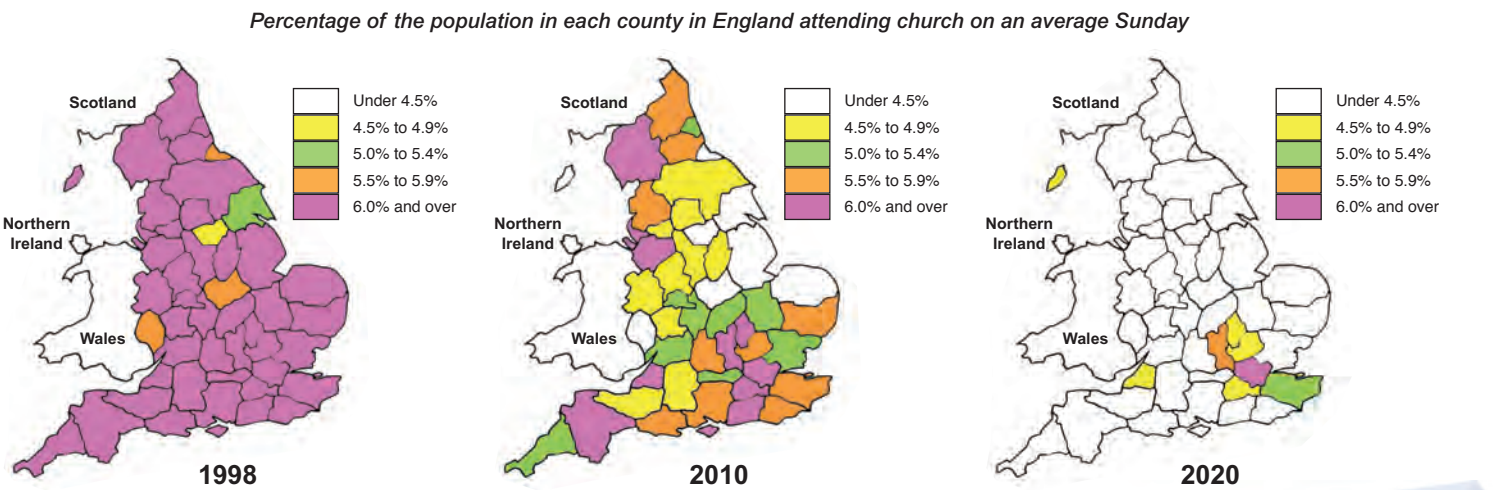


## Decline Continues

It is never pleasant to talk of decline in relation to the church, though sometimes there is some measure of amelioration. Recent figures of Roman Catholic Mass attendance, for example, show their numbers are slightly more buoyant than previously anticipated from earlier studies which makes future projections of church attendance marginally better than before.



obvious that we are facing a very challenging situation in the next 10 years, and while parts of the south-east may be doing better than other areas, they are likewise not immune to radical change.

These figures include estimates for those who come less frequently than weekly, say only once a month, but exclude numbers attending at Easter or, especially, Christmas, the geographical variations of which, if any, are unknown. They also

million is still above 4% of the population (4.1%).

However, when this is broken down by county the seriousness of the situation may be seen. The 2010 map below is reproduced from the last FutureFirst, but has the 1998 and 2020 maps added using the same percentage break-points. It is

exclude mid-week attendances which in general terms would increase the percentages by about 10%, but this is not sufficient, unfortunately, to change the overall pattern clearly seen in these three maps.

## FORECASTING

**Some say that mathematicians and statisticians should never forecast as rarely current trends prevail for any length of time. The reason is true but that doesn't make the exercise a waste of time. In 2000, the then Director of Christian Research was asked to forecast what church life would be like in 2010, 10 years ahead. Here's what he said:**

- 1) Church afterschool clubs for working parents will be more common
- 2) There will be more organised church transport for older people
- 3) Continued growth of larger churches
- 4) Premier Radio in other cities (other than London)
- 5) More rural churches open midweek as shops and post offices close
- 6) Greater Christian involvement in politics
- 7) More Christian schools, both church and independent
- 8) More services, and more midweek services, for particular age or interest groups
- 9) Increasing number of lay people in central and local church leadership
- 10) Flourishing church pastoral care centres
- 11) Young people in church leadership
- 12) Evangelism in the UK increasing using the expertise of Third World mission workers.

It would be relatively easy to get or give statistics to prove 10 of these 12 statements (Numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, probably 10, and 11). We are not sure that Number 2 has happened overall, although it has in some places, while 12 is being undertaken but by mostly black "reverse" mission churches like the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

However, we reckon a score of 10 out 12, 83%, is probably a pass rate for forecasting and should encourage us to continue doing it! For the same talk, he was also asked to forecast what church life would be like in 2020, now just 10 years ahead. Here's what was suggested:

- 1) Songs of Praise discontinued
- 2) Many rural churches closed
- 3) Worship in people's homes more popular
- 4) Christian community under half the population
- 5) Perhaps 12% of population will belong to a non-Christian religion
- 6) 40% will not believe in God [virtually true already]
- 7) Church membership perhaps 7% of the population
- 8) Christian divorce commonplace
- 9) Church of England dis-established?
- 10) Congregations' average size as small as 45 [they were 72 in 2000, and are 61 now]
- 11) Ethnic churches would still be expanding
- 12) Funerals still a huge opportunity
- 13) Closure of half of today's 5,600 Christian organisations [1,100 have already closed].

Numbers 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13 are already on their way to happening (9 out of the 13), leaving Numbers 1, 3, 8 and 9 to see what will happen. The value of such explorations is not to see how many marks one gets out of 10, but to have information useful for strategic planning ahead. If we don't know where we're going (even if we don't like the outcome we see), how can we take actions now so that some dire predictions will not happen? Unlike fortune-telling, statistical forecasting is based on facts, not superstition!



World rank	Item	Value	Date	Top rank country	Value
2nd	Music sales per head of population	\$ 49.6 mn	2007	Norway	\$ 50.4 mn
3rd	Biggest earners from services & income	10.8% of world	2007	United States	16.3%
3rd	Busiest airport [Heathrow]	67 mn passengers	2008	Atlanta [USA]	89 mn
3rd	Largest balance of payments deficit	\$ -79 bn	2007	United States	\$ -731 bn
4th	Trading places [Biggest exporters]	6.1% of world exports	2007	United States	11.5%
5th	Largest industrial output	\$ 570 bn	2007	United States	\$ 2,700 bn
5th	Asylum applications	28,300	2007	United States	50,700
5th	Biggest economy by GDP	2.8 \$bn	2007	United States	13.8 \$bn
6th	Most tourist arrivals	31 mn	2007	France	82 mn
6th	Computers per 100 people	80	2007	Canada	94
8th	Largest refugee population	300,000	2007	Pakistan	2.0 mn
9th	% of population aged 80 or over	4.7%	2009	Japan	6.1%
10th	Largest energy consumers [million tonnes oil equivalent]	230	2006	United States	2,300
10th	Telephone lines per 100 people	59	2007	Bermuda	90
11th	Minutes of the day spent sleeping	503	2006	France	530
11th	Obesity in men, % of population	24%	2007	Lebanon	36%
13th	Most rail passengers [km per person]	810	2007	Switzerland	2,100
13th	Official gold reserves	\$ 8.3 bn	2007	United States	\$ 218 bn
14th	Highest GDP per head	\$45,400	2007	Luxembourg	\$103,000
15th	Largest bi- and multi-lateral aid donors	0.4% of GDP	2007	Norway	1.0%
16th	Households with single occupation	28%	2007	Sweden	45%
16th	Largest energy producers [million tonnes oil equivalent]	190	2006	China	1,750
17th	Total expenditure on R & D as GDP %	1.8%	2006	Israel	4.6%
17th	Most crowded road networks [vehicles per km of road]	77	2006	Hong Kong	245
19th	Highest divorce rate [per 1,000 pop]	2.9	2007	Guam	5.3
21st	Quality of Life [Human Development Index]	94.2	2006	Iceland	96.8

## Grandparents and Parents

Parents and grandparents don't always agree! When grandparents provide childcare for their grandchildren, as they frequently do, should some kind of formal childcare agreement be in place? Three-quarters (78%) agreed with the sentiment, but disagreed on the details as the Table shows.

Statement	Parents	Grandparents
For how many days a week should grandparents be asked to provide childcare?	65% 2 days or more	56% 2 days or less
In whose house should the grandchildren be cared for?	55% parents' house	70% grand-parents' house
Should grandparents be paid?	61% yes	49% yes
Who should provide the equipment?	85% parents	71% parents
Who rules on discipline?	53% said parents	66% said grandparents

SOURCE: www.grannynet.co.uk/groundrules, quoted in FamiliesFirst, January/February, 2010 Page 7.

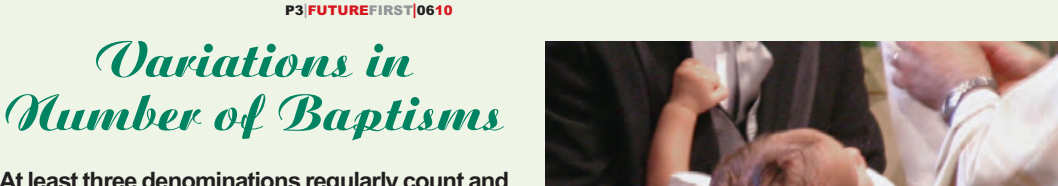
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## World Rankings

The 2010 edition of *The Economist's* "Pocket World in Figures" covers a wealth of global detail, and ranks the various countries accordingly. It may be of interest to see how the United Kingdom performs in this process:



At least three denominations regularly count and publish their number of baptisms: The Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The Table gives the numbers for the years 2002 to 2008:

Baptisms across three denominations, 2002 to 2008				
Denomination	Who baptised?	Number of baptisms		% change
		2002	2008	
Church of England	Infants	103,300	86,500	-16%
	Aged 1+	48,100	52,600	+9%
Roman Catholic, England and Wales	Infants	42,900	40,700	-5%
	Aged 1+	19,700	22,100	+12%
Baptist Union of Great Britain	Young people and Adult	4,654	3,601	-23%
TOTAL		218,700	205,500	-6%

However, while the overall total drops, there is a pattern in the two institutional churches – even if infant baptisms have dropped. The number of baptisms of those older have increased for both denominations, for all ages in the Church of England (about 10,000 of whom are adult

baptisms) and for children aged 1 to 13 in the Roman Catholic Church. Infant baptisms are not only conducted by the two large churches given in the Table, but by many others, including the Methodists and the Church of Scotland. While the number of child baptisms included in the above Table is two-thirds (68%) of the whole, in 2008 some 283,000 children were baptised in the UK, virtually two-fifths (39%) of all births. Baptisms continue to provide an opportunity for reaching into the non-Christian community.



### BOOK REVIEW

**The Call and the Commission:** Equipping a new generation of leaders for a new world edited by Rob Frost, David Wilkinson and Joanne Cox, Paternoster, Milton Keynes, 2009 224 pages, £10.99

The Call and the Commission is the late Rob Frost's last written contribution (published by the now defunct Paternoster Press) to the scene of Christian leadership in the UK today. Essentially the book is about the challenge of equipping a new generation of Christian leaders for the 21st century world in which they have to exercise their ministry.

As one 35-year old leader recently said when asked about his future plans for the church, "I've had no training in these areas. I've had to pick it all up as best I can." How many other churches might be growing today if their leaders had received suitable training?

The book explores the kinds of challenge that are needed, each chapter written by a different person. The cost of training, its theology, the call to train, learning from others, what can be learned from Fresh Expressions and Pentecostal training, the spirituality of training, what is known from research about training, and how this may be applied where necessary in Theological Colleges are all subjects for different chapters.

So this is a book which cumulatively suggests a re-focussing on the fundamental nature of theological training in order to meet the challenges of today's world.

# SNOWFLAKES

**Greatest fecundity.** As far as is known, the world record is nearly 400 years old. When Mary Honeywood died in Lenham village, in Kent, aged 93 in 1620, she left behind 16 children, 114 grandchildren, 228 great-grandchildren and 9 great-great-grandchildren, a total progeny of 367 in her lifetime! "The record is likely to stand for ever," says author Fred Pearce.

**Churches use of email.** The National Church Life Survey in Australia measures many things about churches and their leadership. In their 2010 results they give the percentage by which different denominations use email or the internet:

- 82% Pentecostals
- 79% Baptists
- 75% Churches of Christ
- 59% Lutherans
- 51% Anglicans
- 47% Roman Catholics
- 45% Uniting Church.

There is no recent equivalent of the same in the UK. 85% of Christian agencies in the UK have an email address and 79% have a website.

SOURCES: Article "Which churches use email?" in Pointers, Volume 20, Number 1, March 2010, Christian Research Association, Australia; UK Christian Resources II and book, Bible Society, 2009, Table 1.

**Losing Jewish identity?** In the 1930s the rate of out-marriage (marrying a non-Jew) was below 5% in most countries where Jews lived, and in no community did it rise above 35%. Seventy years later, most Jews live in countries where the intermarriage rate is above 35%, and the majority above 50%. In addition the growth of Jews cohabiting, often in interfaith relationships, may be a "way of resolving the issue of intermarriage by circumventing it," said Erik Cohen, contributor to the 2009 book Jewish Intermarriage Around the World, Transaction Books, by Shulamit Reinhard and Segio DellaPergola.

SOURCE: Article in Religion Watch, Volume 25, Number 1, Nov-Dec 2009, Page 10.

**Global energy demand.** The increasing demand for global energy can be seen in the Table below, units being expressed in billion tonnes of oil equivalent. Both coal and nuclear energy are likely to double in terms of supply over the 40-year period 1990 to 2030, and "other" (mostly hydroelectricity and biomass and waste) grows faster still. By comparison the world population grows nothing like so fast, but we are consuming on average per person more and more energy.

Type of global energy demand						
Year	Total bn tonnes oil equiv	Coal	Nuclear	Oil	Other	Population in billions
1990	8.8	2.3	1.7	3.2	1.6	5.3
2007	12.1	3.1	2.6	4.1	2.3	6.6
2015	13.5	3.9	2.9	4.2	2.5	7.1
2030	16.9	4.9	3.5	4.9	3.6	8.2
%1990-2030	+92%	+113%	+106%	+53%	+125%	+55%

SOURCE: Annual Review 2009, Operating at the energy frontiers, BP, London, 2010, Page 9.

**Men unhappy in church.** A survey for Sorted magazine found that two-thirds (67%) of men said they felt uncomfortable singing in church (although 80% were happy to sing in the shower) and a similar proportion felt "ill at ease" in a pew. Most had in fact been to a church in the last 2 years but mainly for funerals or weddings.

SOURCE: Article in Baptist Times, 21st May, 2010 from a Christian Research study.

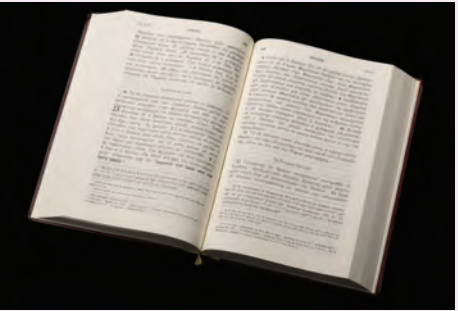
**Orthodox growing in Latin America.** The various Orthodox Churches in the UK are growing, if only slowly. They are doing the same in Latin America, where perhaps their use of liturgy, icons and veneration of the Virgin Mary attract Latinos disillusioned by the various scandals affecting the Roman Catholic church. Such disillusionment has benefited evangelicals also! The increase is happening in both Spanish and Portuguese parts of Latin America, and especially among those of local Indian descent.

SOURCE: Article in Religion Watch, Volume 25, Number 2, Jan-Feb 2010, Page 6.

**Trust in Management Teams.** What helps trust to develop in management teams was the subject of a survey in 2009. The length of time the leader had been in post was important, the length of time a person had been involved in a particular organisation (both the longer, the better), the size of the organisation (the larger, the better), and the better a person knew the line manager were key factors. The survey found that women managers were less trusted than men, and private-sector CEOs more than public-sector. While the survey did not cover churches or Christian agencies at all, the findings suggest obvious similarities.

SOURCE: Article in Management Today, September 2009, Page 48.





## REFLECTIONS

### Because You Prayed to Me...

The situation could not have been more desperate. They were vastly outnumbered. There was no place to run, no place to hide. The odds were totally against them and they were looking defeat in the face. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had Jerusalem under siege. He had already been on the rampage through Judah and had attacked and captured all the other 'fortified cities'. Jerusalem stood alone. There would be no help forthcoming, no other armies coming to their aid. Humanly speaking, they were on their own.

Sennacherib of Assyria sent his field commander to meet with some of the official representatives of King Hezekiah of Judah. He reinforced to them the hopelessness of their situation and reminded them that they had no one to call on. He even said it would be a mistake to let King Hezekiah persuade them to trust in the Lord!

What was Hezekiah's course of action resulting from all this? He went to the temple and prayed. And God answered. Through the prophet Isaiah, He sent a message saying, "Because you have prayed to Me .. this is what I'm going to do" (Isaiah 37:21). The question is – what if Hezekiah had not prayed? What if he had been so overcome by the dire circumstances that he had decided to capitulate to Sennacherib and he had not taken the time to pray?

There were, of course, all sorts of other things that he could have done. He could have met with his generals and commanders to discuss how they could best further defend their city. He could have checked their supplies of weapons and ammunition, making sure they had such resources as were available. He could have walked around the ramparts talking to the men, encouraging and reassuring them. He could have engaged himself in a lot of ways. Instead, he prayed. He laid it all out before the Lord and asked for His deliverance. And the Lord answered – because he had prayed.

Be encouraged! Keep on praying! Sometimes the Lord brings us to desperate or crisis situations to drive us to our knees and to fulfil His plans. We may not always see the answers to our prayers as quickly as Hezekiah did, and not necessarily on the same scale nor in the way we asked God to answer, but God is at work and He responds to our prayers. And one day, we may have the joy of hearing him say, "Because you prayed to Me ... I did that".

Mrs Bev Lindsay, Christian Vocations, now a ministry of Global Connections, reprinted with permission and adapted from their May/June World Prayer News, email: info@globalconnections.co.uk. For an online version visit [www.worldprayermap.co.uk](http://www.worldprayermap.co.uk).

## Old English Churches

There are 38,000 churches (including perhaps 2,000 congregations not meeting in a dedicated building) in England in 2010 and a further 10,000 in the other 3 component countries of the United Kingdom. Perhaps 1,500 of these have started in the last 10 years – “21st century churches” – but these are offset by an equal or greater number of closures.

While just over two-thirds (72%) of these were built in the 19th and 20th centuries, an astonishing fifth, 7,000, of our churches (19%) still in use today were built before 1300. In passing, that means that over the 500 years 1300 to 1799 only 9% of today's churches (3,500) were built. No wonder so much of our ecclesiastical heritage is tied up with these very old churches! Virtually all of the 7,000 are Anglican (now), virtually all are in rural villages, virtually all are listed buildings.



Almost half of these churches would be Broad/Liberal – middle-of-the-road – churches deliberately desirous of welcoming all in their village, especially if they were the only church, with a fifth Anglo-Catholic or Roman Catholic, a fifth Evangelical, and the remainder Low Church.

Geographically, these churches are not spread uniformly across the country. Almost a third (30%) are in the south-east, although relatively few are in London itself, a fifth (19%) are in the south-west, one in eight (13%) are in East Anglia, almost a quarter (23%) are in the Midlands, and the remaining 15% are in the North, broadly reflecting the early pattern of population settlement in the country.

Why were so many built of such solid stone so many years ago? William the Conqueror's triumph over Harold in 1066 was the main reason. 6,000 of these 7,000 churches were built in the 250 year window between the Conquest and the Black Death.

- William built castles as well as churches, so it was safer for peasants to live in small, isolated units.
- A feudal form of government could force labour, especially in winter when farming duties were much fewer, to build churches.
- Economically, trade was good (William brought cross-channel links with the continent), especially for sheep grazing in the rural countryside, so money was available for the best materials.
- An unified theology saw many lords wishing to have places where people could pray for their souls – the Renaissance had yet to begin in earnest.
- The climate was generally warmer so people could live further north and not freeze in winter.
- It was a time of peace – the Hundred Years War had yet to start.

Some of these churches may have replaced existing buildings; the Domesday Book listed 15,000 clergy in 1086. The churches were often built much larger than needed for the average village population, so sufficed when the population grew again after the Black Death rendering new buildings or extensions unnecessary. But then the country was at war; the huge theological challenge of the Reformation was around the corner; trade was less prosperous, and the feudal system was struggling to survive.

The results of that “window of opportunity” have lasted literally hundreds of years. Although our drums may beat to a different tune now, we will still be passing on a spiritual legacy to those who come after us. Such a legacy may not be awe-inspiring buildings, but in using the “window of opportunity” to further the Kingdom.

**SOURCE:** Date of Foundation of Churches in England, originally prepared for English Heritage in 1999, but updated by Brierley Consultancy in 2009.

### WHAT SOME PEOPLE SAY

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed Alex standing in the foyer of the church staring up at a large plaque covered with names. The 6-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the little boy, and said quietly, “Good morning, Alex.”

“Good morning, Pastor,” he replied, still focussed on the plaque. “Pastor, what is this?”

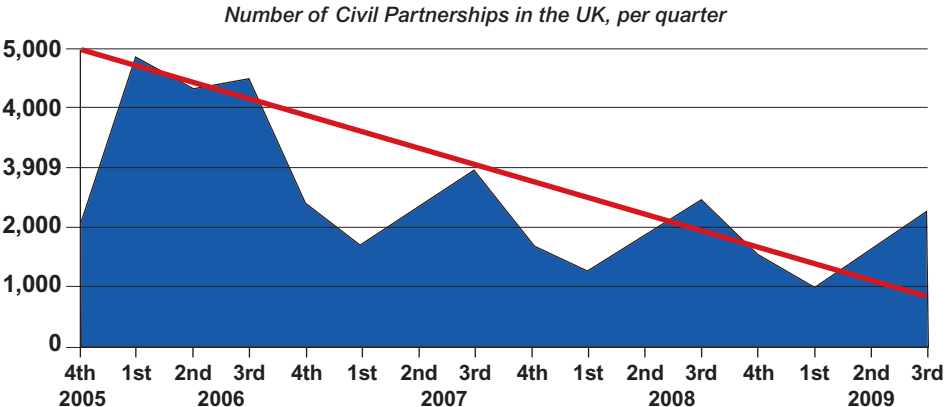
The pastor said, “Well, son, it's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in service.”

Soberly, they just stood together, staring at the large plaque. Finally, little Alex's voice, barely audible and trembling with fear, asked, “Which service ... the 9.30 or the 11.00?”

**SOURCE:** Email from Glenda Weidon, Australia, 6th September 2009.

## Civil Partnerships

The 2004 Civil Partnership Act came into force on 5th December 2005 in the UK, the first day that same-sex couples aged 16 or over could give notice of their intention to form a civil partnership, with the actual date of obtaining legal recognition of their relationship 16 days later. The graph shows the quarterly rate since then, although the 2005 figure is just for the one month.



In technical terms, these numbers form a “binomial” series, something which starts large and then gradually gets smaller, because those in the initial “queue” have now obtained a partnership. However, civil partnerships are different in that, like traditional marriages, the summer months are favoured most, and thus “humping”, obvious in the graph, distorts the trend shown by the annual figures, which, if continued, could become just 1,000 by 2015:

2005	2,000 (one month; annual rate of 23,400)
2006	16,100
2007	8,700
2008	7,200
2009	5,400 (estimate)

The total number of civil partnerships between 2006 and 2008 were 4% of the number of heterosexual marriages in the same period. Whether this gives an estimate for the proportion of homosexuals in the UK is not known. The 4% varies across the UK: it is 4.2% for England, 2.9% for Wales, 2.6% for Scotland and 1.3% for N Ireland, suggesting a greater proportion of homosexuals live in England than other parts of the UK.

What does this mean for churches? It seems that relatively few people living in civil partnerships are churchgoers, although no obvious statistics are available, but, the church needs to maintain her calling that God's amazing saving grace is available to us all.

**SOURCES:** Population Trends, Office for National Statistics, Numbers 137 and 139, Autumn 2009 and Spring 2010, Pages 100 and 132 respectively.

## Seeing the Bigger Picture

A new report from The Work Foundation found that outstanding leaders:

- Think and act systemically, seeing the whole picture rather than compartmentalising.
- See people as the sole route to performance and are deeply people and relationship centred rather than just people orientated.
- Are self-confident without being arrogant; they are aware of their strengths and position of influence, yet see these for the benefit of their organisation and its people.

Penny Tamkin, author of the report, said, “Outstanding leaders focus on people, attitudes and engagement, co-creating vision and strategy.”

**SOURCE:** Professional Manager, March 2010, Page 43.

continued from page 1



### Providing Facts for Forward Planning

### SNIPPETS

1) The average citizen of the world today is under 30. Before he or she dies, the average will probably be over 50.

2) Probably one in 8 Australian clergy in pastoral ministry is divorced.

3) Apprenticeships in the UK have become popular again. Almost 5,000 completion certificates were issued in 2009.

4) In almost every European country, most women are having at least one child fewer than their mothers, and two fewer than their grandmothers.

5) Seven out of 8 UK female students would consider glamour modelling to fund their studies; one in 3 would work in a strip club. 70% were happy to be photographed in their underwear for cash.

6) One in four children born today will live beyond 100.

7) 2.7% of English churches currently in use (1 in every 37) are more than 1,000 years old.

**SOURCES:** 1) and 4) Peoplequake, Fred Pearce, Transworld Publishers, 2010, Pages 5 and 118; 2) Rowland Croucher, John Mark Ministries, Australia, email 10th May 2010; 3) Professional Manager, CMI, Volume 19, Issue 2, March 2010, Page 13; 5) Survey of 1,022 students carried out by studentgems.com, as reported in Research Brief, Christian Research April 2010, Page 2; 6) Preparing for our Ageing Society, Department of Works and Pensions, 2008; 7) Date of Foundation of Churches in England, Report for English Heritage, 2009, Page 4.

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## The Challenge of an Ageing Population

**Revd Canon Graham Hedger,  
Bishop's Policy & Liaison Officer, Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**

It is no secret that the population of Britain is both growing and ageing. The combination of a falling birth rate (though this may be changing) and the increasing longevity of life is producing both a larger population and a significant increase in the over 65s.

In the 50 years from 1971 to 2021 the proportion of the UK population aged over 65 is expected to increase from 10%

to 19%, as Table 1 indicates. The increase in population is not uniform across Britain, or even the regions and counties. In Suffolk, the changes, while not dramatic, are significant especially in the coastal strip covered by two district councils (Suffolk Coastal and Waveney). In the period between 2001 and 2021 the population over the age of 65 in Suffolk Coastal is expected to increase by 50%, as shown in Table 2.

The two districts, although different, share several common elements. Both have one significant centre of population: Lowestoft in Waveney, and Felixstowe in Suffolk Coastal. However, Lowestoft has significant deprivation and economic problems. Felixstowe is smaller and is growing; it has the largest UK container port, though it, too, has some pockets of deprivation. Both districts share a common problem of an ageing population. The coastal strip and small market towns attract recently retired people into the area and a combination of relative affluence and healthy lifestyles may well be significant contributing factors to longevity of life.

Such a growth brings with it challenges and opportunities for the local authorities, primary care trusts, the voluntary sector and the churches. One of the advantages of this growing population is that many of the 'young old' are willing and able volunteers in the numerous charities and community groups in the area. This has breathed new life into organisations and helped many communities tackle local need. In the current climate where local authorities will be seeking to move from providing some services to commissioning from the third sector this

is welcome news. Good health, relative wealth and ability mask many other issues, and, in particular, longer term issues for an elderly population. It is known that in many of the villages and towns of the area there are many people over the retirement age who do not have generous (if any) private pensions, and do not have good health. Long term action by the local authorities and the third sector has sought to address this through advice on benefits and the development of outreach services. The churches, working in partnership with many agencies, are frequently the vehicle for bringing people and agencies to together so that people can continue to live in their homes for longer periods.

As the population continues to get older we will face increasing issues of health, mobility and access to services. Churches will need to work in partnership with other organisations to promote good neighbour schemes. Frequently these exist (as in Suffolk where Suffolk ACRE, the rural community council) promotes the scheme and so the churches are encouraged to provide helpers.

There are other issues to be taken into account. Nationally the Church of England is experiencing a decline in stipendiary clergy, and over the next few years there will be significant reductions. This will impact on the whole church but could be felt most keenly in rural churches where often clergy are expected to be responsible for several churches. Providing the fall in stipendiary numbers is matched by an increase in self supporting clergy and other forms of ministry then the problem will not be too severe. But, will this pool of willing and able people begin to dry up as congregations continue to both decline and get older?

It has always been difficult in small churches to provide a balance of activities and services that attract younger people. If the

population in the area is growing older then there will be fewer young people to start with. Add to that the problem of attracting them to church events and it could be a recipe for accelerated decline. The options might include accepting the situation and urging families to travel to larger town churches, or perhaps arranging specialised events on an occasional basis to complement what happens on a regular basis. My experience of four small rural churches is that some of the oldest church members are game for anything and welcome changes to church life. They recognise that not everything on offer is their cup of tea but see it as the way forward.

I believe that as we get to grips with some of the challenges presented by the ageing population we will discover new and innovative ways of meeting the needs. We might start employing church community workers who specialise in care of the older members of a community. We will certainly need to look beyond the local church and think across areas for both this sort of ministry and other specialist roles. We might find that some churches specialise in ministering to specific groups of people (a revision of Donald McGavran's "homogeneous principle" of church growth).

Is the future one of gloom? No. I recognise that being on the edge means that frequently you are in front of the curve. In Suffolk over the past 40 years we have developed a range of solutions to ministry which have later been recognised by the wider church as innovative. I don't know what we will do but I do believe that we will rise to the challenge.

**SOURCES:** Mid-year estimates 1971 -2008 and 2008 based projections 2008–2026, Office for National Statistics; Projected changes in population, Suffolk County Council citing Dwelling led projections, Royal Statistical Society, December 2006.