while older people perceive themselves younger. They measured the difference and the average results are shown in the graph.



The difference varied from those at 17 perceiving themselves to be 21 to those at 42 perceiving themselves to be 38, with older people perceiving themselves to be considerably younger, with the average 75 year old seeing themselves as 58. 91% of those in their 70s perceived themselves as at least 10 years younger than they were. Reality only occurred in the late 20s/early 30s!

The survey also found various factors were related to those who were more likely to perceive themselves at a different age from their actual age. These people were more likely to be strongly engaged with modern life (68%), use a social network (66%), play computer games (62%), were confident in saying what they thought (57%), had not downloaded music (57%), dealt with new encounters easily (54%), were “open” (53%), and were married (51%).

When applied to the media researchers found the younger at heart more likely to watch BBC 3, Channels 4 and 5, ITV 1, ITV 2, ITV 4 and Sky 1, while the more mature in perceived age watched BBC 1, BBC 2, BBC 4 and ITV 3.

However, this kind of finding is also important for churchgoers and church leaders, given that a third of those attending church are 65 or over. The above findings, if they apply to churchgoers, will mean that some 90% of these will think of themselves as at least 10 years younger than they are and therefore able and willing to be involved with church leadership or running or organising church activities.

One lady in a south London church who started a coffee morning in her mid-60s for older people quickly found it turned into a lunch club, and continued providing more than 120 lunches every week when she was in her 80s, helped by a small number of equally energetic older women!

The findings are also relevant for church people who are not yet in the 65+ age-bracket. Many of them perceive themselves as younger than they actually are, and with the mental and physical energy to go with that younger age. They are therefore able to cope with the challenges, say, of running a group for young people, or with the capacity to take on church leadership. There are a number of examples over the last decade of some being appointed to lead large churches (of 500 or more people) while still in their early 30s, and often doing so very successfully.

Giftng and godliness become more important than age and gender in this process. Pope Francis may have been appointed or chosen when he was 76, but he isn’t acting as one might expect a 76-year old to act. The same is true for some other senior leaders in other denominations. Perhaps we should assess our age by potential and not by years!

**SOURCES:** Paper “It’s all in the mind – changing the way we think about age,” by Lisa Edgar and David Bunker in *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol 55, Issue 2, Page 201, The Market Research Society, 2013



## Well-Being

**David Cameron asked the Office for National Statistics to measure the nation’s well-being with especial regard to health. One aspect of this study was asking what services were regarded as important in making somewhere a good place to live. Three-fifths, 61%, said having a low level of crime, and nearly half (45%) said having clean streets, followed by 44% saying good health services.**

A survey by Leslie Francis of American clergy also asked about health – how did they rate it at the time of the survey? A third, 33%, said it was excellent, and half (55%) said it was good. They were also asked if they were suffering from burnout in their present ministry. One in 14, 7%, said “to a great extent”, and a quarter, 25%, said “to some extent”, but the majority were either “only to a small extent” (40%) or not at all (28%).

However, well-being is about more than health or stress. In another study, children were asked whether they felt good with questions about their friends (63% were), their family (61%) or their feelings (59%). They were far less happy about being asked about their weight (38%)!

Is well-being for the Christian any consideration in their spiritual walk? Does a sense of well-being spring naturally from a close walk with God, abiding in Christ and being filled with Spirit? (It didn’t for Mother Theresa). What part do circumstances play in experiencing this? Paul said, “I have learned in whatsoever situation I am, therewith to be content.” (Phil 4:11).

**SOURCES:** Articles in *International Journal of Market Research*, Vol 54, Issue 2, 2012, Page 191 and *Review of Religious Research*, Vol 53 No 1, Sept 2011, Page 15; *Quadrant*, Issue 34, Autumn 2012, Page 1.

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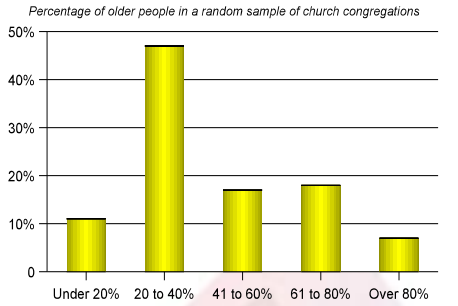
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## Older People

If a third, 33% in 2012, of churchgoers are 65 and over, how old are they really? The 2005 English Church Census found that three-fifths, 59%, of older people in church are aged between 65 and 74 (the age-group the government call the “Third Age”), a third, 34%, are between 75 and 84, and 7% 85 and over. The latter two percentages will increase slightly over the next 10 years.

Some years ago Church of England actuaries calculating clergy pensions found that clergy on average lived 4 years longer than others. Since most churchgoers smoke and drink less than non-churchgoers it is likely they also will live on average for 4 years more. When a conference for older people was held in June by Outlook, which seeks to reach the elderly for Christ, this statistical “gem” was treated with amusement rather than respect!

The 100+ delegates at the conference were asked to estimate what percentage those 60 and over were in their church. Half, 47%, said this age group formed between 20 and 40%, as the chart shows, the overall average being 43%. Naturally this will vary according to the size of the church attended, which fell more or less equally into four groups: 50 or fewer, 51 to 100, 101 to 200, and more than 200.



The Conference delegates were asked in a workshop how they regarded themselves as a “Third Ager” (which half of the delegates were). They replied, “We still do the things we did when we were younger,” “We think of ourselves only as middle-aged, though with some physical constraints,” or “Age is an attitude of mind.”

They were also asked how they felt they were regarded by neighbours and friends and work colleagues where they were still in employment. Their answers were:

- We have wisdom
- We are a resource
- We are easy to talk to
- We smile which makes it easier to be approached
- We are willing to be open to others
- We may be lovably eccentric!

What kind of activities did churches have for older people, and how much were Conference attendees involved in running them? Answers were as follows, though recognising that churches will call these different activities by a whole variety of names:

On average churches had between 2 and 3 of these activities, with Lunch Clubs and Senior Bible Study Groups being the most popular, followed by Coffee Mornings and a Women’s Fellowship. On average about three-fifths, 63%, of those 65 and over were involved with these events in their churches, with the Over 60s Club and Friendship

Hour receiving the most support, followed by Lunch Club and Coffee Mornings.

It should be noticed that one church in 8, 12%, had no special activities for the elderly, and relatively few had a Friendship Hour (despite its popularity with the elderly) or Senior Alpha. For many churches, ministry to the elderly means an occasional pastoral visit to those ill in hospital, or in a nursing home where some churches might also hold a monthly service. In the context of the church, ministry of the elderly is seen as only being capable of arranging the flowers, providing the after service coffee and joining the cleaning rota! “Outlook” is seeking to change the “outlook” of such churches.

Churches with %	Activity	65 & overs involved %
39	Lunch Club	76
39	Senior Bible Study	55
	Group	
32	Coffee Mornings	63
32	Women’s Fellowship	42
27	Over 60s Club	90
15	Senior Alpha	44
7	Friendship Hour	80
47	Other activities	77
12	None particularly	~

What activities does your church have specifically for the elderly? Just as many churches have Youth Workers, some churches are now appointing Senior Ministry Workers; could yours do the same?

**SOURCES:** Survey conducted among delegates at the Outlook Conference, Northampton, June 2013.

## Christian?

**A YouGov survey in January 2013 threw open the question of what it means to be “Christian”. There is a clear theological answer to the question but in practice those who call themselves “Christian” have a wide variety of beliefs. An American survey in March 2013 looked at the question from the opposite viewpoint. How irreligious is the general population? It found:**

- 4% did not believe in God
- 8% identified as being atheist or agnostic
- 13% disagreed that faith was important in their lives
- 18% had not prayed to God in past week
- 27% had never made a commitment to Jesus
- 29% disagreed the Bible is accurate
- 32% had not donated money to the church in the past year
- 33% had not attended church in past year
- 41% believing Jesus committed sins
- 57% had not read the Bible in the past week

The American researchers concluded that over a third (37%) of American adults were now living in a “post-Christian” society. It would be interesting if comparable figures were available for Britain. Given that Americans are generally much more religious than Europeans (in the sense that a higher percentage attend church regularly) the percentages given above would most likely be higher. It is therefore interesting that when the 2011 Population Census asked about religion, only 0.1% of the English population specifically said they were atheist or agnostic, perhaps because very few use such words to describe themselves.

**SOURCES:** Survey “How Post-Christian is US Society?”, Barna Group, News 22nd April 2013, [www.barna.org/culture-articles](http://www.barna.org/culture-articles).

## A (Christian) Tale of Two Cities

**Greater Christchurch in New Zealand has 290 churches, with a total average Sunday attendance of 38,000 people, or 10% of the population. That’s virtually the same as in Greater London although the 10% in London would include mid-week attenders who don’t attend on a Sunday also.**

The percentage of Christian adherents in New Zealand’s population, as given by their 2006 Census, was 56%, again very similar to the 59% in the UK in 2011. Of all the churches in Christchurch, the largest denomination is Anglican (20%), followed by Pentecostal (16%) and Catholic (11%). This is different from London where these denominations are, respectively, 22%, 30% and 8%, showing that London has twice as many Pentecostal churches, pro rata, as Christchurch.

Attendance does not follow the same pattern in Christchurch. Taking the same three denominations, the proportion of attenders was 15% for Anglicans, 16% for Pentecostals and 21% for Catholics. In London these percentages are: 12%, 32% and 27%, showing a similar exuberance of Pentecostals but rather more Catholics, probably because London has many very large Catholic churches, and a longer history of Catholicism than New Zealand.

Two-fifths (43%) of Christchurch’s churches are 50 or fewer in size, while a fifth (22%) have between 100 and 200, with 17% larger than 200. They have just 3 churches with more than 800 attending, but accounting for 10% of all attenders between them. In London, these percentages are, respectively, 30%, 21% and 23% with 140 churches with more than 800, of which almost 100 are Roman Catholic. The average size of a church in Christchurch is 130, very similar to the average for London’s non-Catholic churches. The Catholic average is 320 and because there are so many they increase London’s overall average.

Christchurch is very different from London, however, in that virtually all its churches are involved in community work – some 90% of the total. In London only a quarter of this number proportionately, 23%, run mid-week activities. Christchurch churches also have slightly more youth work – 55% to 45% in London.

Christchurch, however, has one unique feature which has not happened to London – or not yet. A severe earthquake in February 2011 not only smashed the capital’s Cathedral, but a quarter (27%) of all the churches were either destroyed, “red zoned” or suffered such severe damage that they had to be relocated. This affected a third (31%) of all those going to church. What was left of the Cathedral was declared unsafe, and a new one is being built.

This brief comparison shows that church life in two capital cities on opposite sides of the world have a number of similarities, but with some special features in each. Community work is a key Christchurch strength, disrupted by the severe impact of the 2011 earthquake, while Pentecostal energy and Catholic size are important in London. In both cities, Anglicans are strong, and big churches are a considerable draw. How far does the spiritual temperature of a country express itself in the Christian activity of the capital?

**SOURCES:** Powerpoint slides from Ken Shelley, King’s Church Office, Christchurch, [ken@kingschurch.co.nz](mailto:ken@kingschurch.co.nz), May 2013.



## Providing Facts for Forward Planning

### SNIPPETS

1) Worldwide 1,000 billion (= 1 trillion) pages are put on Facebook every month on average.

2) Sponsored children in Third World countries have, on average, 1½ more years of education than non-sponsored children, and are more likely to become leaders in their churches or communities.

3) Twitter’s revenue worldwide was \$350 m in 2012; it is estimated it will be \$1,000 m in 2013.

4) “There are at least 64 nations where the national Church is not strong enough to reach its own people,” said Peter Maiden, International Director of OM.

5) As a result of going on a short-term mission trip, 15% of participants said they would consider pursuing overseas mission work long-term.

6) A researcher at the University of Wales using forms issued to mosques reckons 5,200 Britons turn to Islam every year, making a grand total of 100,000 converts in the UK in 2013.

7) By 2020, one in three of all the technical people in the world will be Indian.

**SOURCES:** 1) Talk by Dr Patrick Dixon, Global Leadership Forum, Bangalore, June 2013; 2) Survey on Compassion’s child sponsorship programme reported in *Christianity*, June 2013, Page 9; 3) Stuart Knapman in *Impact*, Market Research Society, Issue 1, 2013, Page 12; 4) Quoted in *Perspectives*, No 50, Summer 2013, Page 38; 5) Survey of 107 people reported in *Sphere*, Global Connections, April 2013, Page 17; 6) Article in *The Economist*, 18th May 2013, Page 26; 7) Talk by Rajan Mathews on “Mobility in India,” Global Leadership Forum, Bangalore, June 2013.

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## “HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM!”

By Olaf Fogwill, Director Of Connect4life



### Headline results

The purpose of the research was to discover more about the causes and possible solutions, conscious that countless Christian parents and church leaders suffer the pain of lost spiritual contact with their prodigals. Two groups participated in this in-depth qualitative research: (a) 17 church leaders, and (b) 13 church attenders who had “reconnected,” in different denominations.

The key findings were:

• **Number.** Half, 47%, of those disconnecting were aged 40 or over, whereas only two-fifths, 39%, were teenagers.

• **Reasons.** Three-quarters, 77%, left because of some offence given by leadership, and two-thirds, 70%, left because of hurts received from the church, or failure of the church in understanding. Three-fifths, 60%, felt that the church leaders didn’t embrace their concerns, and distanced themselves from them.

• **Time taken.** Half, 46%, disconnected gradually (did anyone care or notice?), confirming Leslie Francis’ findings that it takes six weeks on average. On the other hand, the other half, 54%, left suddenly.

• **Theology.** Three-fifths, 62%, felt they had just disconnected from their church, not from God, while two-fifths, 38%, still felt “rooted in God.” However, 83% said their faith had undergone a change, especially their view of church.

### Discussion

The June 2013 edition of *FutureFirst* highlighted the problem of the church in the UK. The Church of England attendance figures for 2011 indicated 12% fewer adults attending church on Sundays at 763,000, with a corresponding drop of 22% for children’s attendance at just 135,000, giving an overall reduction of 9%, although there were positive increases for weekday attendances.

There is, however, some encouragement in what is happening in London: “Its churches are growing and people are flocking to them.” The increase to 720,000 attenders in 2012 (from 620,000

in 2005), an increase of 16%, is attributed to factors such as church planting, specialist churches, focussed church leadership and the growth of larger churches. Although the Church of England can be encouraged with certain pockets, like this and cathedral attendance, the overall picture indicates continuing disconnection – a major problem to be addressed.

Here’s the question – what might the UK Church be doing to cause a short circuit? Is it consuming too much time and money in maintenance of existing buildings and outdated structures? Apollo 13’s Commander James Lovell called the aborted mission “a successful failure” because although the mission was aborted, no-one was lost. In the context of the church, a more apt description might “an unsuccessful failure” as not only has mission been aborted but people are being lost.

### What to do

C4L’s study showed the views of reconnecting people were often at variance with those of the church leaders in matters of pastoral care, cause and solution. Those reconnecting were unwilling to take up where they had left off (75%).

*Continued on page 4*

