

TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION: ASSESSING THE STATE OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN A CHANGING WORLD

by

MADISON KALECHI POLLARD-SHORE

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS BY RESEARCH

Department of Philosophy, Theology and Religion

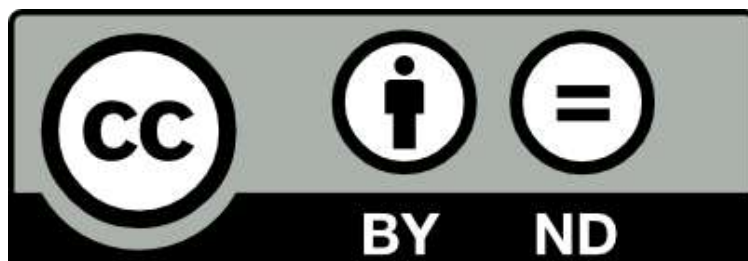
College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

May 2024

Complete at 36,521 words

University of Birmingham Research Archive e-theses repository



This unpublished thesis/dissertation is under a Creative Commons Attribution- NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0) licence.

You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially.

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

 **Attribution** — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

 **NoDerivatives** — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you may not distribute the modified material.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

Notices:

You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.

No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Unless otherwise stated, any material in this thesis/dissertation that is cited to a third party source is not included in the terms of this licence. Please refer to the original source(s) for licencing conditions of any quotes, images or other material cited to a third party.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines factors that may lead to growth within the Church of England. The research focuses on specifically the impact that worship music, theological and social viewpoints, and leadership style have on attendance figures within the church. In order to understand these factors, this thesis analyses data collected through a survey to identify whether one factor influences affiliation more than any other. The thesis concludes that whilst one factor has a larger impact than others, there is no definitive answer as to what draws individuals to churches. Further examination could include investigation of regional differences, or more in-depth study of the impact of social attitudes on religious affiliation.

DEDICATION

For Tom,

Thank you for believing in me, when no-one else did. For showing me what I am capable of, and for being there to slow me down when I need it.

Thank you for your unending love and support. We did it!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thanks to Professor Andrew Davies for his ongoing support for my research, and for his never ending patience. Thank you for taking the chance on an unproven student, and for your guidance throughout my course.

To the London Library, for allowing me to use their writing room and collection of books in order to complete this thesis.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	11
List of Figures.....	12
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Hypotheses	2
1.3 Value of the approach	3
1.4 Outline of the thesis	4
CHAPTER TWO – THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND	7
2.1 The Decline in Church Attendance	7
2.2 The Decline in Religious Affiliation	9
2.3 The Decline in Religious Belief	11
2.4 Areas of Growth	12
2.4.1 Growth of the Religious ‘Other’	12
2.4.2 Growth of the Religious ‘Nones’.....	15
2.5 The Way out of Decline.....	16
2.5.1 The Charismatic Evangelicals.....	17
2.5.2 Anglo-Catholics and the rise of Cathedral worship	23
2.5.3 Renewal and Reform	26
2.5.4 Resource Churches	30

2.6 Religious Market Theory and Opportunities for Growth	33
CHAPTER THREE - WORSHIP	36
3.1 Music.....	36
3.1.1 The rise of Contemporary Worship Music.....	36
3.1.2 Lyrics	40
3.1.3 Instrumentation	44
3.1.4 Style.....	46
3.2 Prayer Culture.....	49
3.2.1 Structured Prayer.....	49
3.2.2. Free Prayer.....	51
3.3 Gifts of the Spirit	53
3.4 Observation of Services	55
3.4.1 St Luke's Gas Street.....	55
3.4.1.1 Introduction.....	55
3.4.1.2 Worship	56
3.4.1.3 Liturgy.....	57
3.4.1.4 Community	58
3.4.1.5 Context	59
3.4.2 Canterbury Cathedral	60
3.4.2.1 Worship	60
3.4.2.2 Liturgy.....	61

3.4.2.3 Community	61
3.4.2.4 Context	62
3.4.3 St Peter's, Diocese of Chichester	63
3.4.3.1 Worship	63
3.4.3.2 Liturgy.....	64
3.4.3.3 Community	64
3.4.3.4 Context	65
3.4.4 St Mary's Iffley, Diocese of Oxford.....	65
3.4.4.1 Worship	66
3.4.4.2 Liturgy.....	66
3.4.4.3 Community	67
3.4.4.4 Context	67
3.5 Evaluation	68
3.5.1 Worship.....	68
3.5.2 Liturgy	69
3.5.3 Community.....	69
3.5.4 Context and Environment	70
CHAPTER FOUR - SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES	72
4.1 Social Conservatism and LGBT+ Rights.....	72
4.1.1 Same-Sex Marriage	73
4.1.2 Conversion Therapy Ban	79

4.1.3 Queer Theology and LGBT+ Inclusion.....	82
4.2 Social Engagement and Serving Christ in the Community.....	84
4.2.1 Youth Clubs	88
4.2.2 Food Banks and Advice Centres	89
4.2.3 Alpha	89
CHAPTER FIVE - DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF CHURCH WEBSITES.....	94
5.1 Background.....	94
5.1.1 Strengths	95
5.1.2 Weaknesses	96
5.2 The Church Online.....	97
5.2.1 The Church during Covid-19.....	98
5.3 Website Analysis.....	100
5.3.1 St Luke's Gas Street.....	101
5.3.1.1 Technical Adequacy	101
5.3.1.2 Web Content.....	102
5.3.1.3 Web Appearance.....	103
5.3.1.4 Conclusion.....	104
5.3.2 St Peter's, Diocese of Chichester	105
5.3.2.1 Technical Adequacy	105
5.3.2.2 Web Content.....	105
5.3.2.3 Web Appearance.....	107

5.3.2.4 Conclusion.....	107
5.3.3 St Mary's Iffley, Diocese of Oxford.....	107
5.3.3.1 Technical Adequacy	107
5.3.3.2 Content.....	108
5.3.3.3 Web Appearance.....	110
5.3.3.4 Conclusion.....	110
5.3.4 Canterbury Cathedral	111
5.3.4.1 Technical Adequacy	111
5.3.4.2 Web Content.....	111
5.3.4.3 Web Appearance.....	113
5.3.4.4 Conclusion.....	113
5.4 Conclusion	114
CHAPTER SIX - LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH ..	117
6.1 Capacity.....	119
6.1.1 One Priest for One Parish.....	121
6.1.2 One Priest for a network of Churches.....	122
6.1.3 Leadership Teams	124
6.2 Charisma.....	125
6.2.1 Vision and Vision Direction	128
6.3 Celebrity.....	131
6.3.1 Hillsong and HTB Churches.....	131

6.3.2 Billy Graham and TV Evangelists	132
6.3.3 Celebrity.....	133
6.3.3.1 Celebrity Congregants.....	134
6.3.3.2 Celebrity Clergy	135
6.4 Training	136
6.4.1 Ordination of Women.....	137
CHAPTER SEVEN - METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS.....	142
7.1 Background.....	142
7.2 Results	148
7.2.1 Demographic Data.....	148
7.3 Conclusion	164
CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION	165
BIBLIOGRAPHY	175
APPENDICES	210
APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET.....	210
APPENDIX B - PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM.....	211

List of Tables

Table 1 – Theological Viewpoint by Worship Type 153

Table 2 - Theological Viewpoint by Bible Usage 154

Table 3 -Theological Viewpoint against Top Priority when selecting a church
155

Table 4 - Age against Theological Viewpoint 156

Table 5 - Age against Top Priority when selecting a church 157

Table 6 - Leadership Size against Top Priority when selecting a church 158

Table 7 - Worship Style against Top Priority when selecting a church 159

Table 8 - Age against level of agreement with Church Theological Viewpoint
160

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Religious Affiliation by Religion (2017)	10
Figure 2 - Religious Affiliation by Religion (2007)	10
Figure 3 - Religious Affiliation by Religion (2021)	11
Figure 4 - Church Attendance by Denomination (2005)	13
Figure 5 - Church Attendance by Denomination (2015)	13
Figure 6 - Previous Church of Resource Church Attendants	31
Figure 7 - Age Profile of Resource Churches	32
Figure 8 - Age Distribution of Respondents	148
Figure 9 - Geographic Distribution of Respondents	149
Figure 10 - Worship Style of Respondent's Churches	150
Figure 11 - Worship Leadership of Respondents	150
Figure 12 - Theological Viewpoint of Respondents' Churches	151
Figure 13 - Frequency of Bible Usage in Church	152
Figure 14 - Top Priority Factor for Respondents	152

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Church membership in the UK reached its peak in around 1930, with approximately 10.3 million people attending churches. Since the 1960s, the Church of England has seen a steep decline in both religious attendance and affiliation. In fact, this is not a phenomenon that is unique to the Church of England, and across the country, religious affiliation to religions of all flavours has been in decline over the past decades. The Church has always played a role in British life, with the 2021 census marking the first time that the UK was not a majority-Christian country.

With fewer people identifying with a specific religion, there is a visible increase in both those identifying as non-religious, the religious ‘nones’, as well as in those who identify with spirituality in general, but not with a specific religion.

This thesis is less interested with the factors that lead to this decline in affiliation, and by extension, the decline in attendance at churches across the nation, studied at

great length by Wilson¹, Davie², Bruce³, McLeod⁴, and Hollinghurst⁵, but rather focuses on factors that might support growth again within the church.

I was raised outside the Church of England, and since my early teens, I have seen a decline in the number of my friends that identify as religious, and also in those who regularly attend church. Whilst questioning my religious identity, I have attended a number of churches from different denominations and styles. Across all the services I attended, I saw a vast difference in demographics between different churches, and this is what triggered my initial interest in this area of research.

1.2 Hypotheses

In this thesis, I will look to answer three hypotheses on what factors may help to stimulate growth within the Church of England, and if these factors differ based on demographic data, including age and geographical location. The factors that will be considered throughout this research are the style of worship music, the leadership culture of the church and the theological and social viewpoint of the church.

¹ Bryan R. Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1979).

² Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publ., 1994).

³ Steve Bruce, *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002).

⁴ Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵ Steve Hollinghurst, *Mission-Shaped Evangelism: The Gospel in Contemporary Culture* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 2010).

The hypotheses are as follows:

H¹ - Charismatic Evangelical church services are more appealing to young people (<30 years).

H² - The style of worship music is the key factor when deciding on which church to attend.

H³ - Charismatic worship is concentrated in cities, with traditional worship dominant in rural communities.

1.3 Value of the approach

This research makes several important contributions to our understanding of church growth in the Church of England. First, it addresses a critical knowledge gap by systematically analysing multiple factors - worship music, theological positions, social viewpoints, and leadership approaches - that may influence church attendance.

While previous studies have often examined these factors in isolation, or considered liturgical positioning and its impact on church affiliation, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of their relative importance and interrelationships.

Second, by using survey data to quantitatively assess the impact of different factors, this study moves beyond anecdotal evidence to provide empirical insights that could be used as a basis for decision-making. A finding that one factor has a particularly strong influence, while still acknowledging the complexity of church growth, offers

practical value for religious institutions seeking to understand and address attendance patterns and their continued decline.

Finally, this research opens up valuable new directions for future scholarship by identifying the need to examine regional variations and the relationship between social attitudes and religious affiliation. These suggested areas for further investigation demonstrate how this work not only contributes to current knowledge but also lays the groundwork for deeper understanding of church growth dynamics.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

In the remainder of this thesis, I attempt to identify how the three above-mentioned factors, namely worship, social perspectives and leadership can play a role in believers deciding which type of church they choose to attend and identify with.

Chapter two provides an introduction to both the state of the Church of England at present, as well as a discussion of the current trends in religious affiliation, for both the Church of England, and the wider religious community. Through an examination of national Census data, as well as an examination of datasets on religious affiliation, this chapter charts the decline in religious affiliation and attendance, and the rise of non-religious identities. This is followed by an examination of those Christian traditions that are seeing growth, as well as an initial introduction to the Renewal and Reform guidance that was issued by the Church of England in 2015. The chapter closes with an examination of Resource Churches as an offshoot of Renewal and Reform, and their attendance profiles as a potential model for church growth.

Chapter three of this thesis examines the first of three factors, that of Worship. In this chapter, consideration is given to the music used during a worship service, including the lyrics, instrumentation, and style of the music, and the effect that these can have on the worshippers. Secondly, it considers prayer culture, and the use of either free or structured prayer in a church service, and what impact this may have on attendees. The chapter includes a participant observation of three different church services, one from a charismatic evangelical church, St Lukes' Gas Street, one from an Anglican cathedral, Canterbury Cathedral, and two from more typical parish churches, St Peter's East Blatchington and St Mary's, Iffley. The observation of these services goes some way to exploring how worship music and prayer can lead to affiliation with one style of church over another.

In chapter four, I examine the church within the community. This begins with a discussion of the social perspectives held by differing church communities on topics such as LGBT+ rights, including their views on same-sex marriage, and the proposed ban on conversion therapy. The second part of the chapter looks at engagement with the local community through outreach programmes such as Alpha, as well as providing services such as debt advice clinics, young children's groups and food banks.

Chapter five is a digital ethnography, or netnography, examining the websites of the four churches first examined in chapter 2. It considers the role of the Church online, including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and then examines the three church websites in detail. It looks at the websites through the lens of the Aladwani-Palvia instrument, using technical adequacy, web content presentation and web appearance as the key areas for analysis, as well as capturing how each website presents

information relating to my three overarching categories of worship, leadership and social perspectives. This chapter seeks to identify what role, if any, the digital presence of the church has on church affiliation.

Chapter six looks at the idea of leadership as an influencing factor when deciding which type of church to attend. I examine leadership through the categories of capacity, charisma, celebrity and training, as well as looking at the discussion around the role of women in the church, and views on the ordination of women. This chapter aims to identify whether one style of leadership is leading to more growth within the church than others, as well as identifying the potential risks that varying styles of leadership can present.

Chapter seven contains the methodology used for my quantitative and qualitative research, as well as an examination of the results. This chapter looks to analyse the data collected from participants via an online survey, with the goal of identifying whether one of the three key factors of worship, social perspectives, or leadership have an impact on decisions to affiliate yourself with a particular church, or church tradition.

Chapter eight draws the thesis to a conclusion, restating the hypotheses of the thesis, as well as evaluating each of the three research methods in answering the questions posited at the beginning of the thesis. The chapter closes with an examination of the implications of this thesis on existing scholarship, as well as outlining a path for future research into this area.

CHAPTER TWO – THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

2.1 The Decline in Church Attendance

In her book ‘That was the Church that was’⁶Linda Woodhead claims that ‘in England today ‘religion’ has become a toxic brand and Anglicanism something done by other people.’ Faith surveys conducted by Brierley Consultancy⁷ and YouGov⁸ within the UK would appear to uphold this point. Whilst some areas of the church, such as Charismatic Evangelicals, and Anglo-Catholics seem to be seeing a level of growth, many traditions have seen a decline⁹ in their attendance. Attendance is declining to such a level that in 2016, the Church of England embarked upon a programme entitled ‘Renewal and Reform’¹⁰ designed to see growth in the number of people attending churches across the country, and to foster a deepening in personal discipleship amongst those who were already Christian.

⁶ Andrew Brown and Linda Woodhead, *That Was the Church, That Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2017).

⁷ “Affiliation and Attendance from 1983 |,” Brin.ac.uk (British Religion in Numbers, 2017), <http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures/affiliation-and-attendance-from-1983/>.

⁸ Iain Emberson, “Faith Survey | Christianity in the UK,” Faithsurvey.co.uk (Brierley Consultancy, 2018), <https://faithsurvey.co.uk/uk-christianity.html>.

⁹ Affiliation and Attendance from 1983’, (*British Religion in Numbers*, 2017)

¹⁰ “Renewal and Reform,” 2015, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-reform>.

‘Renewal and Reform’, which will be examined more fully later in this chapter, is a Church of England Programme aimed at seeing growth in the numbers attending church, and the depth of each person’s discipleship. In this thesis, I aim to discover whether any effect of ‘Renewal and Reform’ can be seen within the last 9 years since its implementation, and ask whether there is any evidence to suggest its impact in three specific areas: Worship Music, Theological viewpoints and Leadership Culture.

There is a theory that religious identification, and attendance at church follows a natural peak and flow, and that we are at the end of an ebb, and that we are about to see an upward trend within the next few decades.¹¹ This ebb and subsequent flow has been reflected in previous census figures, which have shown a fluctuation in church attendance figures across past generations.

Brierley Consultancy also published statistics for church attendance between 1980 and 2018. Attendance at any church in the UK has declined from 6,484,300 to 3,081,500. In 2015, only 4.7% of the population attended church in England, which was lower than Wales and Scotland at 4.8% and 8.9% respectively. The Brierley Consultancy have also published a forecast for continuing change in UK church membership across denominations from 2013-2020. They predicted that New Churches, Orthodox and Pentecostal churches would see an increase, but overall, the church would see a 7% decline in attendance¹². This is currently an accurate

¹¹ Stephen Bullivant, “The ‘No Religion’ Population of Britain,” vol. 3 (London, UK: St Mary’s University, 2017), pp. 1-20.

¹² ‘Affiliation and Attendance from 1983’, (*British Religion in Numbers*, 2012)

reflection of the UK as a whole, with most of the growth seen happening around large population centres, such as London and Manchester.

2.2 The Decline in Religious Affiliation

However, whilst there are natural changes in church affiliation figures in the UK, overall affiliation figures are at an all-time low, with almost 50% of people no longer identifying as religious.¹³ One view is that the UK has hit 'peak secular'¹⁴ with even those who were raised within the church no longer attending by the time they are in their mid-twenties.¹⁵ This would support the theory of religious identification, as a decrease in affiliation would likely lead to a decrease in attendance. Now only those over 55 have a majority of people who still hold a Christian religious affiliation, which can be seen in the general makeup of many, particularly rural, Anglican churches.

Religious affiliation in the UK has seen a dramatic decline over the past 20 years. Those who identified as Christian, in a survey lead by the Office of National Statistics, has seen a decline of over the last ten years. Between 2007 and 2017, the percentage of people in the UK who identify as Christian has seen a drop of 21.3%, as shown in Figures 1 and 2 below. As mentioned previously, the number of people

¹³ Harriet Sherwood, "Nearly 50% Are of No Religion – but Has UK Hit 'Peak Secular'?", the Guardian (The Guardian, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/13/uk-losing-faith-religion-young-reject-parents-beliefs>.

¹⁴ Sherwood, 'Peak Secular'

¹⁵ "British Social Attitudes 35" (London, UK: National Centre for Social Research, 2018).

who identify as 'No Religion' has increased by 19.1 percentage points, from 18% to 37.1%.¹⁶

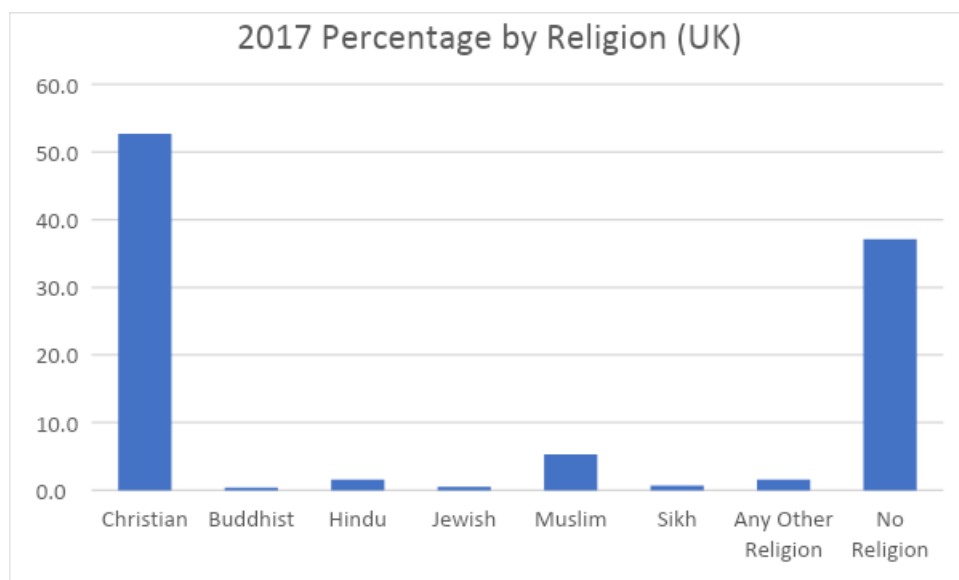


Figure 1 - Religious Affiliation by Religion (2017)

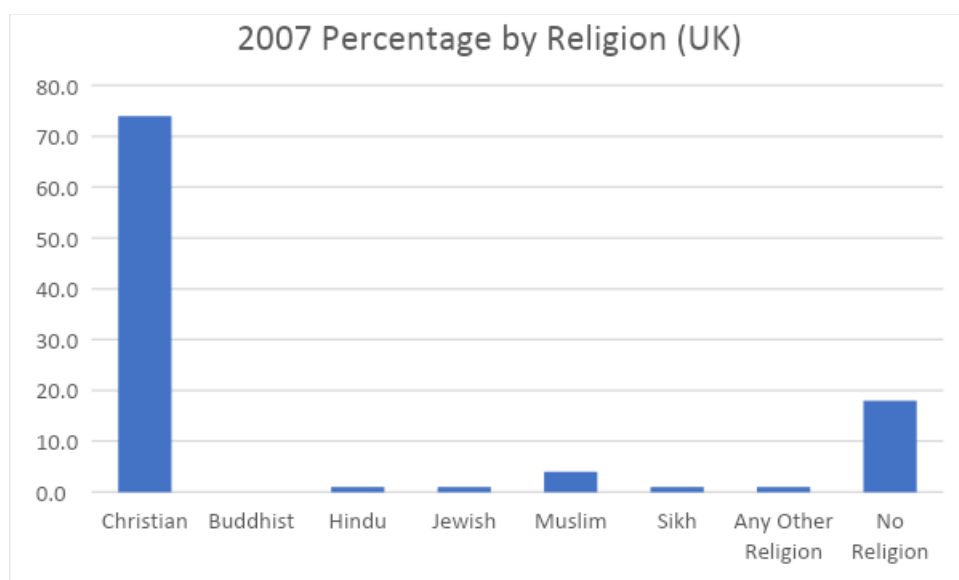


Figure 2 - Religious Affiliation by Religion (2007)

¹⁶ ONS, Office for National Statistics

This decline is again visible in the data made available from the 2021 census, which revealed for the first time that the UK was no longer a majority Christian country, with only 46.49% of census respondents identifying as Christian. Whilst the Census will never be able to capture the identity of all residents, the response rate to the optional religion question was 94% in 2021, an increase from 92.9% on the 2011 census.

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of beliefs among the UK population.

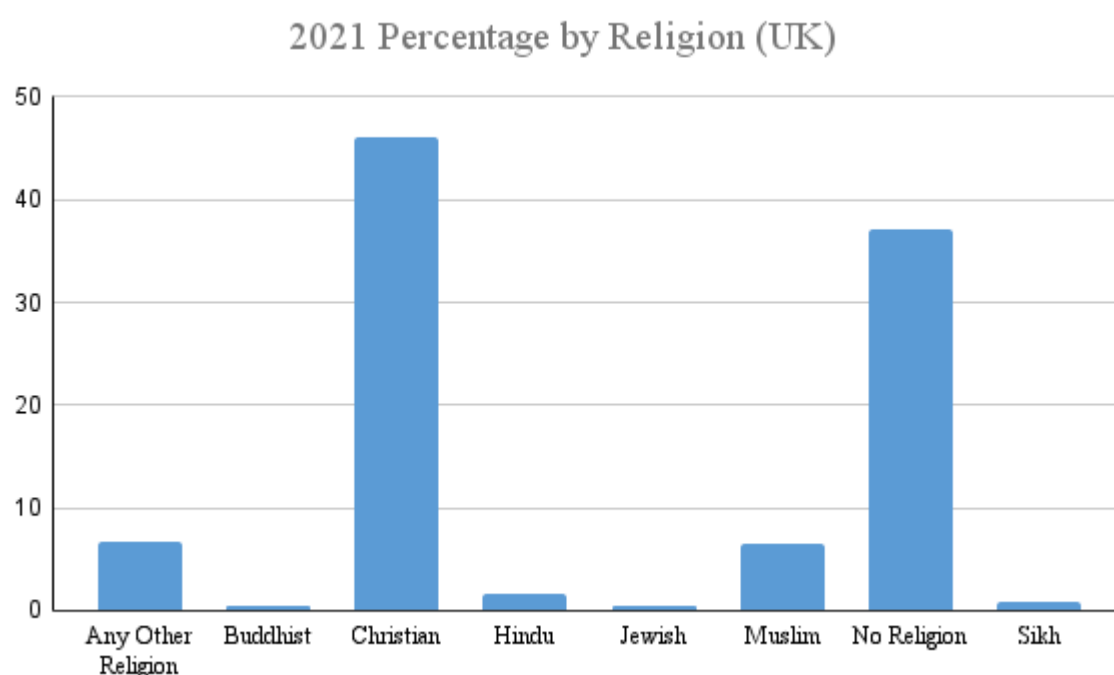


Figure 3 - Religious Affiliation by Religion (2021)

2.3 The Decline in Religious Belief

The 'Faith Survey', run by You Gov in December 2016 shows that religious affiliation is greatly declining in the UK. In December 2016, only 28% of people said that they believe in either God or a higher spiritual power, with another 20% believing in some

kind of spiritual power only¹⁷. Grace Davie coined the phrase ‘Believing without belonging’¹⁸ in the early 1990’s, and the number of Britons that fall into this category of believing in some kind of higher power, but not identifying with any religion. appears to be on the rise.

2.4 Areas of Growth

2.4.1 Growth of the Religious ‘Other’

There has also been a decline across several different denominations of the church within the UK between 2005 and 2015. Whilst most have seen a decline in attendance, a handful of denominations have seen a growth over the ten years between 2005 and 2015 as shown below in Figures 4 and 5. These are Orthodox, Pentecostals, ‘Smaller Denominations’ and ‘New Churches’.¹⁹ Whilst these 2015 statistics were a prediction based on prior growth and decline in the five years between 2005 and 2010, they do align with statistics from surveys held in subsequent years. Following on from 2005, an ecumenical census of church attendance in England was planned for 2016. However, this was cancelled, after several

¹⁷ Iain Emberson, Christianity in the UK, (*Faith Survey*, 2018)

¹⁸ Grace Davie, ‘Believing without Belonging: Is this the Future of Religion in Britain’, *Social Compass*, 37(4); 455-69

¹⁹ Peter Brierley, UK Church Statistics Number 2, 2010 to 2020 (*ABDC Publishers*, 2014)

denominations, including the Church of England were unwilling to sign up.²⁰

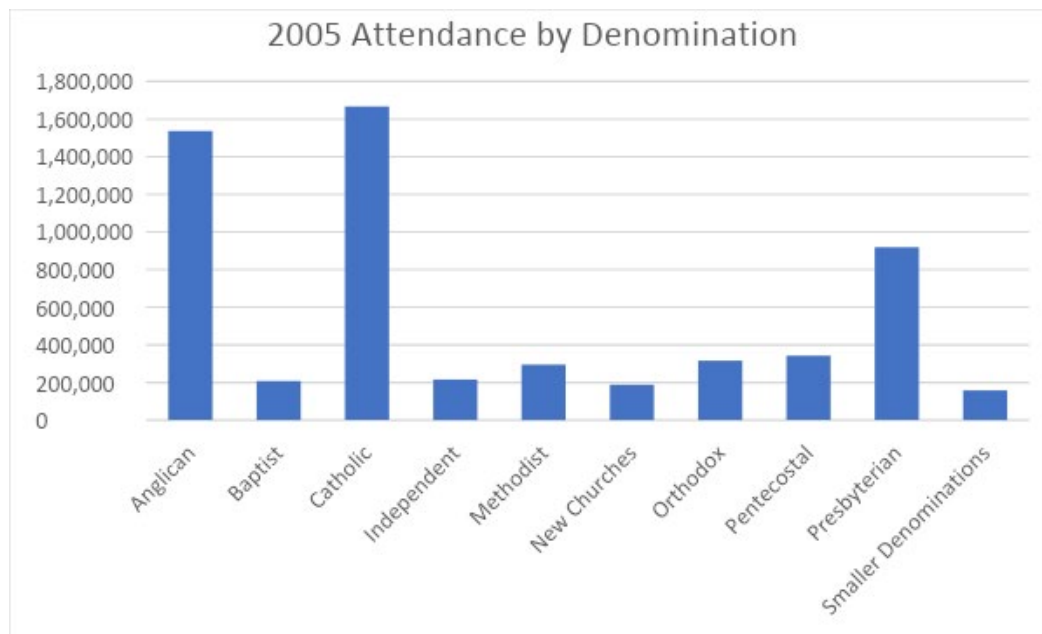


Figure 4 - Church Attendance by Denomination (2005)

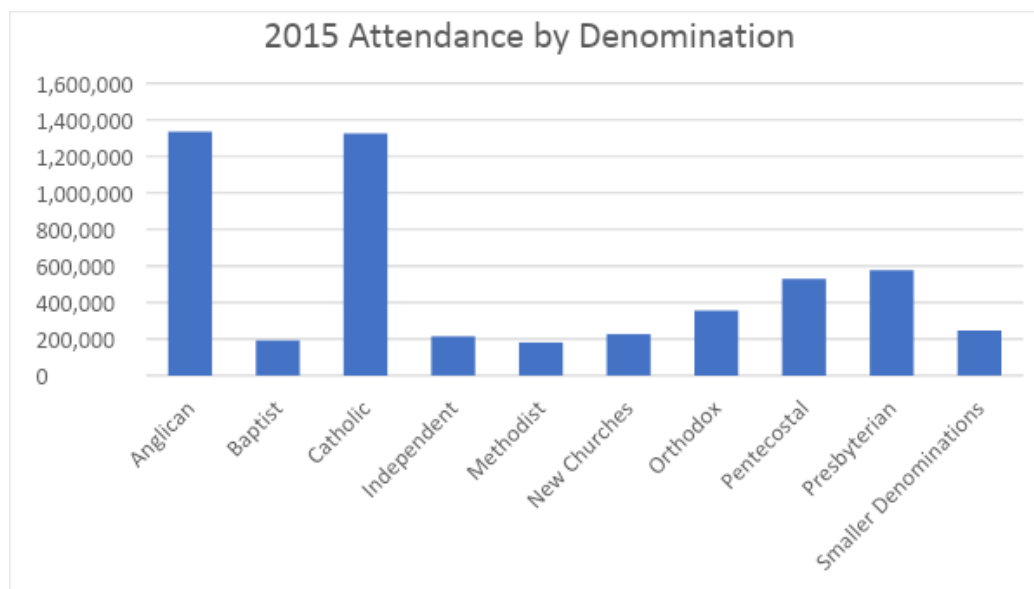


Figure 5 - Church Attendance by Denomination (2015)

²⁰ Hattie Williams, 'Church Census 2016 cancelled after C of E drops out' (*Church Times*, 2016)

It is worth noting that not all other religions are seeing decline in the way that Christianity is. A few religions, namely Muslim, Hindu and 'Any Other Religion' have seen a slight rise, 0.6%, 1.3% and 0.6% respectively. The growth in Islam and Hinduism can be partially explained by increased immigration over the last 20 years, as more foreign nationals move to the UK, and maintain their existing faith whilst they are here. Additionally, Islam has seen an increase in the number of 'reverts', those who have converted to Islam from another faith. A Faith Matters report estimates that an estimated 5,200 people converted to Islam in the UK in 2010²¹, and these numbers have remained consistent year on year since then. Not only are these faiths seeing an increase from converts, but they are not seeing a decrease in 'nonversion', those who were raised in a religious home, and have since identified with 'no religion'. Only 2% of those who identified as non-religious in a 2017 survey came from religious homes that were not Christian, compared to 60% of non-religious people who were brought up as Christians.'

The largest growth that has been seen among 'Any Other Religion' is among Pagans, Wiccans and Spiritualists. In 2001, the census recorded 32,000 people identifying as Spiritualist, 31,000 as Pagan and 7,000 as Wiccans.²² This increased by 2011 to 39,000 people identifying as Spiritualist, 57,000 people as Pagan and 12,000 as Wiccan.²³

²¹ 'A Minority Within a Minority: A Report on Converts to Islam in the United Kingdom' (*Faith Matters*, 2011)

²² 'Census 2001 Maps of Religious Affiliation' (*British Religion in Numbers 2002*)

²³ 'Religion in England and Wales 2011' (*Office for National Statistics*, 2012)

2.4.2 Growth of the Religious ‘Nones’

Writers such as Woodhead²⁴ and J P Thackway²⁵ are among those who discuss the theory that declining numbers in the church is occurring because the church is failing to modernise. Woodhead posits that, because of this clinging to tradition, the church is losing the interest of younger generations, and if the church does not modernise, and soon, it risks sinking further into decline.²⁶ This risk, I would suggest, is reflected in the number of generation Y or ‘millennials’ who do not identify as observing a religion, even if they state that they hold spiritual beliefs. Conversely, Thackway suggests that the ‘new’ modernisation of the church is in fact not new, but something that has happened in the past, and also suggests that ‘keeping to the old paths’ does not automatically mean decline or extinction.

However, data shows whilst there is a decline in people identifying with a religion, there is not a commensurate rise in the number of people identifying as an Atheist. A survey undertaken by YouGov for the Westminster Faith Debates, with Linda Woodhead, found that the number of people identifying as ‘non-religious’ has increased dramatically over the last 30 years. This means that there are many people, usually aged under 30, and often male, who are not atheist, but are so disenfranchised with the Church, they no longer identify as Christian.²⁷

²⁴ Linda Woodhead, “Time to Get Serious,” Churchtimes.co.uk (Church Times, 2014), <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/31-january/features/features/time-to-get-serious>.

²⁵ J.P. Thackway, “Modernise or Perish!,” Bibleleaguetrust.org (Bible League Trust, 2004), <https://www.bibleleaguetrust.org/modernise-or-perish/>.

²⁶ Ben Clements, “Attitudes towards Gay Rights” (British Religion in Numbers, 2017).

²⁷ Linda Woodhead “No Religion’ is the New Religion’, (*Westminster Faith Debates*, 2013)

This survey does not differentiate between those who were raised in a faith and those who were not, but it does show a trend, of religious beliefs not being shared between generations in the family²⁸. This is reflected in the variance in religious identification between the older and younger generations. Whilst Gen X are more likely to say that they identify with a faith, this religious belief is not being successfully transmitted to their children, with younger generations showing a far lower rate of religious identification. If overall 59% of people in the UK identify as Christian, with the majority of these being over 50, it is interesting, and potentially worrying that so few of the younger generation identify with the Christian faith. Of course, there are a number of factors that can affect these. Whilst 59% of the UK say that they would identify as a Christian, nowhere near this many people are attending churches on a weekly basis, or even less frequently.

2.5 The Way out of Decline

Very small areas of the church have seen a rise in their attendance figures among younger generations. For example, Evangelical churches, such as St Matthias, a Holy Trinity Brompton church plant in Plymouth have seen an increase in attendance, following more modern style services, sparking the local press headline 'Church introduces raves and congregation goes through the roof'²⁹. These attendance

²⁸ David Voas and Alasdair Crocket 'Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging' *Sociology of Religion*, 29(1); 11-28

²⁹ Max Channon, 'Church introduces raves and congregation goes through the roof' (*Plymouth Herald*, 2018)

figures are particularly boosted in cities with a large population of students, such as in Plymouth and Birmingham, where the average age of the congregation is far lower than that of a more traditional Anglican church, thanks to their specific student-oriented offerings, such as informal evening services, and specific nights for students (often with pizza).

2.5.1 The Charismatic Evangelicals

As Brierley Consultancy predicted, the Evangelical church has seen large growth in its attendance figures over the past 20 years within the UK. The rise of churches such as Holy Trinity Brompton, and their proclivity for planting churches across the country can explain part of this growth, as can the increase in funding made available for church planting by the Church of England under the guise of their Renewal and Reform guidance. In addition, the style of services within most Evangelical services can be seen by many as more appealing than the traditional Anglican liturgical service.

Evangelical services, with their live worship bands, modern music, and lack of 'stuffy', ritualistic, traditional liturgy can be a lot more accessible, particularly for those who have not attended church before. Whereas a standard Eucharist service can be difficult for a visitor to follow, many modern Evangelical churches use easy to follow songs, with lyrics projected onto large screens, and loud music to reduce feeling self-conscious about singing talent or lack thereof. This, combined with the laid-back atmosphere, relaxed and friendly sermons, and often free coffee and cake, can lead to people feeling instantly a part of the congregation, rather than sticking out as a

new person in a smaller congregation. Some of the churches that are seeing the most growth at the moment are those that have managed to combine both modern, evangelical elements, and elements of more traditional church services. Through offering a variety of services, these churches are able to interest new members to their church, particularly of the younger generation, whilst not losing the older members that are already a part of their congregation by alienating them.

In addition, a rise in immigration is bringing more and more people from diverse backgrounds to the UK³⁰. They often find their homes in Evangelical churches, perhaps due to the 'family' atmosphere that they seek to cultivate, and perhaps due to the charismatic nature of the church, expecting, and revelling in any signs of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. This charismatic nature can be seen as the cause of some of the divide between Evangelical Christians, and more traditional Anglican groups. Many traditional Anglicans are sceptical of these 'gifts' that seem to manifest in the more intense emotional moments in the evangelical churches, particularly at events such as festivals.

However, those who attend more charismatic evangelical churches, and those who have experienced these 'gifts' or the atmosphere surrounding these events view them as an experience with the Holy Spirit, and a crucial part of their worship. At some evangelical churches, time is made in every Sunday service for people to invite in, and encounter the Holy Spirit for themselves. At events such as Spring Harvest, there is often a session dedicated to encountering the Holy Spirit, with the potential

³⁰ Bullivant, Catholic Research Forum Reports

for spiritual gifts to manifest themselves. For me, as someone who has attended these styles of events, as well as these church services, it is difficult to say whether it is a true encounter with the Spirit, or whether there is a more 'rational' explanation for the things that can happen. This experience of the Holy Spirit can be a great draw to people, which would explain why Charismatic, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches continue to see a rise in attendance, whilst the rest of the churches in the UK are continuing to see a decline. However, this does raise concerns within the church, as to whether or not this spiritual 'ecstasy' that people experience whilst welcoming in the Holy Spirit is a strong enough basis for faith, as it is often these same churches that provide less structured, and less exegetical services.

Additionally, this raises a question around the dynamism of the experience of attending a more charismatic church service, and whether this has an impact on people's first impression of a church. This could, of course, be a polarising experience, one that either very rapidly draws you into the church, or conversely leads you to look for another place of worship. Whether the 'experiencing the Holy Spirit' during these services is truly a divine encounter, or rather a physical and emotional response to the highly energetic and charismatic service, it is a very engaging situation, and one that can impress new worshippers, and serve as a strong reason for returning the following week. If, however, you are used to a more traditional style of worship, and hold an expectation of a traditional style of service, these experiences may be overwhelming, uncomfortable, or even feel like a distraction from the message of the service. This can be a negative experience, and can alienate worshippers from that church community, and lead them to find another place to worship. Often, changing church occurs during a time of upheaval, either

emotional such as a breakdown of a relationship in the old congregation, or physical, such as moving house. Attending a service that feels familiar and comfortable can be a great support during these times, and attending a service so starkly different can feel overwhelming, an increase in the amount of change and unrest that is already occurring.

Evangelical Anglican churches are often planted in the community to act in the role of a 'Resource Church'. Of the 18 church plants that took place from Resource churches between 2013 and 2020³¹ 10 were planted by St Peter's Brighton, 2 by St Swithuns Bournemouth, 2 by St Thomas Norwich, 2 by St Luke Gas Street, 1 by St Matthias Plymouth and 1 by St Weburgh's Derby. All of these planting churches were part of the evangelical Holy Trinity Brompton Network. They have also played a role in growing the numbers of stipendiary clergy in the UK, with St Matthias in Plymouth hosting the South West branch of St Mellitus College, and the North-East branch hosted by Trinity Church Nottingham.

These Evangelical churches often thrive, and see larger attendance numbers than those of surrounding churches within their parish. As an example, in 2018-2019, the Diocese of Exeter contained 595 churches.³² An average of 2100 children attended these churches each week across the Diocese. Yet between 300 and 600 of these children attended just 6 of these churches.³³ St Matthias Plymouth, St Andrew's Cullompton, Exeter Network Church, Exeter Holy Trinity , St Andrew's Plymouth and

³¹ SDF Learning Summary – New Resource Churches (*Church of England, 2021*)

³² Church of England Statistics Unit, *Statistics For Mission 2018*.

³³ General Synod, Response To Question 91.

St Leonard Exeter each reported an average of between 50 and 100 children at their services each week. These six churches represented between 14 and 28.5% of all children's attendance across the Diocese. Of the six, St Matthias, St Andrew's Cullompton, St Leonard's, Exeter Network Church and Exeter Holy Trinity are Evangelical, with St Andrew's Plymouth being the outlier. These churches are seeing growth in the number of children in attendance, as well as a growth in the number of adults attending.

However, in recent years, there has been a level of discontent at the proportional amount of power evangelicals seem to hold within the church. The proportion of evangelicals in the Church grew from 26% in 1989 to 34% in 2005³⁴, with estimates placing that figure around 50% now. Linda Woodhead believes that only 10-20% of lay people are evangelical, but 'in terms of bishops and power... it's become extremely influential.'³⁵ The rise in evangelicalism, and the notable silence from large evangelical groups such as HTB on sensitive issues such as gay marriage have left many in the church uncomfortable with what can be seen as a tacit acceptance of the idea. This was further reinforced when Archbishop Justin Welby stated that the question of whether or not gay sex was a sin was 'a question [he] cannot give a straight answer to'³⁶, in recognition of the varied and conflicting views held by Anglicans. This debate, among other issues is seen as holding the potential to cause a schism in the church, in a similar way to the appointment of female bishops was a

³⁴ Sam Hailes, *How Evangelicals Took Over the Church of England* (Premier Christianity, 2017)

³⁵ Andrew Brown and Linda Woodhead, *That Was the Church That Was* (Bloomsbury, 2016), 46

³⁶ **Alastair** Campbell, Archbishop Justin Welby Hopes He Does Not Have To Oversee The Queen's Funeral. (GQ, November 2017)

divisive topic within the church. The perceived liberal view of Evangelicals towards topics such as gay marriage may be a contributory factor to their church growth, particularly as society becomes more socially liberal, and homosexuality becomes more socially accepted, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Contrary to the idea that young people are leaving the church in droves, there has been a rise in the last five years in the number of young people applying for ordination, and joining the ranks of the clergy within the church.³⁷ This increase is itself a surprise, as it does not correlate with the fact that the numbers of their generation attending church is in decline across the country. However, large evangelical churches, such as those planted by teams from Holy Trinity Brompton or other Evangelical groups often see a large number of young people, especially students attending their churches, whether they were raised in a church or not. There is an argument³⁸ that this is, at least in part, due to the Evangelical nature of the Christian Unions at the universities. Christian Unions at universities are overwhelmingly members of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF), who are a founder member of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)³⁹. This continued exposure to Evangelical Christianity may have an impact on the type of church that students choose to attend whilst at university.

³⁷ Church of England Media, 'Growing Numbers of Young People Train as Priests' (*Church of England*, 2018)

³⁸ Mathew Guest et al. 'Challenging 'Belief' and the Evangelical Bias: Student Christianity in English Universities', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol. 28, No.2 (2013), 207-223, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2013.783326>

³⁹ 1. "IFES · International Fellowship of Evangelical Students," IFES, August 5, 2023, https://ifesworld.org/en/?switch_language=en.

I would propose that, as student attendance at Charismatic and Evangelical churches continues to rise across the country, we will again see a rise in the number of young people that are applying for ordination, having discovered their 'calling' at these churches, and looking for a way to share that experience with others in their community.

2.5.2 Anglo-Catholics and the rise of Cathedral worship

Whilst traditional parish churches have seen a decline in their attendance figures, the second arm of the church that has seen growth is the Anglo-Catholics. This growth since 2020 has likely been partially influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has afforded many people the opportunity to attend churches outside of their local area. However, even pre-pandemic Anglo-Catholic churches were seeing an increase in the number of worshippers attending their services.⁴⁰

In a report from 2017⁴¹ The Centre for Theology and Community identified seven Anglo-Catholic churches in London that were seeing growth in their attendance figures. These were churches that had reported a growth in attendance figures within the last five years. Whilst the numbers themselves were not large (all seven churches saw a total of an additional 240 worshippers over the period), the percentages this

⁴⁰ 'Cathedral Statistics 2019', (Church of England Statistics Unit, 2020)

⁴¹ Thorlby, *A Time To Sow: Anglican Catholic Church Growth In London* (The Centre for Theology and Community, 2017)

growth represented was significant. St Luke' Hammersmith saw a growth of 25% over a period of 4 years, with their average Sunday attendance growing from 60 to 75⁴². This was by no means an outlier. The largest growth reported, albeit over ten years, was a 300% increase in attendance at St John's Catford, from 50 to 150 regularly attending on a Sunday⁴³. They go on to state that the growth is a mix of existing members from other churches transferring, people returning to church after a period of time away, and some people who are completely new to attending church.

Several common practices were identified that could potentially be responsible for the growth within this area of the church. These included building leadership capacity, maximising resources, having 'growth-minded' priests, and ensuring that all ages were made to feel welcome.⁴⁴ These are similar to the models set out in the Renewal and Reform guidance, again aimed at delivering growth within the church.

However, the report also identified factors that could be inhibiting the potential for growth in the Anglican Catholic tradition. A key factor was the lack of new worshipping communities. Without churches similar to evangelical 'mega churches' and with limited church planting, there are few initiatives that are aimed at growing the church in new areas, both nationally, and in London, where these studies were conducted.

Across England, the total weekly attendance at Cathedral services in 2019 was 37,200 people, of which 18% were under the age of 16. This is an increase of young

⁴² Thorlby, *A Time to Sow*, XIII

⁴³ Thorlby, *A Time to Sow*, XIII

⁴⁴ Thorlby, *A Time to Sow*, XVI

people attending by almost 2% over 2009. Attendance at Christmas services has seen an increase of 5% from 631,000 to 665,000 between 2014 and 2019⁴⁵. Whilst there was a marked decline in the numbers attending weekly cathedral services in 2020, of up to 76%,⁴⁶ this can mostly be attributed to pandemic restrictions limiting access.

Some seek to explain the increases in attendance across the board as a 'shared border', a recognition that these forms of Christianity, Charismatic, Catholic and Anglo-Catholic demand a high quality of music, have a physicality or worship and an intellectual preaching style.⁴⁷ Charismatic and Anglo-Catholic services provide a high level of skill in their music, they both incorporate physicality into their worship, either through the raising of hands during worship music, or through crossing yourself at the presentation of the Host in a Eucharist service, and they all preach 'intellectually credible sermons', offering a clear framework that young people can use to support their lives.

One possible reason for the rise in attendance within the Anglo-Catholic tradition is because of contentious issues such as homosexuality and the ordination of women as bishops and priests.⁴⁸ Those who feel called to uphold what they perceive as a biblical and traditional view of homosexual relationships, and the position of women in ministry, regardless of age are likely to be drawn to Anglo-Catholic churches,

⁴⁵ 'Cathedral Statistics 2020' (Church of England Statistics Unit, 2022)

⁴⁶ 'Cathedral Statistics 2020' (Church of England Statistics Unit, 2022)

⁴⁷ Marcus Walker, *Why Anglo-Catholicism appeals to millennials* (Catholic Herald, 2019)

⁴⁸ Andrew Village and Leslie J. Francis *An Anatomy of Change: Profiling Cohort Differences in Beliefs and Attitudes among Anglicans in England* (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

where these views and beliefs are upheld among the clergy, and in the liturgy. Ian Paul highlights views on the issue of homosexuality in the Church, with particular reference to the appointment of Stephen Knott, a gay man who was married in a ceremony led by the (Scottish Episcopal) Bishop of Edinburgh, to the role of Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments, a senior lay position.⁴⁹ This move has been seen by some as a 'probably the greatest endorsement of a marriage canon change one could gain.'⁵⁰

Another possible explanation for the growth, particularly among the young, is the desire for a community 'a place.... where they can make a contribution'.⁵¹ The opportunity to be involved in the worshipping community of an Anglo-Catholic church as a musician, a reader or a server allows young people to grow in their faith, whilst remaining an engaged member of their worshipping community, which in turn provides them with a space to learn, and grow, whilst being supported.

2.5.3 Renewal and Reform

In 2015, the General Synod introduced a paper of guidance for the future growth of the church, entitled 'Renewal and Reform'. The theological root of this guidance is explained as an understanding of Luke 10:2 '*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*' The guidance calls on all members of the church to be active in the growth of

⁴⁹ Ian Paul, On the appointment of senior leaders in the Church (Psephizo, 2022)

⁵⁰ Luke Appleton, Questions raised about Archbishops' Appointment (Anglican Ink, 2022)

⁵¹ Philip Barnes, Anglo-Catholic Mission: A Landscape Alive With God's Presence (Church Times, 2018)

the church, as well as in imagining the church of the future. The clear aim of the programme is to reverse the decline of the Church of England, to become a growing church, welcoming of everyone, and 'a serving church where all God's people live out their vocation to serve and witness'.⁵² This would achieve a tangible growth within the church, both in numbers of people attending, and the level of commitment and involvement with the life of the church.

The guidance acknowledges the current challenges that the Church is facing, which I have already outlined, including a decline in and ageing of church attendance, a 'significant decline'⁵³ in stipendiary clergy and a lack of capacity in some dioceses to be able to implement strategies aimed at combating this decline in the future. This is reflected in published statistics that show the number of clergy has reduced to the point where a number of parishes have been amalgamated. In 1960, only 17% of Church of England Parishes were part of a multi-parish benefice⁵⁴. By 2011, this had risen to 71%. 8,400 of the Church's 12,500 parishes are now under amalgamation, or a team ministry. This can also be seen anecdotally. For example, the Rev. Richard Coles, when discussing his impending retirement, reflected that he was a vicar of only one parish, but knew a vicar 'with 14 parishes in her care instead of the one we were originally intended for'⁵⁵

⁵² "Renewal and Reform", (*Church of England*, 2015)

⁵³ "Renewal and Reform", (*Church of England*, 2015)

⁵⁴ 'Amalgamating Parishes and Declining Clergy Numbers: Consequences and Causes' (*Church of England*, 2016)

⁵⁵ Richard Coles, "The Rev Richard Coles on Retirement and What Comes Next," *The Times*.co.uk, 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-rev-richard-coles-on-retirement-and-what-comes-next-vxhf92fxz>.

The implementation of this guidance was then supported by the appointment of Debbie Clinton as the new 'Director of Renewal and Reform' and the appointment of Dave Male as 'Director of Evangelism and Discipleship'.

The three targets of the 'Renewal and Reform' guidance were to 'Contribute as the national Church to the common good, Facilitate the growth of the church in numbers and depth of discipleship and Re-imagine the Church's ministry'⁵⁶. This is a key acknowledgement that the strategies and traditions of the church are shown to not be as effective with younger generations, and that, in order to generate the growth that the church is seeking, new methods will be required, in order to modernise the church for its survival.

Key strands that were identified included going digital, simplifying Church law, using money to resource the future (including the planting of 'resource churches), investing in vocations to all types of ministry, all of God's people being able to live out their faith every day and a growing church.

The Church also announced the introduction of a number of workstreams to support the initiative. These are:

- The Digital Team, to develop the Church's approach to the web and social media
- Growing Faith – aimed at a 'renewal of hearts and minds so that it becomes second nature to include and value children, young people and households in every aspect of church life'

⁵⁶ "Renewal and Reform", (Church of England, 2019)

- Growing Vocations – aimed at fostering a culture in which vocations can be identified and supported
- Estates – aimed at having a thriving church on every ‘significant social housing estate’ in the country
- Nurturing Senior Leaders – identifying how the Church identifies, trains, and resources leaders to face current and future challenges
- Funding Mission and Growth – how money is distributed to support mission work and growth
- Setting God’s People Free – aimed at enabling people to live out ‘the Good News of Jesus confidently in all of life.’

The ‘Growing Faith’, ‘Estates’ and ‘Funding Mission and Growth’ workstreams are of particular relevance to my research, as these three strands identify the activity intended to deliver on the aim of growing the church, both in numbers and in depth of discipleship. Additionally, the funding stream has been regularly used in the planting of ‘resource churches’, a tool for growth that I will discuss in more detail later.

In April 2021, the Church issued an update on the progress that had been made over the first 5 years of the guidance⁵⁷. There has already been a measurable change in some areas that were highlighted under the Renewal and Reform guidance.

Stipendiary ordinations have increased by 43% when compared to 2013,⁵⁸ and the size of the stipendiary clergy cohort has exceeded the original growth projections.

Work has been undertaken to identify and recognise the breadth of roles undertaken

⁵⁷ ‘A Summary of Progress and Impact’, (*Church of England, 2021*)

⁵⁸ ‘A Summary of Progress and Impact’ (*Church of England, 2021*)

by lay ministers, with over 100,000 people performing these roles across England. With regards to growing attendance numbers, plans were developed at a diocesan level to revitalise existing churches, and plant new ones, and they have so far seen 11,500 new disciples as of December 2020. As part of funding being redirected to communities in need, over 100 new worship communities have been established across the UK. Moves have been made to widen the digital presence of the Church, with the *Comfort and Joy* (A resource for Advent and Christmas) mailing list being established in 2019, and now having 200,000 subscribers.⁵⁹ Weekly online services have been viewed more than 3.5 million times, including by people who have never attended church before.⁶⁰ Despite the progress that has been made to date, the Church also acknowledged continuing issues that they are facing. These include difficulties in reaching specific places and communities, as these groups are greatly underrepresented in both church leadership and the wider worshipping communities. But, a lack of a shared vision, particularly around growth strategies can impede the Church from fully working together as a whole to achieve the change that is desired.

2.5.4 Resource Churches

This desire to see growth in the number of worshipping communities has particularly been reflected in the planting of 'resource' churches across the country. The Church of England defines a Resource Church as a church that is designated as so by the bishop, that works strategically across its city or town. They plant new churches, and

⁵⁹ 'A Summary of Progress and Impact' (*Church of England, 2021*)

⁶⁰ 'A Summary of Progress and Impact' (*Church of England, 2021*)

revitalise existing ones, and are given sufficient resources to do so. They also develop vocational leaders, and help to develop resources for the wider church. These churches were planted or supported through the Strategic Development Fund that was created under the Renewal and Reform Guidance.

The chief concern raised around the creation of designation of resource churches is that they are seeing such large growth in their membership, because they are attracting members from other local churches. As shown in the chart below, ‘transfer growth’ does account for approximately 38%⁶¹ of the attendees of the typical resource church. However, these churches have also been able to reach those that weren’t attending churches, with 23% of attendees being either the ‘un-churched’ who have never been part of a church before, or ‘de-churched’ who have been part of a church in the past, but not in recent years.

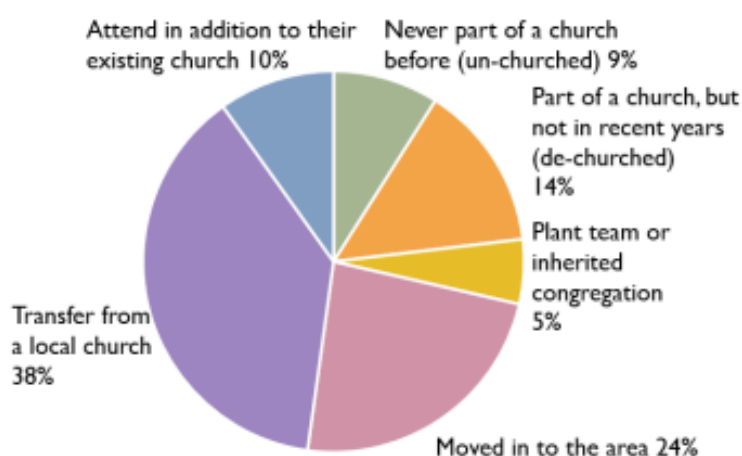


Figure 6 - Previous Church of Resource Church Attendants

⁶¹ SDF Learning Summary - New Resource Churches (*Church of England, 2021*)

This development of Resource churches has been fundamental in getting younger people back into churches, with almost one third of participants being aged between 18 and 29 and 52% under 30, compared to the Church of England as a whole, where the majority of attendees are over 55.

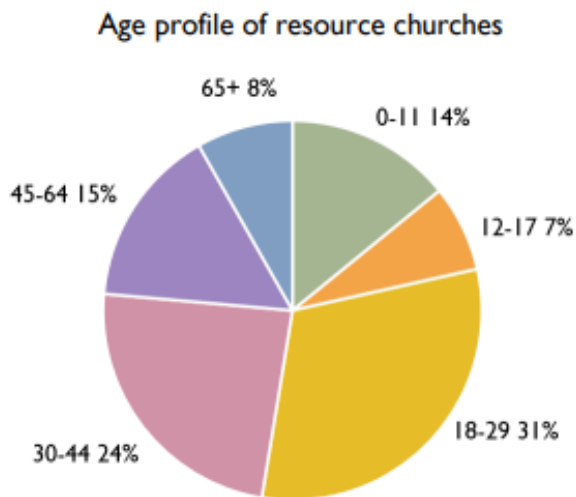


Figure 7 - Age Profile of Resource Churches

So, it can be seen that resource churches are having an impact, albeit a small one in recent years, on increasing the number of new worshippers that are attending church services, either for the first time, or among those who had previously lapsed. As discussed earlier, both Evangelical resource churches and Anglo-Catholic churches are seeing an increase in the number of young people that they are reaching, and the church is seeing a slow increase in the percentage of their worshippers that fall in the 18-29 demographic. It is important to consider what factors are encouraging growth specifically in these churches, when growth is not being seen elsewhere.

2.6 Religious Market Theory and Opportunities for Growth

Religious market theory posits that the general population are naturally religious, and religion meets a human need, and therefore, there will always be a demand for religion. Stark and Bainbridge also proposed the idea of secularisation cycles, periods of high secularisation before religious revival occurs, in the form of religious and New Age movements. Under that theory, we are currently at a period of peak secularism, but, without any intervention required, there will be a natural increase in religious identity in the coming years.⁶²

Religious market competition characterizes denominations based on the level of 'tension' between them and their local secular society.⁶³ Johnson suggests that economic growth can lessen religious participation,⁶⁴ which would go some way to explain the decline in religious affiliation that is currently seen in the west. Increased secularisation in society may also reduce the impact of traditional religious institutions, which may explain why more traditional parish churches are seeing higher levels of stagnation than modern worship offerings.⁶⁵ Perl posits that, when traditional churches hold a larger market share, as has been the case over the past few decades, there is little impetus for them to compete, or actively engage new

⁶² Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

⁶³ Michael McBride, "Religious Market Competition in a Richer World," *Economica* 77, no. 305 (December 22, 2009): 148–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0335.2008.00732.x>.

⁶⁴ Benton Johnson, "On Church and Sect," *American Sociological Review* 28, no. 4 (August 1963): 539, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2090070>.

⁶⁵ Peter Beyer, "Religious Vitality in Canada: The Complementarity of Religious Market and Secularization Perspectives," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 2 (June 1997): 272, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1387558>.

members, which can again lead to stagnation.⁶⁶ By contrast, congregations that have a smaller market share show higher levels of commitment. However, this is not usually attributed to a response to competition, but rather to higher attrition rates among less committed members, and attraction of more committed members.⁶⁷ Where there are overlapping niches, there are likely to be higher rates of mobility between churches by their members.⁶⁸ This is reflected by the growth in attendance at Resource Churches, and other similar churches.

Chen proposed the theory of Religious Economy,⁶⁹ which identifies religious competition as a factor that can lead to innovation and adaptation by churches. This diversity of churches, combined with greater freedom of religion and practice can lead to an increase in religiosity, and religious identification among the general population. Religious pluralism in society and the freedom to choose how to worship can also lead to higher engagement and participation within church life.

Contemporary worship offerings often embrace marketization strategies, such as advertising, open days and community events to attract new members.⁷⁰ The benefit

⁶⁶ Paul Perl and Daniel V.A. Olson, "Religious Market Share and Intensity of Church Involvement in Five Denominations," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 1 (March 2000): 12–31, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0021-8294.00002>.

⁶⁷ Jonathan P. Hill and Daniel V. Olson, "Market Share and Religious Competition: Do Small Market Share Congregations and Their Leaders Try Harder?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 4 (December 2009): 629–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01470.x>.

⁶⁸ D. E. Sherkat, "Tracking the Restructuring of American Religion: Religious Affiliation and Patterns of Religious Mobility, 1973-1998," *Social Forces* 79, no. 4 (June 1, 2001): 1459–93, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2001.0052>.

⁶⁹ Jianlin Chen, "1 - Introduction," essay, in *The Law and Religious Market Theory: China, Taiwan and Hong Kong* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1–12.

⁷⁰ Marcus Moberg, "Understanding Religious-Organizational Marketization: The Case of the United States Mainline," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90, no. 4 (December 1, 2022): 815–35, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfac076>.

of these efforts can be seen in the growth in attendance at these churches, such as across the HTB network. These innovative approaches can stimulate growth by encouraging churches to consider the ways that they are meeting the needs of their congregants. Core to the message of these churches are the themes of individual freedom, choice and autonomy, and the use of these ideals in promotion of church services can be appealing to those looking for a new, or first, church.^{71 72} However, Mangeloja proposes that church growth is stimulated by surplus resources, both monetary and time from active, committed members, which allows for greater attraction of new members.⁷³

The theories of Religious Economy and Religious Market Competition offer guidance for the Church of England in its goal to modernise, as well as reach out to new, and former members. By employing marketization tactics, including outreach events and advertising within the community, churches are more able to attract committed members, who in turn represent more resources to be used in reaching out to members of the community. By avoiding stagnation and complacency, these churches are able to survive, and thrive in a modern society. This goes some way towards explaining the success and growth within contemporary churches, particularly when compared to the less active traditional churches.

⁷¹ Samuelson Appau and Ye (Nicole) Yang, "Church Advertising and the Marketization of Religious Hegemony," *Marketing Theory* 24, no. 2 (September 8, 2023): 263–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14705931231202434>.

⁷² Jeaney Yip and Susan Ainsworth, "You Need 'Help for the Journey': Freedom and Regulation in a 'Market-Friendly' Megachurch," *Marketing Theory* 20, no. 1 (June 19, 2019): 103–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593119856654>.

⁷³ Esa Mangeloja, "Preaching to the Choir? Economic Analysis of Church Growth," EconPapers, January 19, 2007, https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/grapaoner/07_2f02.htm.

CHAPTER THREE - WORSHIP

3.1 Music

3.1.1 The rise of Contemporary Worship Music

There are several facets that make up worship within the Anglican Communion. The main portions of worship within the Anglican Communion can be separated into Liturgy, both spoken and sung, hymns and other worship music and the Eucharist, or communion services. However, in some more Evangelical-leaning churches, there can also be extended periods of open prayer and experiencing the Holy Spirit, which will be considered later in the chapter.

Robert Allen wrote that 'The basic format of Anglican Worship service is the same from one church to the next, all over the world'⁷⁴. However, whilst all Anglican services can be said to share the same foundations, described by Perry Lankhuff as 'Penitence, Prayer, Praise and Proclamation'⁷⁵, the style within these services can be incredibly different.

Two distinct worship styles are seeing greater increases in attendance than the remainder of the communion. Cathedral worship, with a traditional service, and choral liturgy, and 'modern' worship with live worship bands can be seen to be on the rise,

⁷⁴ Robert Allan, "How Do Anglicans Worship? | Synonym," Classroom.synonym.com, 2018, <https://classroom.synonym.com/how-do-anglicans-worship-12086100.html>.

⁷⁵ Perry Lankhuff, "Worship | Christ Church Anglican : Welcome Home," Christchurchanglican.org, 2020, <http://christchurchanglican.org/anglican-faith/worship/>.

whilst smaller, traditional services, such as in local Parish churches are on the decline. This thesis posits that these distinct worship styles, and the demographics to which they are the most appealing, can be an important factor in the rise of certain church attendances, and the decline in smaller, more traditional Anglican churches.

What is now often referred to as contemporary worship music began to emerge in the 1960s. There was a musical revolution taking place in the evangelical Protestant communities, a new form of music, reflective of the pop-rock style that was prolific in society, which began to expand across evangelical churches, across numerous denominations and locations. On writing about how contemporary music forms evangelical community⁷⁶, several terms are used interchangeably to describe this music, including 'contemporary worship music', 'praise and worship music' and 'worship music'

The 1970's was a period where the contemporary worship scene began to expand at an accelerated rate. The music that was being created reflected the popular music of the surrounding decades, and was also similar in content to the more traditional worship music that was being used in the majority of churches, with one significant difference. Rather than this music being directed from above, this music was being created from within the congregation, as a means of expressing the spirituality of their own Christian communities⁷⁷. The Jesus Movement was one of the largest

⁷⁶ Monique Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1-21.

⁷⁷ Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 240-244.

groups producing contemporary worship music at the time. They were often described as ‘the youthful, baby-boomer expression of American Evangelism’⁷⁸ and from this new expression of faith came both the contemporary worship music and Christian Rock movements.

Contemporary worship culture became one of the identifying elements of Charismatic Evangelicalism, particularly in the US, which then spread around the world. This branch of the church became more widely appealing to a variety of people thanks to their adapting to ‘contemporary cultural idioms, influenced by counter-culture and by popular music’⁷⁹. The use of contemporary worship has been described as ‘another avenue for expressing the emotional, expressive, mystical dimension of charismatic evangelicalism.’⁸⁰ . It is widely seen that contemporary worship is synonymous with charismatic evangelicalism. More recently, contemporary worship has become more widespread

In ‘modern’ worship services, such as those found at Holy Trinity Brompton,⁸¹ there can be less traditional content than in more traditional services. For example, a typical Sunday service at St Matthias, a Holy Trinity Brompton church in Plymouth, will not include communion, and will include a short sermon, along with extended times of worship and prayer. There is more of an importance put on worship, and on

⁷⁸ Colleen McDannell and Julie Ingersoll, “Contemporary Christian Worship Music,” in *Religions of the United States in Practice, Volume 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 121-128.

⁷⁹ Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 210.

⁸⁰ Colleen McDannell and Julie Ingersoll, “Contemporary Christian Worship Music,” in *Religions of the United States in Practice, Volume 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 121-128.

⁸¹ 1. “Easter Sunday Celebration | HTB Live Stream,” YouTube, March 31, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/live/ENhn0yJy9lQ?si=hafG6bbQSDxhSp82>.

experiencing the Holy Spirit, over the traditional, ritualistic nature of other Anglican services. There is no use of traditional liturgy, such as that found in the Book of Common Prayer, and services are very informal, and community focused. There is often a message about working within the community, and supporting local organisations, such as mental health groups, etc. This often is seen as more appealing to a younger audience, offering more opportunities for participation and building relationships, and less time spent on traditional liturgy, which can be perceived as 'boring' by those of a younger generation.

There has not been much research undertaken into whether Worship style can impact on attendance, or demographics within the congregation of a church, but much has been written about the different styles of worship within the Anglican Communion. Since the Andover review of 1884, there has been an acknowledgement that worship music can serve as an important element when reaching those 'over whom the church has no attraction'.⁸²

This thesis posits that this modern style of worship, with live bands, and often far younger worship leaders is what is attracting large numbers of young people and students to these Evangelical churches. Conversely, the more traditional, familiar style of Anglican worship that is continuing in cathedrals, but dying out in local churches can be seen to grow, due to the older population being more religious. These cathedral services offer them the style that they have grown accustomed to,

⁸² Egb.C Smith, Wi.J Tucker, and J.W Churchill, "Editorial: Social Classes and The Church," in *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*, vol. 2 (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), pp. 290-304.

and feel comfortable with. They may feel that the ‘modern’ Evangelical-style services do not offer them the experience of church, or the connection with God that they are accustomed to. This is in line with the views held by J P Thackway⁸³ that there are radical changes to the church being proposed in the 21st century, and these changes do not, and will not appeal to everyone. With the decline in services offered by local Anglican churches, these older generations may well be pushed to attend Cathedral services, seeking an experience of God that they are comfortable with.

To examine ‘contemporary worship music’ fully, it is necessary to identify the difference between ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ and the aspects that make up each of them. I have split this out into lyrics, orchestration and style.

3.1.2 Lyrics

Firstly, the lyrics. Broadly, in ‘contemporary’ music, the lyrics can be divided into three groups; songs of thanksgiving, songs of praise and songs about our identity in Christ. Famous worship songs such as *10,000 Reasons* by Matt Redman and *No Longer Slaves* by Bethel Music offer a refrain that captures the hearts of those that are singing it. By singing in the first person, it can help to create a personal connection to the lyrics that are being sung. The following are the lyrics to the bridge of *No Longer Slaves*⁸⁴ written in 2014:

⁸³ 1. J.P. Thackway, “Modernise or Perish!,” Bibleleaguetrust.org, 2004, <https://www.bibleleaguetrust.org/modernise-or-perish/>.

⁸⁴ Bethel Music, Jonathan David Helser, Brian Johnson, and Joel Case. “No Longer Slaves.” Bethel Music. Accessed April 1, 2024. <https://bethelmusic.com/resources/peace/no-longer-slaves>.

I am surrounded by the arms of a Father

I am surrounded by songs of deliverance

We've been liberated from our bondage

We're the sons and the daughters

Let us sing our freedom

You split the sea so I could walk right through it

My fears are drowned in perfect love

You rescued me so I could stand and say

I am child of God

One criticism that is often levied against contemporary worship music is that it is one-dimensional. In an examination of 133 contemporary worship songs, Jesse found that 'joy' is used 37 times and 'praise' 152 times, but the word 'sad' nor any of its derivatives ever appear.⁸⁵ Additionally, the songs reflect a very Western work ethic, in that they feature a high proportion of active verbs, which can be said to not reflect the restful God found in the Bible.⁸⁶ These active verbs can make worship feel

⁸⁵ Daniel Jesse, "Over-Generalizing, under-Promising, and over-Promising: Singing Sadness and Joy in the Church," *Religions* 13, no. 12 (December 1, 2022): 1172, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13121172>.

⁸⁶ Jeremy Perigo, "'You Never Stop Working,'" *Evangelical Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (April 9, 2024): 20–34, <https://doi.org/10.1163/27725472-09501001>.

performative, rather than genuine, although it is also argued that some contemporary songwriters use ‘performance’ as an intentional way of encouraging active participation by worshippers in the act of worship.⁸⁷

Conversely, Scottish comedian Danny Bhoy sums up how many people of the younger generation view the lyrics of the traditional hymns that are sung in Anglican parish churches as ‘God is great, and we are sh*t’. This view, that traditional hymns feature lyrics that focus on the sinful nature of humanity can be disheartening and demoralising for many of the younger members of the congregation. Additionally, the lyrics can be dense, and hard to parse, especially for those who are visiting, or new to the church. For example, the following are the lyrics to verse two of Crown Him with Many Crowns⁸⁸, written by Matthew Bridges and George Job Elvey in 1851:

Crown him the Virgin's Son!

The God Incarnate born,--

Whose arm those crimson trophies won

Which now his brow adorn!

Fruit of the mystic Rose

⁸⁷ Daniel Thornton, “‘This Is No Performance’: Exploring the Complicated Relationship between the Church and Contemporary Congregational Songs,” *Religions* 14, no. 5 (April 26, 2023): 578, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050578>.

⁸⁸ “Hymn: Crown Him with Many Crowns.” Hymnalnet. Accessed April 1, 2024. <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/142>.

As of that Rose the Stem:

The Root, whence mercy ever flows,--

The Babe of Bethlehem!

Bhoy goes on to state that it is ‘pages and pages of it’, in reference to the number of verses that Anglican hymns often contain. The running line about Anglican hymns has always been ‘if you don’t know it at the start, you’ll have learned it by Verse 5’. This repetition, and often of a slow melody can lead to a sense of dread, particularly among those of the younger generation who were raised on worship music written by people such as Matt Redman. However, those of the older generation, particularly those that grew up attending church overwhelmingly prefer the more traditional style of music that they grew up with, likely because of its familiarity. Whilst there is not a large amount of data about UK Anglicans, a 2020 study by the Barna group in the US found that 51% of boomers preferred ‘traditional music’, and 45% also preferred hymns.⁸⁹ The generation before boomers, described in the Barna study as ‘elders’ overwhelmingly preferred hymns or traditional music, at 66% and 62% respectively. At the opposite end of the spectrum were Millennials, who did not display a particularly strong preference for any one style of worship music, with ‘traditional’ and ‘lively’ at 38% and 30% respectively scoring highest. This study did not include Gen Z, but does display a trend of traditional music and especially hymns increasing in

⁸⁹ “Christian Millennials Are Most Likely Generation to Lean toward Charismatic Worship,” Barna Group (Barna Group, July 23, 2020), <https://www.barna.com/research/worship-preferences/>.

popularity through the older generations, with charismatic music becoming less popular, dropping from 18% in Millennials to just 9% among 'Elders'.

Both styles of worship music offer benefits and drawbacks, and those selecting the music for a service should bear in mind the purpose that they wish the music to serve. Traditional hymns tend to be more scripturally based, embedding passages of scripture within their lyrics.⁹⁰ As a result, they are more 'lexically dense'⁹¹ which allows them to carry more meaning, but this can make them more difficult for congregants to understand. In contrast, contemporary songs, through their use of first person language, create a stronger sense of personal intimacy, which can lead to a stronger experience of worship by the worshippers. Each style of music has its place, whether it is intended to support pedagogy or, as is common in evangelical churches, as another way of conversing with God.

3.1.3 Instrumentation

Secondly, the instrumentation. In more traditional parish churches, It is common to see one member of the church involved in the worship music, usually on an organ, or increasingly commonly, a piano, as the number of trained organists continues to fall. This allows for the worship music to be provided with little input from the congregation or the vicar, and with little commitment required, outside of the organist or pianist. Organs are prohibitively expensive to upkeep, hence the move of many

⁹⁰ Robert J. Karris, *A Symphony of New Testament Hymns* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996).

⁹¹ Ian Hussey, "The Songs We Sing: A Textual Analysis of Popular Congregational Songs of the 20th and 21st Century," *Ecclesial Practices* 6, no. 2 (November 26, 2019): 217–34, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22144471-00602003>.

churches towards using a piano or keyboard in its place, particularly as keyboards can utilise patches that would allow for an organ sound. Additionally, organists have to be paid a set fee for each service that they play for, which further increases the costs of having an organ in a church service.

Conversely, with contemporary music, there is generally a greater level of commitment from a range of musicians required. The performance of contemporary music often requires a band, including guitarists, multiple vocalists and sometimes additional instruments, including bass guitars and drums. This can limit the number of churches that can offer this style of worship music, for several reasons. In churches that have seen a great decline in the number of congregants regularly attending their services, it can be difficult to source sufficient musicians to lead the worship, especially on a consistent basis. In addition, a worship band requires a far larger space than a single piano or organ, which can be difficult to come by in smaller parish churches. Contemporary worship music is particularly popular among younger members of the congregation, who have grown up listening to high energy music, and find that reflected in the music of groups such as Worship Central or Elim Sound. The larger worship bands, particularly those with drum kits and bass guitars allows for congregants to feel the music in the body, which can lead to them feeling more immersed in the music, and therefore more involved in the worship. The larger number of people involved in contemporary performances also can lead to greater engagement in the service from the musicians themselves, as they form a part of the service, leading to greater levels of individual attention and participation.

This emphasis on larger contemporary worship bands also poses challenges in the area of quality. In larger cities, where there may be a wide range of musicians

available, it is possible to select a band of highly skilled and talented musicians that are able to perform cohesively together. In smaller churches, or more rural parishes that may be lacking in contemporary musicians, the church can face a challenge in finding a group of performers that are able to produce high quality worship music together, and may instead be forced to opt for a single musician who is able to perform to an acceptable standard by themselves.

One middle ground that churches strive for is to offer contemporary worship services on specific weeks, perhaps the first Sunday of every month, or alternating weekends. This allows for both worship preferences to be catered towards, without putting undue pressure on a small group of musicians to lead the worship every week. Additionally, churches are offering a 'contemporary'-lite service, with more modern worship music, either supported by backing tracks, or by a single guitarist. This is particularly popular among smaller churches that may have a limited number of musicians, or none that play 'contemporary' instruments, but have noted a desire in the congregation for more contemporary music in their services.

3.1.4 Style

There has been debate and attempts to define 'Contemporary Worship Music' as a style. The first influences on worship music that could be considered 'contemporary' were from Negro spirituals. These spirituals were based on psalms or other bible

verses, but drew upon both African music styles⁹² and contemporary American music, setting a pattern from contemporary worship music to this day. The lyrics and titles often included 'rock' or 'rocking',⁹³ a reference both to the change in rhythm visible in these songs, and also a reference to the often rapturous experience of worshipping in this fashion.

Contemporary styles of music tend to be more appealing to younger generations, who are, as previously discussed, less likely to hold a religious affiliation. By using a style of music that is more familiar and popular with this age range, worship music can be used as an 'evangelistic tool' to draw people back to God, in the way that some viewed rock music as being used as a tool to pull young persons away from God. Members of the 'Church Growth' movement purport that contemporary music is the only way forward for growth within the church. This music serves well as propaganda, or a marketing tool for the church, popularising music that has a Christian message, but in a style that is familiar and easily listenable for non-churchgoers.⁹⁴

The style of music used in a church service can also be linked to the intended purpose of the music. Traditional worship music is commonly based around a passage of scripture, or forms a clear part of the liturgy, such as the Gloria or a sung

⁹² Jonathan Snodgrass, "The Influence and Inspiration of Negro Spirituals in the Black Worship Experience," *Our City On A Hill*, February 11, 2016, <https://www.ourcityonahill.net/the-influence-and-inspiration-of-negro-spirituals-in-the-black-worship-experience/>.

⁹³ Marius E. Marton, *Worship Music in the 21st Century: Selecting Proper Music for Worship in Regards to Lyrics, Instrumentation, and Rhythm* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015).

⁹⁴ Robin A. Leaver, "Hallelujah! Using Historic Music in Contemporary Worship," *The Choral Journal* 43, no. 7 (2003): 51–61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23554610>.

Eucharistic Prayer, and thus serves a clear purpose in the context of the service.

Contrastingly, contemporary music can be used to serve many purposes, to praise, to pray, to share a message, or to share bible truths. With such a diverse range of purposes, it is unsurprising that contemporary music can be seen as unsuccessful in many of these contexts.⁹⁵

Even within congregations that regularly perform contemporary worship music, there is disagreement over the value and benefit of this style of worship. In his ethnographic study, Mark Porter spoke to members of a charismatic church in Oxford.⁹⁶ This found that some viewed contemporary worship as a good way of preparing to 'be in the presence of God' at the beginning of a service, whilst others viewed the music, and its lyrics 'dreadful and generally empty'. The desire to be in the 'presence of God' was further explored by Monique Ingalls in *Singing the Congregation*.⁹⁷ Her research found that there was a growing desire for 'greater experiential encounters' of God and worship, and that this partly explained the growth of worship outside of the traditional congregational setting, at events and tours, and that this created a greater sense of a worshipping community through the experience of contemporary music. The singing of contemporary worship music has become so

⁹⁵ Robin A. Leaver, "Hallelujah! Using Historic Music in Contemporary Worship," *The Choral Journal* 43, no. 7 (2003): 51–61, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23554610>.

⁹⁶ Mark James Porter, *Contemporary Worship Music and Everyday Musical Lives* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

⁹⁷ Monique Marie Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).

central to some evangelical worship services that it has been described by one researcher as fulfilling the role of Mass for Catholics , or the sermon for Protestants.⁹⁸

3.2 Prayer Culture

3.2.1 Structured Prayer

The style of prayer that is on offer in churches can also have an impact on the type of church that people choose to attend. Traditional prayer in church services often involves one person leading prayer on behalf of the congregation. This may or may not be the vicar. The prayers are often grouped together at one point in the service, and follow a routine, including prayers for the church in the UK, prayers for the church worldwide, and prayer around any large issues in the news, such as a natural disaster. This can feel impersonal and detached. That is not to say that there are no benefits to structured prayer.

The primary benefit of structured prayer is the consistency and familiarity of the ritual. The creation of this ritual time, and ritual space can help to signify to the group the importance of the moments to come, as well as the solemnity and sincerity of the words that are spoken during times of collective structured prayer.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Pete Ward, *Selling Worship How What We Sing Has Changed the Church* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

⁹⁹ Todd Nicholas Fuist, "Talking to God among a Cloud of Witnesses: Collective Prayer as a Meaningful Performance," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54, no. 3 (2015): 523–39, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12209>.

Additionally, structured prayer led by a priest or reverend can allow for the prayers to be focused towards a specific message, which can in turn allow for the leader to share deeper knowledge of liturgy or sacred texts. The words that are used during prayer, particularly from the liturgy act as an identifier of God, or the facet of God that the prayer is appealing to (father, healer, redeemer etc.)¹⁰⁰. Having a shared topic of focus for prayers can help build community and a strength of feeling, particularly when praying for Christian populations that may be facing hardship or persecution elsewhere in the world.

Praying in a group setting, on a common theme can help to create a sense of social solidarity among worshippers, particularly in times of hardship, or when praying for the relief of hardship for others.¹⁰¹ Prayer, and particularly liturgical prayer, or 'praying the bible'¹⁰² can foster unity, even amongst disparate groups. It highlights the potential for inclusivity within the group, and within the wider worshipping community.¹⁰³

There are however some drawbacks to using structured prayer within church services. First among these is a limit on spontaneity and flexibility. It may be that a person is feeling moved to pray in a particular manner, or on a specific topic. If this is

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Elizabeth, "Lex Orandi Est Lex Credendi? The God of Anglican Liturgy," *New Blackfriars* 97, no. 1067 (January 2016): 52–73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12157>.

¹⁰¹ JoAnn O'Reilly, "A Community of Strangers: Finding Solidarity through Prayer Request Journals," *The Caregiver Journal* 11, no. 2 (January 1995): 26–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1077842x.1995.10781718>.

¹⁰² Stephen Burns, "'Learning Again and Again to Pray': Anglican Forms of Daily Prayer, 1979–2014," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 15, no. 1 (May 16, 2016): 9–36, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1740355316000139>.

¹⁰³ Paul Froese and Rory Jones, "The Sociology of Prayer: Dimensions and Mechanisms," *Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (January 10, 2021): 15, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10010015>.

not in line with the prayers that are being led, this can lead to dissonance between the priest and the worshipper.

Further, whilst structured group prayer can lead to feelings of unity within a congregation, it can also increase 'performative prayer', or semi-voluntary involvement in group prayer, due to the perception of social pressures to be participating.¹⁰⁴

Having structured prayer led by a priest, or another member of the congregation can lead to the congregants becoming passive recipients, not able to, or invited to participate, except with the repetition of a statement at the end of prayers such as 'Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.' A lack of involvement can lead to the degradation of attention from the congregation, which can over time lead to attrition in faith and attendance, particularly in those who have come from congregations with more involved prayer. If a church service can take place regardless of whether you attend, then there is less incentive to continue attending, as individual worshippers may feel that they do not have a part to play in the life of the church.

3.2.2. Free Prayer

In contemporary worship services, there are commonly several points where prayer may occur throughout the service including for an extended period of time.

Commonly the first period of prayer may follow a period of worship music at the start of the ceremony. Whilst a theme may be suggested, there is more space left for

¹⁰⁴ 1. JoAnn O'Reilly, "A Community of Strangers: Finding Solidarity through Prayer Request Journals," *The Caregiver Journal* 11, no. 2 (January 1995): 26–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1077842x.1995.10781718>.

individual prayer, whether that be praise, or penitence. This includes prayer in smaller groups, and some contemporary churches will have a Prayer team, who are based at the front or sides of the church at these times, and individuals wanting prayer for a specific matter can approach one of them, and prayer will be shared.

There are benefits to allowing time for free prayer within a church service. The first benefit is that time for free prayer allows people to pray spontaneously, as they feel led by the spirit. This can lead to a deepening of individual faith,¹⁰⁵ and allows individuals to pray in a more personal manner, expressing themselves, and their issues, and lifting these issues to God in a way that they may not feel able to during structured prayer times. Charismatic prayer is not viewed as a one-sided conversation, but rather a way of entering into a 'living relationship' with God.¹⁰⁶

The second benefit is that periods of free prayer can foster a stronger participatory atmosphere in church services. This can lead to greater engagement, both in the church service, and also in the wider life of the church. By being invited to actively participate in a church service, through prayer, the sharing of the peace, or any other means,, this can lead to a more attentive congregation, which is likely to lead to reduced attrition in attendance figures over time.

However, there are several drawbacks to the use of free prayer sections in a church service. The first of these is that it can lead to a lack of consistency. If, as is

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Winchester and Jeffrey Guhin, "Praying 'Straight from the Heart': Evangelical Sincerity and the Normative Frames of Culture in Action," *Poetics* 72 (February 2019): 32–42, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2018.10.003>.

¹⁰⁶ Etienne Vetö, "'Praying in the Holy Spirit' Spirituality and Pneumatology," *New Blackfriars* 97, no. 1068 (March 2016): 157–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12195>.

becoming more common, there are a number of people who run the worship services, the amount of time dedicated to prayer in each service may vary. This can lead to a feeling of a lack of predictability or consistency. As discussed above, our behaviour is often driven by ritual or familiarity. A lack of familiarity can lead to a lack of engagement, or a lack of confidence from worshippers.

Free prayer can often be less liturgically-centred, which can lead to a focus on superficial prayers. With the embracing of prayer as a two-way conversation with God amongst charismatics, prayer can become focused on the mundane, sometimes to the exclusion of the divine.

3.3 Gifts of the Spirit

In more Evangelical circles, it can be more commonplace to see 'Gifts of the Spirit' expressed during times of prayer. For example, at some HTB churches, it is commonplace for the congregation to be encouraged to pray aloud in tongues, allowing the spirit to speak through them in unknown languages when they don't have the words to express their prayers. This *glossolalia* is often described as speech to God alone, not requiring any translation, as it is only intended for the divine, and not for the other congregants to understand.¹⁰⁷

It can be common for people to receive thoughts, or messages from God, either for themselves or others during times of prayer. In her book *When God Talks Back* T.M. Luhrmann uses the example of the Vineyard Church in the USA. Here, she explains

¹⁰⁷ Ernest Best, "The Interpretation of Tongues," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (February 1975): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0036930600034591>.

‘newcomers soon learn that God is understood to speak to congregants in their own minds¹⁰⁸.’ These messages may be very clear, and targeted to one person, or offer a more general thought that is shared with the whole congregation. At retreats such as Spring Harvest, it is common for the worship leaders to call upon specific small groups of people that they feel are particularly in need of prayer.

The scriptural basis for praying in tongues comes from both 1 Corinthians 14, and Acts 2, although only one of these is now commonly accepted as a representation of *glossolalia*. 1 Corinthians is a true representation of *glossolalia*, a speaking in tongues and in the spirit, that is not understood by anyone around them.

This is distinguished from the occasion in Acts 2, when the disciples began speaking in other recognisable tongues, to enable the sharing of the gospel with those around them.¹⁰⁹ This form of speaking in tongues is not commonly seen among charismatic Christians, particularly in a church worship setting.

Distinct from both of these is the idea of ‘praying in the spirit’, which does not always manifest in a gift. Rather, it is ‘entering into the dimension of divine life’, a greater appreciation of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, and in enabling a worshipper to approach God in prayer.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ T. M Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2013).

¹⁰⁹ Ernest Best, “The Interpretation of Tongues,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (February 1975): 45–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0036930600034591>.

¹¹⁰ Etienne Vetö, “‘Praying in the Holy Spirit’ Spirituality and Pneumatology,” *New Blackfriars* 97, no. 1068 (March 2016): 157–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12195>.

3.4 Observation of Services

The following section contains observation of four contrasting church services; a traditional Anglican service, from the Seventh Sunday after Trinity (23rd July 2023), led by Rev. Arwen Folkes and Rev. Elizabeth Jinks at Saint Peter's Church in the Diocese of Chichester, a Sunday service from St Luke's Gas Street on July 16th 2023, an HTB Network Church in Birmingham, and Eucharist from the Seventh Sunday after Trinity at Canterbury Cathedral. These observations will focus around worship, liturgy and community.

3.4.1 St Luke's Gas Street

3.4.1.1 Introduction

St Luke's Gas Street is one of three locations that forms Gas Street church in Birmingham, along with Central and South. Gas Street is a part of the Holy Trinity Brompton Network, and offers 6 services across their churches on a Sunday, including Traditional Communion and contemporary services. They describe themselves as a church 'compelled by a Jesus-centred vision to be "Light for the City"'.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ 1. "About - Gas Street Church, Birmingham," Gas Street Church Birmingham - Light for the city, accessed August 8, 2023, <https://gasstreet.church/about>.

The service that I watched was from July 16th 2023, entitled 'Loving Others is Loving God'. Gas Street live streams their services on a Sunday, and they are hosted on the Gas Street Church YouTube channel.¹¹²

3.4.1.2 Worship

The service was approximately 90 minutes long, and contained a mixture of contemporary worship, prayer, preaching and time for fellowship. The service started with 30 minutes of worship, a combination of contemplative and upbeat music, with a full band including three singers, guitar, bass, keyboard and drums. The music matched the high quality that has become expected from Gas Street Church, given the renown of Worship Central, which was co-founded by Tim Hughes, who is the vicar at St Luke's.

There was a mixture of both directed and open-ended prayer. Following the music at the start of the service, there was an opportunity for people to pray, either individually, or other those near them in the congregation who requested it. Towards the end of the service there was around 10 minutes of prayer, directed by the service leaders, from the stage. The service ended with the congregation being invited, either for the first time, or again to accept God into their lives, and the whole congregation was invited to pray the Salvation Prayer.

The worship appeared to be well received by the congregation, with all members participating in the singing of each worship song, often combined with open arms, or

¹¹² 1. Gas Street Church, "Loving Others Is Loving God - Esther Rai | Gas Street Church," YouTube, July 16, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7EsG7nGvvl>.

hands lifted to heaven, particularly during more emotive songs such as ‘Living Hope’ and ‘O Praise The Name (Anastasis)’.

3.4.1.3 Liturgy

The service was opened with 30 minutes of sung worship, totalling 7 songs. This was followed by a time for prayer. There was a welcome message, and a recorded video of notices for the church, as well as an opportunity for financial giving. This was followed by a 40 minute talk entitled ‘Loving Others is Loving God.’ Following the talk there were prayers as well as one final worship song. The service ended with the Salvation Prayer.

The talk was based around a long passage of scripture, Matthew 25:31-46, and the congregation were invited to read along in personal bibles if they had them, but the verses were also projected onto the large screen. The talk shared a message that had a clearly applicable, and repeated message that loving others is loving God, and invited the congregation to consider what that means in their own lives, and in their interaction with others. It emphasised the idea that the global church is a part of God’s plan, including every believer and the impact that this could have on the wider community. This reflected the church’s value of being a ‘Light for the City’, as well as the wider HTB value of being part of the ‘evangelisation of the nation.... and the transformation of society.’¹¹³

¹¹³ 1. Holy Trinity Brompton, “Our Story,” HTB Church, accessed August 8, 2023, <https://htb.org/story>.

3.4.1.4 Community

The church community was visible and given several opportunities to be expressed during the service. The initial service welcome was to everyone both new and visiting, as well as those online to the 'Gas Street Family'. To act as an icebreaker, one of the leaders, Amy Tan, shared that a typical greeting at home in Malaysia is 'have you eaten?'. The congregation were invited to turn to the people around them, and ask the question, as a way of creating community with those they may have not met before.

The pre-recorded announcements included information covering all three locations, and also invited the congregation to get involved, and play their part in the life of the church, by joining one of the church teams. There was also a call for financial giving, as an offering of worship, to support the local church community.

During the talk, there was mention of the work that Gas Street does in their local community, including the facilitating of a job club, and a debt centre, as a way to support the community within Birmingham itself. It also touched upon the idea of 'Gather and Scatter', emphasising that it is important for the congregation not just to 'gather' together weekly for worship, but to also 'scatter' themselves throughout the local area, offering aid wherever they can.

Another area where community was visible was in a way that Esther Rai identified herself to the congregation at the start of her talk as a 'Central 6PM-er', or someone who regularly attends the 6PM service at Gas Street Central, the largest of the Gas Street locations. This suggests that whilst there is a wider Gas Street community and identity, that there are also smaller identities within that, around which location and

service you regularly attend, and the smaller community that you meet with weekly. This is reflected throughout churches in the HTB network, both in terms of weekly services, but also life groups of around 10-15 people who meet weekly for study and fellowship.

3.4.1.5 Context

The church is located in a former warehouse, with a large stage at the front, and then rows of individual seating. There is a large projector screen at the back of the stage, used to display videos, as well as song lyrics and bible verses. The church is well-equipped to live-stream their services, with multiple cameras and stage lighting.

The warehouse was previously used to manufacture gas to power street lights across the city, and this helped to inspire the idea that Gas Street would be a light for the city. The informal nature of the location is well-suited to the less formal style of worship, and the communal seating helps to build a sense of community and camaraderie between congregants.

The church also has a secondary space which, on Sundays, is used to provide separate youth services for ages 1+. There were a large number of young children and teens in attendance, almost all of whom left the main service to join the youth provision.

Overall, this service offered a balanced mix of contemporary worship music, both free and structured prayer, and a talk with a message that could be applied to the lives of both the congregants, and the wider city community. The worship seemed effective in engaging all ages within the congregation, and provided opportunities for people to make connections, and form stronger community bonds. The opportunities for

worship built a high level of energy among attendees, as could be seen through both their participation through song, and also through moving and raising their arms to the heavens.

3.4.2 Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury Cathedral is a World Heritage Site that has been in use for worship since 507 AD. It is one of 42 Anglican Cathedrals within the UK, and offers worship services every day of the week, starting with Matins and ending with Evensong. There is a Eucharist service offered on a daily basis.

The service that I watched was from 23rd July 2023, for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity. The Cathedral live streams their daily choral evensong and their Sunday Eucharist service on their website, and the videos are hosted there afterwards.

3.4.2.1 Worship

The worship followed a traditional Eucharist service and lasted for approximately 90 minutes. The service was a mixture of hymns, structured prayer, the Eucharist service, bible readings and the sermon. There were six hymns sung during the service by the choir, with the congregation also singing for three of them.

As this service took place during the summer, the Cathedral was able to invite a visiting choir, the Vasari Singers to sing the Eucharist service, which was well-suited to the formal nature of the service.

There was engagement from the congregation through the singing of the three hymns, as well as the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. Additionally, a large number of those in attendance chose to receive either communion or a blessing at the altar.

There was an opportunity for interaction within the community when given the time to share the peace with those sitting around them.

3.4.2.2 Liturgy

The service followed the order of a traditional Eucharist service, opening with a welcome and notices, followed by a hymn, and prayers of penitence. This was followed by the second hymn, the collect for the day, and the first of two Bible readings, this one from the epistles. There was then another hymn, followed by the second Bible reading, this time from the Gospels, which led into the Sermon. After the sermon, there was the Creed, structured prayers and two further hymns before the saying of the Eucharist prayer and the Lord's Prayer. This was followed by Holy Communion, a final prayer and a final hymn to end the service.

The service was well structured, and offered the opportunity for both structured prayer, and short moments for personal prayer, particularly for those in individual's lives who were suffering from poor health. There was engagement from the congregation through the hymns, as well as the rote responses that are part of the service.

There was a short sermon of around 15 minutes. The liturgy reflected the traditional nature of cathedral worship within the Church of England, and matched the serious atmosphere of being in a cathedral.

3.4.2.3 Community

Community was expressed and mentioned, from the very opening of the service, where all Christians of all denominations who would usually receive Communion

within their local setting were invited to take Communion, and all others were invited to receive a blessing. Additionally, community was expressed through the sharing of the Peace with those who were sat together, allowing for individual relationship-building.

Prayers that were offered during the service also expressly mentioned both the local church community, and the global Anglican community, and the specific challenges that they were facing. There was small mention made of the local physical community, choosing rather to focus on the religious communities.

3.4.2.4 Context

As an old and historic cathedral, the layout was very traditional, with seating on the sides, around a central aisle, with an altar, and altar rail at the centre front. The acoustics are very well-suited to a choral service, allowing for all voice parts to be heard by all in attendance.

The location matched the formal nature of the service, and created a serious and sombre mood throughout, albeit one that may be quite cold, or imposing to those who are less used to more traditional services.

The cathedral used to be home to a monastic community, and this is reflected in the range of services that are offered in the Cathedral, particularly with the inclusion of Matins.

Overall, the service was very well-suited to the grand nature of the Cathedral location, and was an accurate reflection of the more traditional 'high church' services that are available across the country on a weekly basis. There was not a lot of opportunity for the congregation to interact, either as part of the service, or with their

fellow congregants. The provision on an Order of Service made it more accessible to those who may not be familiar with formal Eucharist services, and allowed for greater immersion in the service, by being able to follow along with each section of the service. This familiarity leads to a sense of comfort, and a feeling of belonging when the service is easy to follow, and recognisable to attendees and visitors.

3.4.3 St Peter's, Diocese of Chichester

St Peter's in East Blatchington is a parish church within the Diocese of Chichester. The church has been in its current location since at least the 13th century, and has had a consistent worshipping community from then onwards. The church offers weekday prayer services, and a midweek Eucharist in addition to the Saturday and Sunday services.

The service I watched was from July 16th, 2023, as part of the Church of England's 'Church Online' programme, where one service every week, from a range of Anglican expressions, is live-streamed on the Church of England website, as well as on their YouTube channel.

3.4.3.1 Worship

The service that took place was approximately 45 minutes, and followed the pattern of a Eucharist service, including five hymns, several periods of prayer, a sermon, a reading and the Communion service.

The hymns were sung by a choir, which offered a level of professionalism and formality that matched the nature of the service.

The congregation were able to be involved through the hymns and prayers, as well as sharing the Peace with those around them. Owing to the nature of the live-streamed service, and the placement of the cameras, it was not possible to judge the level of engagement with the topic of the sermon.

3.4.3.2 Liturgy

The sermon focused on forgiveness and love, particularly as a way of distinguishing Christian 'wheat' from the 'weeds' of the wider world, with an emphasis on acting in a way that displays God's love for all mankind, with the aim of changing the 'weeds' into 'wheat.' The sermon was preached by a visiting vicar, the Reverend Elizabeth Jinks, from St Andrew's, the sister church of St Peter's.

The service was well organised, and followed the traditional structure and pattern of a Eucharist service, making it simple to follow for those in attendance, particularly those familiar with this style of service.

3.4.3.3 Community

There was not much expression of community during the service, with the exception of the sharing of the Peace. During the prayers, mention was made of the local worshipping communities, and the wider Anglican Communion, particularly overseas. No mention was made of any work that the church may be doing in the local community, although there were general prayers offered for political leaders at both a local and national level.

3.4.3.4 Context

The church is a very traditional, and old parish church, with a small altar at the front, and seating at the sides, separated by a central aisle. This matched the more traditional nature of the service, with the vicars, deacon and assistants in vestments, and the presence of a thurible.

Whilst this service offered a traditional, short Communion service, it is difficult to say whether this is an accurate representation of the weekly worship offered here, as it is likely to have been amended in some way to suit the live-stream for the Church of England website.

The service, much like at Canterbury Cathedral offered opportunity for engagement through the hymns and the sharing of the peace, but did not have much opportunity for deepening of relationships within the worshipping community.

3.4.4 St Mary's Iffley, Diocese of Oxford

St Mary the Virgin in Iffley is a parish church within the Diocese of Oxford. The church has existed in its current location, and largely in its current form since the 11th century, and has been home to worshipping communities for its entire life. The church offers a Eucharist service each Wednesday, as well as two services every Sunday.

The service I watched was from 7th April 2024, the First Sunday after Easter, which had been live streamed directly to YouTube by the church.

3.4.4.1 Worship

The service lasted for around one hour and twenty minutes, and was opened with organ music. It followed the pattern of a Eucharist service, including five hymns, three periods of prayer, a sermon, three readings and the Communion service.

The hymns were sung by the congregation, accompanied by an organist. The formality of the music matched the traditional style of the church and the service, and offered an opportunity for the congregation to feel engaged in the service.

The congregation were also able to be involved through the prepared responses to prayers, through the sharing of the Peace with those around them, and through being able to contribute financially to the life of the church during the offertory hymn.

Additionally, two members of the congregation performed the readings, from Acts, 1 John and the gospel of John, and a further member of the congregation delivered the sermon.

3.4.4.2 Liturgy

The sermon focused on the story of the Apostle Thomas, and his journey from doubting the identity of Christ to being martyred for his faith. The main point was around recognising the identity of Jesus as the Son of God, and the way that recognising and following Jesus will lead to life for his followers.

The service was well organised, with service sheets provided. It followed the traditional structure and pattern of a Eucharist service, which made it simple for the congregation to follow, as well as participate in.

3.4.4.3 Community

During the service, there was not much mention made of community, except for inviting congregants into community with one another during the sharing of the Peace. During the prayers, there were prayers for both the local, and global Christian communities, as well as members of the local congregation who were absent. In the parish notices at the start of the service, reference was made to the Community Cupboard, a food bank programme that is run by the church, and offers a chance for church members to work within their local community.

3.4.4.4 Context

The church is a very traditional, and old parish church, with a small altar at the front, and in rows, separated by a central aisle. This matched the more traditional nature of the service, with the vicar in vestments, and the presence of an organist.

This service offered a traditional, Communion service, which is likely an accurate representation of the regular pattern of worship at the Church, as they offer a sung Eucharist service every Sunday morning.

The service, much like at St Peter's offered opportunity for engagement through the hymns and the sharing of the peace, but did not have much opportunity for deepening of relationships within the worshipping community.

3.5 Evaluation

Overall, these four services offer an insight into the differing styles of worship on offer within the Church of England across the nation on a weekly basis.

3.5.1 Worship

The contemporary worship offered by a full band, with a mixture of contemplative and upbeat songs offers a dynamic experience at St Luke's Gas Street, which in turn offers greater opportunity for engagement by the congregation. This engagement can be witnessed through the singing, praying and bodily expressions of worship, such as raising hands towards the sky. The musical experience is enhanced by the quality of the musicians who led the service, which is not a standard experience, even in contemporary churches.

By contrast, the more traditional parish churches and cathedral offer a more typical experience of Anglican worship, with prayers led by one member of the church, and the music led by an organist and choir. This led worship provides less of an opportunity for worshippers to feel actively engaged in the service, with the exception of rote responses to the liturgy and in response to prayers.

This level of traditionalism, and the requirement to be familiar with the liturgy, or entirely reliant on an order of service, when provided, can go some way to explain why younger believers, and the previously unchurched may be more drawn towards contemporary services, as they can have a lower point of entry.

3.5.2 Liturgy

The contemporary liturgy at St Luke's Gas Street, whilst scripturally based, offers applicable and easily relatable messages to daily life, as well as being centred around the Church's vision to be a 'Light for the City'. Bible verses that are referred to are often shared on large screens, making the Bible more accessible for those who may not have one with them. Additionally, the more relaxed, conversational nature of the sermon, frequently using questions, both rhetorical and not, invites the congregation to participate and actively consider the application of the message to their own lives.

In contrast, the more traditional liturgy and sermon from the parish churches are shorter, but more formal in style, focusing on central theological teachings, but they may be lacking in applicable lessons for daily life. However, this structure may provide consistency and familiarity that is appealing to the regular congregation. It presents a more solemn and reflective worship experience than may be seen in a more contemporary setting.

3.5.3 Community

Community and outreach plays a central role in worship at St Luke's Gas Street. From the start of the service, there are interactive elements including icebreakers and repeated invitations to join church teams, as a way of finding your own smaller community within the church. Community initiatives such as job clubs and the debt centre reflect the 'Gather and Scatter' philosophy of the church, encouraging the congregation to engage with their wider community, as well as finding a community for themselves within the church.

By contrast, the expression of community within traditional parish churches is often limited to prayers for the local and global church, as well as the sharing of the Peace between congregants. Whilst some of these churches offer outreach, such as hosting a community pantry, these are less likely to be actively promoted during the church service. This focus on tradition may limit the opportunity for innovation in community engagement, which could be a contributing factor to the stagnation of growth that the church has seen.

3.5.4 Context and Environment

The modern, informal setting of a converted warehouse aligns well with the contemporary worship style of St Luke's Gas Street. This, combined with the use of technology for sharing visual aids, as well as live-streaming makes the church more accessible and appealing to a broader audience. The informal setting also allows for a sense of camaraderie and community to be fostered amongst congregants, which can lay a foundation for strong interpersonal relationships.

In contrast, the traditional parish church provides a more formal, and historic setting for worship. This can provide a sense of continuity and familiarity to parishioners who have attended for a long time, as well as creating a sense of reverence by the nature of the building. This traditional architecture and setting may appeal to those who have an interest in the historical and spiritual heritage of the church. However, these settings can appear cold and austere, which can be off-putting to those who are new to church, or looking for an inclusive experience.

The growth of contemporary churches like St Luke's Gas Street can be attributed to their dynamic worship style, practical and relatable sermons, active community

engagement, and modern, informal environments. These elements are likely to resonate with a diverse and younger demographic, fostering a sense of belonging and active participation in the life of the church.

In contrast, traditional parish churches maintain a structured and formal worship experience, which appeals to those seeking continuity and reverence but may not engage a broader audience as effectively. To address stagnation, traditional churches might consider incorporating more interactive and community-focused elements while preserving their rich heritage and traditions.

CHAPTER FOUR - SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Social Conservatism and LGBT+ Rights

Evangelical churches such as HTB, in what could be seen as an effort not to distance any of their congregation, focus their sermons on evangelism, and supporting those in their local community, rather than focusing on topics such as homosexuality, which could potentially be very divisive. I would suggest that this is with the aim of not alienating members of their community who may hold differing views on these topics. This can foster a sense of family, and community among those who attend the church. However, this lack of discussion around deeper issues that are potentially controversial can also repel those who are seeking a deeper look into theology. These churches also are more likely to feature sermons that are based on real-life issues, such as friendship, relationships and community, and are less likely to regularly feature biblical standpoints, and verses in their sermons.

By contrast, in more traditional Anglican churches, there can be long discussions, particularly in sermons about the issues that are affecting our society, and the Anglican Communion as a whole. Whilst this can be divisive and lead to friction within the church, this allows attendees to be aware of the viewpoints of their ministers, and those around them, within their church 'family'. By including questions on this topic in the survey, it is hoped that we will be able to judge how much of an impact these viewpoints, and their discussion, or lack thereof, have on people attending these churches. As younger age groups are generally more socially liberal, as seen in the

latest British Social Attitudes Survey,¹¹⁴ we would expect to see a greater percentage of youths attending churches that hold, superficially or otherwise, more liberal views on these issues.

4.1.1 Same-Sex Marriage

Despite being unified under the Anglican Communion, there are various theological differences between the churches under that umbrella. These theological differences are also expressed in different forms. Some churches are clear and open about their theological beliefs, and express these, whether they are popular opinions or not. I believe that others, such as St Matthias, an HTB church plant in Plymouth do not discuss any topics that may appear to be ‘controversial’, so as not to alienate any within the congregation. Archie Coates, the vicar of HTB in London, who succeeded Nicky Gumbel has stated that he would not share his view on LGBT+ relationships as ‘I want people to be able to be here and find a unity in holding different views.’¹¹⁵ Reverend Coates also likened the disagreements within the church on sexuality to differing views that members may hold on Brexit.

I believe that these issues, ones such as homosexuality that may be ‘contentious’ should still be discussed, albeit in a sensitive manner. LGBT+ Christians may feel

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Clery, “BSA 40: A Liberalisation in Attitudes?,” National Centre for Social Research, September 21, 2023, <https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/BSA%2040%20Moral%20issues.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Megan Cornwell, “Archie Coates: Succeeding Nicky Gumbel, Tackling LGBT Issues and Reaching the Lost,” Premier Christianity, August 26, 2022, <https://www.premierchristianity.com/interviews/archie-coates-succeeding-nicky-gumbel-tackling-lgbt-issues-and-reaching-the-lost/13674.article>.

drawn to a church from its preaching, worship and community, only to later find that they are not affirming of LGBT+ relationships, or members, which can lead to alienation. I believe that these discussions should be occurring, with the aim of reaching a point of agreement within the congregation, rather than left undiscussed, to potentially cause problems or hurt further down the line.

HTB, for such a 'modern' church, holds fairly traditional, conservative views. As an example, HTB views homosexuality as a sin, and expects that all homosexual members of their church lead a celibate life.¹¹⁶ There was an expectation that this may have changed in August of 2022, with the retirement of Nicky Gumbel. He was replaced as the Reverend of Holy Trinity Brompton by Reverend Archie Coates, formerly the vicar of St Peter's in Brighton. When Rev'd Coates was the vicar at St Peter's, he expressed support for the annual Pride parade, and stated that there were many LGBTQ+ members who regularly attended the church. However, after becoming the vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton, Revd Coates was asked about his views on LGBTQ+ issues within the church. He expressed that he viewed it as a secondary issue, akin to Brexit, and would not be preaching on the topic, out of concern for causing disunity within the church.¹¹⁷ This does raise the question that, if young people are more socially liberal than older generations, why do they choose to attend more socially conservative churches? This is one question that I hope to be able to answer from my survey, in Chapter six.

¹¹⁶ Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 2018).

¹¹⁷ Steve Addison, "HTB and the Beginning of the End," *Movements*, December 7, 2022, <https://www.movements.net/blog/blog/2022/12/7/xmjvgvrnalczhn9ukebj1llwtepe>

Following the publishing of Prayers of Love and Faith, both Rev'd Coates and Rev'd Gumbel were among 27 signatories that expressed concern about this work being approved by the College of Bishops, without a synodical authorisation process.

Whilst not an outright statement against LGBTQ+ blessings, it has widely been taken as an indication of the views of the wider HTB network on LGBTQ+ issues.¹¹⁸

This is at odds with the more progressive views that can be seen within the Anglican Communion in the west at large, where homosexuals are welcomed within the church, as well as in church leadership, as well as some churches choosing to offer same-sex marriage ceremonies in their churches. Episcopal churches within the United States and Anglican churches within Australia have begun to offer blessings for same-sex couples, as well as ordaining homosexual clergy.¹¹⁹ In addition to this, in 2017, the Anglican Church advised vicars to assist in the developing of gender non-specific baptismal rites, to be more inclusive to congregants who identify as transgender or non-binary. This has caused a further divide in the Anglican church, between those who hold more socially conservative views around LGBT+ issues, and those who believe that the church should be welcoming to any and all people. This divide can particularly be seen between the west, and Anglican churches of the Global South, who view themselves as in a state of 'impaired communion' over the divide

¹¹⁸ Francis Martin, "Church Organisations Urge Bishops Not to Commend Blessings for Same-Sex Couples," The Church Times, July 7, 2023

¹¹⁹ Staff Reports, "Home / News and Events / UC News Global Trend: World's Oldest Protestant Churches Now Ordain Gays and Lesbians," The United Church of Christ, May 31, 2002, <http://www.ucc.org/global-trend-worlds-oldest>.

Following the publication of the outcomes of *Living in Love and Faith*, and the possibility of using prayers to bless LGBTQ+ couples in churches, whilst still not performing gay marriages, some have seen this as an ‘unworkable compromise’¹²⁰. The basis of this argument is that Canon law B4.1 states that the Convocations of Canterbury and York may approve forms of service that are ‘neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.’¹²¹ This argues that any liturgy that is designed to offer blessings to LGBTQ+ relationships is a clear departure from the orthodoxy of the church.

Whilst the more conservative wing of the church has pushed back against LGBTQ+ inclusion in one form or another, it appears that the clergy in general may hold more liberal views. In a survey of 5000 priests selected at random by the Times¹²², which received almost 1200 responses, 67.8% of priests were in favour of the government’s proposed ban on conversion therapy, with only 17.7% being against it. For the first time, a majority of priests backed same-sex marriage. Additionally, in late 2023, 44 bishops both diocesan and suffragan signed a letter stating that they believe that priests should allow to be in a same-sex marriage, a more progressive standpoint than previously taken by the convocation in years past.¹²³

¹²⁰ Ian Paul “Prayers of Love and Faith: The c of E’s Brexit Moment?”, Psephizo, September 15, 2023, <https://psephizo.com/sexuality-2/prayers-of-love-and-faith-the-c-of-es-brexit-moment/>

¹²¹ “Section B”, The Church of England, accessed August 27, 2023, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/canons-church-engalnd/section-b>

¹²² Kaya Burgess and Ryan Watts “Most Church of England Priests Support Ban on Gay Conversion Therapy”, The Times, September 8, 2023

¹²³ Francis Martin, “Don’t Delay Guidance, Say Bishops,” *Church Times*, November 3, 2023.

The acceptance, or lack thereof, of gay marriage, and the expectations placed on non-heterosexual people within the church has long been a point of contention. In 2021, the Methodist conference voted to allow homosexual unions to take place in Methodist churches, and to be performed by Methodist ministers, albeit with a conscience clause that would allow individual ministers to opt out of providing these services. The amended Standing Order 011A (1) now reads that the Methodist church believes ‘that marriage is... a lifelong union... of two people who freely enter it.’¹²⁴ or between a man and a woman, allowing for all beliefs to be represented. Amended Standing Order 011B (2) ensures that under no circumstances would any person such as a minister of member be required to ‘officiate at or participate in’¹²⁵ the marriage of a couple, if it would go against their conscience to do so. That said, it cannot be said that being accepting of same-sex marriage is a guarantee of retention of worshippers, as both the Methodist Church and the United Reform Church (URC) are in favour of same-sex marriage, and yet their numbers continue to freefall, worse than those of the Church of England.

Contrastingly, the Church of England does not offer any services for homosexual unions, nor can their church buildings be used for such weddings. Even if it were the overwhelming desire of the Church of England, in part, or as a whole, to begin performing same-sex marriages, they are currently unable to, under law. Under the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, there was the introduction of the so-called

¹²⁴ “The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church”, The Methodist Church. Page 276 Accessed July 27, 2023.

¹²⁵ “The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church”, Page 277

‘quadruple lock’¹²⁶, that protects religious freedom to oppose same-sex marriage, and protects the Church of England further. Firstly, it states that a religious marriage ceremony of a same-sex couple would only be possible if the governing body of the religion has opted in, the individual minister is willing to conduct the marriage, and the premises have been appropriately registered for same-sex marriage. Secondly, it states that no religious organisation can be compelled to opt in to perform same-sex marriages, or for their premises to be used for such an event. Thirdly, it amends the Equality Act 2010 to make it explicit that a religious organisation or representative’s refusal to marry a same-sex couple is not unlawful discrimination. Finally, it ensures that the common law legal duty of the Church of England, and the Church in Wales clergy to marry parishioners only extends to marriage between one man and one woman. This is a protection of existing Church of England Canon law, and to amend this, it would require parliamentary approval, in line with any other Synodical legislation.

There are voices disagreeing within the church, with Bishop Paul Bayes, the former Bishop of Liverpool calling for the church to offer a ‘gender-neutral marriage canon’¹²⁷, as part of a wider move towards greater acceptance of LGBTQ+ people within the church. Such moves are opposed by conservative groups, who call for the biblical standard of marriage between one man and one woman to be upheld.

¹²⁶ “Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act: A Fact Sheet” UK Government, 2013, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/51750cd2e5274a59fa717007/140423_M_SSC_Act_facsheet_web_version.pdf

¹²⁷ Harriet Sherwood, “Church of England Should Recognise Same-Sex Weddings, Says Bishop,” the Guardian (The Guardian, 2021), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/26/church-of-england-should-recognise-same-sex-marriage-says-bishop>.

Conservative opponents of equal marriage often quote scriptures such as Matthew 19:4-6, and Ephesians 5:25-27 as evidence that the biblical standard is for marriage between a man and a woman, and not between same-sex couples.¹²⁸

4.1.2 Conversion Therapy Ban

In 2021, the UK Government announced that it was launching a consultation into banning conversion therapy for those under the age of 18, and those above 18 who are unable to consent. More conservative Christian groups, such as Christian Concern ‘one of the most prominent evangelical organisations in the United Kingdom¹²⁹’ were staunchly against the proposed measures, arguing that it infringed on the freedom of religion, and amounted to banning private prayer and discussion. Conversely, in 2017, the General Synod of the Church of England backed a motion calling for a ‘ban on the practice of conversion therapy aimed at altering sexual orientation.¹³⁰’, demonstrating again the wide range of contrasting views that Christians in the UK hold on social issues.

The argument for conversion therapy for gender identity is based on the scriptural evidence in Genesis 1:27 that God ‘So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.’ This scripture,

¹²⁸ Christian Concern, “Same Sex ‘Marriage’ The Costs and Consequences of Redefining Marriage,” Christian Concern, 2012, https://archive.christianconcern.com/sites/default/files/docs/CCO2607_Same-Sex_Marriage.pdf.

¹²⁹ Sam Hailes, “Andrea Williams: The Unstoppable Founder of Christian Concern,” Premier Christianity (Premier Christianity, 2019), <https://www.premierchristianity.com/home/andrea-williams-the-unstoppable-founder-of-christian-concern/2779.article>.

¹³⁰ “General Synod Backs Ban on Conversion Therapy,” Church of England (Church of England, 2017), <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-backs-ban-conversion-therapy>.

along with the perfect nature of God's creation is used to argue that anyone seeking to change their gender is acting based on their sinful nature. Conversion therapy could therefore be used to bring their mind, and understanding of their gender back into line with their physical reality, as the gender they were created by God. A similar line of reasoning is used to explain the use of conversion therapy for those who are homosexual, using the verses at Romans 1:26-27, to identify that 'unnatural lusts' for same-sex relationships were part of a sinful nature. This reasoning is used by those who frame 'conversion therapy' not as changing someone's sexual orientation, but as a way of supporting those who wish to avoid the 'temptations' that may come from their sexual orientation.¹³¹

Those in favour argue that it is never 'forced' conversion therapy, with it only being performed on those who are willing and able to consent. However, research has shown that when conversion therapy is performed by religious practitioners, they have no training, and are lacking in competence. This means that they often fail to provide the full information to a patient, which would negate their ability to provide informed consent.¹³²

In addition, those in favour of conversion therapy claim that the current text of the government's conversion therapy ban would make it possible for members of the church, and particularly church leaders to be prosecuted for 'conversations about

¹³¹ John Stevens, "Conversion Therapy: A Biblical Response," FIEC, December 13, 2016, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/conversion-therapy-a-biblical-response>.

¹³² G. Andrade and M. Campo Redondo, "Is Conversion Therapy Ethical? A Renewed Discussion in the Context of Legal Efforts to Ban It," *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health* 20 (February 2022): 100732, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2021.100732>.

sexual attraction’ as well as for prayer. Some go as far as to state that Christian teachings on topics such as sexuality are not going to ‘escape unscathed from a ban on conversion practices.’¹³³

The Government has responded to these concerns, clarifying that there is no desire to criminalise religious beliefs or practices, and that ‘talking conversion therapy’ could not be reasonably understood to include communication between individuals such as private prayer or pastoral conversation.

A more moderate line taken, in favour of conversion therapy is that it should only be made available when it is ‘genuinely voluntary’, and where the participant is unwilling or unable to abandon the ‘repressive norms that cause their distress.’¹³⁴ This was particularly considered in the context of strict orthodox religions, where remaining a member of the LGBT+ community can lead to social ostracization, which can have equally damaging outcomes for an individual.

There is no credible scientific evidence that conversion therapy offers any benefit to those who undergo it, and plenty of scientific evidence to support the view that conversion therapy harms those who undergo it, particularly those who undergo it

¹³³ Danny Webster, “What the Government Must Consider in Its Upcoming Conversion Therapy Bill,” Evangelical Alliance, January 25, 2023, <https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/what-the-government-must-consider-in-its-upcoming-conversion-therapy-bill>.

¹³⁴ Owen M. Bradfield, “Sexual Identity or Religious Freedom: Could Conversion Therapy Ever Be Morally Permissible in Limited Urgent Situations?,” *Monash Bioethics Review* 39, no. 1 (July 2021): 51–59, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40592-021-00132-6>.

against their will. Studies have shown that conversion therapy significantly increases the risk of stress and self-hatred, particularly on the grounds of sexual orientation.¹³⁵

A study by Galop¹³⁶ identified how prevalent conversion therapy practices are within the UK. 18% of LGBT+ people who responded said that they had been offered conversion therapy, or pressured to change on the basis of their sexual orientation. The figures were 36% and 43% respectively for non-binary and trans respondents. Looking at the impact of religion on conversion therapy, 22% of religious respondents said that they had been offered conversion therapy, compared to 17% of non-religious respondents. Perhaps the most alarming of statistics is that 56% of those who had undergone some form of conversion therapy stated that this was performed by a family member, and not by a qualified therapist.

4.1.3 Queer Theology and LGBT+ Inclusion

Research undertaken by the Pew Research Centre in 2013¹³⁷ showed that religious affiliation can be a significant predictor of happiness for LGBT+ Christians, especially those that identify as a Protestant.¹³⁸ This suggests that same-sex inclusive doctrines

¹³⁵ G. Andrade and M. Campo Redondo, "Is Conversion Therapy Ethical? A Renewed Discussion in the Context of Legal Efforts to Ban It," *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health* 20 (February 2022): 100732, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2021.100732>.

¹³⁶ "LGBT+ Survivors' Experiences of Conversion Practices - Galop," Galop, 2023, <https://galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Galop-Conversion-Practices-Report-Jan-2023.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Wallace Swan, "Chapter 6: Religion," essay, in *A Survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, Experiences and Values in Changing Times* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2013), 1–157.

¹³⁸ M. N. Barringer and David A. Gay, "Happily Religious: The Surprising Sources of Happiness among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adults," *Sociological Inquiry* 87, no. 1 (December 2, 2016): 75–96, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12154>.

can lead to a sense of identity and happiness for believers. Surprisingly, the same level of happiness is experienced by Evangelical protestants, who are more likely to be in a relationship that is condemned by their church.

As social policy has changed to include more LGBT+ rights, some have argued the zero-sum belief that this increase in rights impedes on Christian religious freedom. However, Wilkins et al found that sharing a scriptural message centred around acceptance, rather than identity lowered this belief for mainstream Protestants, but was less effective for Evangelicals.¹³⁹

Support for LGBT+ Christians can create a tension between individual Christians and the tradition that they ascribe to. When the United Methodist Church prohibited the performance of same-sex marriages in their churches, this was met with disappointment among individual worshippers, but it also served to strengthen the individuals' commitment to their local congregations that are LGBT+ friendly.¹⁴⁰ This shows that for some, inclusion is a key priority, and may be a deciding factor when choosing a local congregation to associate with.

The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), originally founded in the United States, but now also present in Europe, was created as a safe space for LGBT+ young Christians to worship. It has helped to provide a sense of home and family for young Christians, but not at the expense of their traditional beliefs, as these young

¹³⁹ Clara L. Wilkins et al., "Is LGBT Progress Seen as an Attack on Christians?: Examining Christian/Sexual Orientation Zero-Sum Beliefs.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 122, no. 1 (January 2022): 73–101, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000363>.

¹⁴⁰ Clara L. Wilkins et al., "Congregation over Denomination: Analyzing Psychological Reactions to a Church Ruling on Same Sex Marriage," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 63, no. 3 (February 9, 2024): 501–18, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12905>.

Christians often also maintain their affiliation with their previous (non-inclusive) churches.¹⁴¹ This would suggest that there is a place for queer-affirming traditional churches, as well as more contemporary inclusive churches, to create a safe and welcoming space for worship for LGBT+ Christians of all types.

4.2 Social Engagement and Serving Christ in the Community

Social outreach programs play a crucial role in fostering church growth, even in the face of declining church attendance and growing secularisation. The Church of England, like many religious institutions, has witnessed a significant decline in Christian affiliation and attendance over the past few decades. However, amidst this secularising trend, the church has emerged as a vital contributor to the socio-economic infrastructure of contemporary British society through its social outreach initiatives.

One of the key findings is that faith-based social action, which involves practical service provided by the church to the wider community, can lead to growth in church numbers and deepen faith among congregations.¹⁴² Participating in social action, or social outreach can be an opportunity to participate in the redemptive activities that God is leading in the world. One paper describes social outreach as allowing the

¹⁴¹ Karen Cuthbert and Yvette Taylor, "Queer Liveability: Inclusive Church-Scenes," *Sexualities* 22, no. 5–6 (November 12, 2018): 951–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718772759>.

¹⁴² Beryl Hugen, Terry A. Wolfer, and Jennifer Ubels Renkema, "Service and Faith: The Impact on Christian Faith of Community Ministry Participation," *Review of Religious Research* 47, no. 4 (June 2006): 409–26, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/20058107>.

Spirit to 'increase Christ in our lives', so that we can share the 'gifts and graces' that he grants to us.¹⁴³

While social action is often mistaken for mere charity, it goes beyond one-sided transactions and fosters meaningful relationships that can transform both the giver and the recipient. Churches engaged in social action embrace the concept of genuine Christian hospitality, where sharing a meal and building relationships are prioritised over merely providing food. This is particularly visible in the activities of large global megachurches such as Hillsong, who offer holistic services including counselling, advocacy and a health centre, as well as providing food and housing support to unhoused populations.¹⁴⁴¹⁴⁵ This approach resonates with nonreligious individuals as well, as studies have shown that growing churches are often characterised by their hospitality to those outside their congregation.

Furthermore, the church's social action serves as an implicit form of evangelism. When the church actively engages in social outreach, it aligns with people's expectations of what a church should be at its best. This integrity and authenticity are attractive to those outside the church, creating plausibility structures that render Christianity more persuasive. The church's involvement in social action reflects the

¹⁴³ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Christ Must Increase: New Horizons in Mission and the Influence of the Spirit," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 31, no. 4 (October 2014): 282–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378814537756>.

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Davies, "The Evangelisation of the Nation, the Revitalisation of the Church and the Transformation of Society': Megachurches and Social Engagement," in *Handbook of Megachurches*, ed. Stephen Hunt (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 214–40.

¹⁴⁵ Philip Schwadel, "Individual, Congregational, and Denominational Effects on Church Members' Civic Participation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 2 (May 12, 2005): 159–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2005.00273.x>.

goodness of God as expressed in the gospel, making faith more plausible and compelling.

Research has shown that increased attendance at church events and services is associated with an increase in community engagement¹⁴⁶, and a growth in church-based social networks. These networks are positively associated with civic activity and civic engagement.¹⁴⁷ This civic engagement then leads to being able to provide genuine impact within the local society and community.¹⁴⁸

The impact of social action extends beyond organised programs, as much of it occurs reactively or informally through relationships built by clergy and congregation members. The church's involvement in providing food banks, homeless shelters, and various community support services demonstrates its commitment to addressing the pressing material and social conditions of contemporary British society. Churches also play a crucial role in tackling issues like holiday hunger, providing meals and activities for children during school holidays.

One non-evangelical megachurch that is actively participating in, and supporting, their local community is All Souls, Langham Place. All Souls offers three church services, and sees about 2300 worshippers attend weekly. They facilitate one of

¹⁴⁶ Gene L Theodori and Chyrel A Mayfield, "Attendance at Religious Meetings and Community Involvement," *Journal of Rural Social Sciences* 23, no. 1 (June 30, 2008): 266–76, <https://doi.org/https://egrove.olemiss.edu/jrss/vol23/iss1/11>.

¹⁴⁷ Philip Schwadel et al., "Social Networks and Civic Participation and Efficacy in Two Evangelical Protestant Churches," *Review of Religious Research* 58, no. 2 (June 2016): 305–17, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-015-0237-y>.

¹⁴⁸ Anne Marie Brady and Lauren Burke, publication, *Vibrant Neighborhoods Forum: Leveraging Civic Engagement for Social Impact*, January 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28524>.

London's largest church-run homeless support network, the All Souls Local Action Network (ASLAN)¹⁴⁹, which provides a variety of services, both religious and secular, to support the unhoused population in London.

Research on the Church of England has shown that despite declining attendance, churches actively involved in social action experience growth in both numbers and faith. The church's social engagement serves as a powerful witness to the community and can attract individuals who may not be interested in traditional forms of evangelism. Through social action, they encounter the goodness of the gospel in action and are drawn to become part of the church community.¹⁵⁰

One megachurch that is actively participating in, and supporting, their local community is All Souls, Langham Place. All Souls offers three church services, and sees about 2300 worshippers attend weekly. They facilitate one of London's largest church-run homeless support network, the All Souls Local Action Network (ASLAN)¹⁵¹, which provides a variety of services, both religious and secular, to support the unhoused population in London.

¹⁴⁹ "ASLAN - All Souls Local Action Network," ASLAN - All Souls Serve The City, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://asstc.org.uk/aslan>.

¹⁵⁰ Hannah Rich, "Anglican Churches in the UK Are Shrinking in Size but Not Impact," ChristianityToday.com, November 24, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/church-of-england-decline-theos-growing-good-social-action.html>.

¹⁵¹ "ASLAN - All Souls Local Action Network," ASLAN - All Souls Serve The City, accessed April 17, 2024, <https://asstc.org.uk/aslan>.

4.2.1 Youth Clubs

In the past, the Church was a pillar of the community, a place that you could turn to for support both for spiritual needs, and for physical ones. Resource churches, particularly those that follow the Holy Trinity Brompton model seek to reoccupy this space, through a number of outreach avenues.

Many churches offer youth groups or 'Kid's Church' during the main Sunday service. This allows parents the opportunity to make time and space for their own faith, which likely allows for a deepening of their own relationship with God, which they can then share with their children. In addition, many of the sessions that are run during these youth groups offer engaging activities that are centred around a biblical story, or with a clear moral message. This encourages children to view life through a Christian lens, and can shape their thoughts about the church as they grow older.

Additionally, churches in large urban areas often offer a weekday session with activities for children. This allows parents, childminders and nannies from the local community to meet, and form friendships. These relationships offer the possibility for non-Christian friends to be encouraged to attend the church, creating the chance for them to become a member, whilst also providing a beneficial service to the local community. In the area surrounding Holy Trinity Clapham, one of the largest plants in the HTB network, there is a large community of nannies, who meet weekly at the 'Trinity Toddlers and Babies' sessions, as a way of allowing their children to play with others of a similar age, in a supervised environment, that also allows the nannies to forge stronger personal relationships. Anecdotally, this has had success in encouraging non-believers to become members of the church community.

4.2.2 Food Banks and Advice Centres

Another way that churches are operating in their local community is through the provision of sorely needed resources, such as support groups for victims of domestic violence, debt advice centres and Food Banks. As an example, Christ Church Feltham, an HTB plant just outside of London runs the 'Good Grub Club' in partnership with the Feltham Salvation Army, which allows them to supply food parcels to families who are in need. The funding to support these outreach channels is from donations by members of the church community. These initiatives allow for church members to give back to their local community, whether that be monetarily or by volunteering their time to support the programmes. It helps to raise the visibility of the church in the local area, and reaches members of the community that may not have considered attending church before. It is hard to quantify whether receiving support from the church when in need is more likely to encourage you to attend church, but raising the profile of the church in the area is likely to have a positive effect.

4.2.3 Alpha

Perhaps one of the most well-known products of the HTB Network is The *Alpha* Course. Described by HTB as 'a chance to ask questions and explore the Christian faith in a fun, no-pressure environment', *Alpha* courses are run by churches across the country. Whilst current statistics are not available on how many alpha courses are run in the UK, it has been translated into 112 languages, and had several million

people attend. At its peak in 1998, 10,500 Alpha courses were run within the year.¹⁵² 11 weeks of sessions, each covering a different area of the Christian faith, along with time for socialising, and generally a shared meal, Alpha is seen as a non-threatening way to learn more about Christianity, meet new people, and ask questions, without committing to anything further.

The sessions are lightly structured, a meal, followed by a talk of around 30 minutes, often in video format, and then time for discussion.¹⁵³ Knowing that *Alpha* is aimed at those with little to no knowledge of the Christian faith, it allows people to ask open and honest questions about areas that they struggle to understand, which can in turn allow them to develop their own faith. By meeting weekly, alongside members of the local church community, non-Christians are able to form friendships, which may encourage them to continue attending the church as a way of remaining in contact with their friends.

In his book, Stephen Hunt describes the purpose of *Alpha* as ‘to set people on a spiritual road, or at least get them to think about what it has to offer.’¹⁵⁴ In his interview with Ben Pollard, pastoral advisor to Nicky Gumbel, the founder of Alpha, Ben explained that ‘*Alpha* is about winning converts, but even more it provides a basic introduction to Christianity through a neighbourhood awareness campaign.’ In 2020, it was estimated that 23 million people worldwide had attended some or all of

¹⁵² Stephen Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise: Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2004).

¹⁵³ “The Alpha Course,” Coastal Church, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://coastalchurch.org/alpha/>

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Hunt, *Anyone for Alpha?*, 1st ed. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001).

the Alpha course. Whilst it doesn't seem to have had the desired effect of 'winning converts', it certainly has provided millions of people with a basic introduction to Christianity, removed from the stereotype of hellfire and damnation, and instead couched in friendly terms. In fact, a suggested question for leaders to ask in the first session is 'If it turned out that God existed and you could ask one question, what would it be?', allowing for those with no belief¹⁵⁵ in God to attend, without immediately being challenged on their belief, or lack thereof.

Alpha was started as an attempt to combat the decreased church attendance across the UK. In her 1990 study¹⁵⁶ Grace Davie identified both a decrease in belonging and in believing, particularly among the young; 'Not only have the young left our churches, they are, it seems, rejecting even nominal belief.' It can be said that this is exactly the problem that *Alpha* seeks to solve, offering an informal way of learning more about the church, with the hope that it will lead to deeper faith, particularly in the young and 'unchurched'. *Alpha*, an informal and open way to learn more about Christianity allows people to begin where they are. The national advertising campaigns at the launch of *Alpha* in the 1990's made no mention of repentance, or sin, but rather offered Christianity as a support to everyday life. According to the *Alpha* website, in 2020, more than 30,000 churches and organisations ran *Alpha* with

¹⁵⁵ "Alpha Host Notes," Alpha Course, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://alpha.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Host-Notes.pdf>.

¹⁵⁶ Nancy T Ammerman and Grace Davie, "Vicarious Religion: A Methodological Challenge," in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 21-36.

over 1.3 million participants, suggesting that *Alpha* may be a key indicator as to how the church can see further growth in the future.

Of course, the main goal of these initiatives is to offer support and engagement opportunities to targeted groups in the local community, rather than to bolster church attendance figures. However, it is likely that, by joining these groups or attending sessions such as *Alpha* or children's groups, members of the local community are likely to become more conscious of the church community, and the goal of outreaching the love of Christ in the local community, which may in turn lead to more people attending the church, even on a semi-regular basis.

Participating in, and actively facilitating social outreach programmes can lead to growth, both in depth of belief, and also in congregation size for churches in the UK. By increasing the visibility of the church, as well as working to develop genuine, and personal relationships with unchurched members of the local community, the church can see benefits, both for themselves, and the community members that they are engaging with. Research from the Theos Think Tank in 2020 suggests that 'the manner in which social action is approached is what makes it conducive to congregational growth, or not.'¹⁵⁷ Churches that seek to build relationships with those who otherwise would not come into regular contact with the church are able to develop these relationships into a growth in their congregation. For social action to succeed, the church needs to be visible and active within their local community,

¹⁵⁷ Hannah Rich and Stephen Cottrell, "Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England," Theos Think Tank, 2020, <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf>.

supporting their secular needs as well as offering spiritual support and guidance on an individual basis.

CHAPTER FIVE - DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF CHURCH WEBSITES

5.1 Background

This chapter will briefly examine the role of the Church online, both before and after the Covid-19 pandemic, and include a digital ethnographic examination of four church websites. It is helpful first to briefly define, in the context of this research, this term.

Digital Ethnography has been defined previously as an ‘ethnography of virtual spaces.’¹⁵⁸ It encompasses virtual, cyberspace, online and new/social media ethnographies.¹⁵⁹ Digital ethnography provides the opportunity to examine how cultures and spaces are created, and exist online, particularly for religious purposes. Through an examination of the ‘virtual presence’ of four churches online, this research hopes to examine how they create an experience that can be described as ‘networked religion’, how religion exists and functions online.¹⁶⁰ The virtual presence of these churches exists under three categories, as defined by Cartledge and Davies; the provision of liturgical resources for asynchronous individual worship, the provision

¹⁵⁸ Jenna Burrell, “The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research,” *Field Methods* 21, no. 2 (February 18, 2009): 181–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x08329699>.

¹⁵⁹ Satveer Kaur-Gill and Mohan J. Dutta, “Digital Ethnography,” *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, November 7, 2017, 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0271>.

¹⁶⁰ H. A. Campbell, “Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (November 8, 2011): 64–93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

for real-time participation online both real-world services, and the provision for real-time participation online in virtual-world services.¹⁶¹

5.1.1 Strengths

There are several opportunities provided by this form of ethnography. Examining online sources allows for the creation of a ‘netnography of social outputs’¹⁶², allowing for the examination of large amounts of online information, to create an understanding of the ‘religious spaces’ that are being created online. It builds on the idea that in a digital context, text, images and multimedia resources are carriers of ‘newly reinterpreted experiences’, including the creation of virtual spaces for worship as an extension, or replacement of traditional physical spaces. McClure described the internet as an ‘interactive mass medium that promotes affiliation with others’.¹⁶³ This medium is being used by religious congregations around the globe to extend their ‘religious and spiritual outreach’ to those within and outside their worshipping communities.¹⁶⁴ As the world we live in becomes more and more digital-dominant, websites and the internet are the first place we seek to learn and gain information.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Mark Cartledge and Andrew Davies, “A Megachurch in a Megacity,” *PentecoStudies* 13, no. 1 (March 19, 2014): 58–79, <https://doi.org/10.1558/ptcs.v13i1.58>.

¹⁶² M. Tran and A. Davies, “Church without Walls? Social Media as Ritual Carrier for Megachurch Congregants in the Renegotiation of Ritual Space,” LSBU Open Research, September 20, 2022, <https://openresearch.lsbu.ac.uk/item/9191z>.

¹⁶³ Paul K. McClure, “Tinkering with Technology and Religion in the Digital Age: The Effects of Internet Use on Religious Belief, Behavior, and Belonging,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 3 (September 2017): 481–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12365>.

¹⁶⁴ Brenda E. Brasher, *Give Me That Online Religion* (San Francisco, CA: Wiley, 2001).

¹⁶⁵ Lynn Conway, Donna Lanclos, and Erin Hood, “‘I Always Stick with the First Thing That Comes up on Google. . .’ Where People Go for Information, What They Use, and Why,” *EDUCAUSE Review*, accessed February 2, 2024, <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2013/12/i-always-stick-with-the-first-thing-that-comes-up-on-google---where-people-go-for-information-what-they-use-and-why>.

Well designed and well-structured SEO-optimised websites offer the ability for churches to reach an audience of the unchurched, who, particularly in the age of digital services, may be inclined to attend a church that is easier to find and navigate.

5.1.2 Weaknesses

There are some weaknesses, or challenges to undertaking this type of ethnographic research. Firstly, the variety and sheer amount of digital media can make this methodology difficult to approach, as it can be a challenge to identify the key sources of information online to consider for your research.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, using online methods for analysis and collection of data can lead to exclusion of certain populations who are less present online, especially those of older generations, or those living in highly rural areas.¹⁶⁷ Murthy cites the ‘state of flux’ of online sites as a challenge to digital ethnographies, as their content is liable to change frequently, making it difficult to apply ‘conventional research methodologies’.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, the online space can blur the boundaries between the ‘private and the public’, creating ethical concerns for researchers.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ E. Gabriella Coleman, “Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39, no. 1 (October 21, 2010): 487–505, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104945>.

¹⁶⁷ Marnie Howlett, “Looking at the ‘Field’ through a Zoom Lens: Methodological Reflections on Conducting Online Research during a Global Pandemic,” *Qualitative Research* 22, no. 3 (January 16, 2021): 387–402, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120985691>.

¹⁶⁸ Dhiraj Murthy, “Digital Ethnography,” *Sociology* 42, no. 5 (October 2008): 837–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094565>.

¹⁶⁹ Kaur-Gill and Dutta, *Digital Ethnography*, p 6

5.2 The Church Online

The Church of England has had websites, both at an organisation level, and for individual churches for over 20 years now. These websites often vary in their format, with smaller churches offering websites that often appear as ‘nothing more than a glorified Sunday bulletin’¹⁷⁰. This is contrasted with the highly polished and professional websites for larger, often charismatic churches, and especially the megachurches in London. These websites often feature multimedia elements such as videos of previous services that were live-streamed, and some also offer interactivity for visitors, through chat rooms, prayer request forms, and contact forms. Across the spectrum of church websites, the distinction between ‘religion online’ and ‘online religion’ as defined by Dawson and Cowan¹⁷¹ can be clearly seen. A majority of churches offer ‘religion online’, posting updates and notices, rather than embracing ‘online religion’ with the benefits that this offers.

One key purpose of the church that can be fulfilled through skilled use of a church website is communication. Communication has been a central tenet of the church since its foundation, with Jesus commanding his disciples to go and preach the message.¹⁷² Clear communication and web design can allow for a website to act as

¹⁷⁰ Charles Zech, William Wagner, and Robert West, “The Effective Design of Church Web Sites: Extending the Consumer Evaluation of Web Sites to the Non-Profit Sector,” *Information Systems Management* 30, no. 2 (April 2013): 92–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10580530.2013.773800>.

¹⁷¹ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online Finding Faith on the Internet* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

¹⁷² Amanda Sturgill, “Scope and Purposes of Church Web Sites,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 3, no. 3 (August 2004): 165–76, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328415jmr0303_3.

‘an extension of the church’s office’¹⁷³, sharing the news of Jesus in ways that are easy to digest for the reader. Communication is also frequently used to shape the way that the public views the church, and their public ‘identity’¹⁷⁴. How a church communicates online can often provide insight to the makeup of their congregation, the tone of their worship services, and their involvement within their local community.

That said, a majority of church websites, whether good or bad, are aimed at the already faithful. Church websites are rarely aimed at ‘those with no faith’.¹⁷⁵ I would argue that this is an oversight that could prove fruitful for churches who aim their websites at the unchurched.

5.2.1 The Church during Covid-19

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Church was forced to pivot, at very short notice, and only a few weeks before Holy Week, to providing services online. For some churches, particularly in the US, this was common practice, with services from larger churches regularly recorded and live streamed. In the UK, this was not

¹⁷³ Charles Zech, William Wagner, and Robert West, “The Effective Design of Church Web Sites: Extending the Consumer Evaluation of Web Sites to the Non-Profit Sector,” *Information Systems Management* 30, no. 2 (April 2013): 92–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10580530.2013.773800>.

¹⁷⁴ Sturgill, *Scope and Purpose*, 167

¹⁷⁵ Jerry Pillay, “Covid-19 Shows the Need to Make Church More Flexible,” *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 37, no. 4 (October 2020): 266–75, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378820963156>.

common, and churches had to change practices, with varying levels of technical ability and success.

The pandemic meant that a large number of churches had to turn to electronic platforms, in order for them to reach their members.¹⁷⁶ This enabled them to maintain 'local embeddedness', providing a consistency of service to their regular parishioners¹⁷⁷. The pandemic also meant that churches were able to reach Christians who usually attend another church, or even from another country. The initial novelty of church online meant that worshippers became 'church hoppers'¹⁷⁸, attending a variety of services each week, all over the globe.¹⁷⁹ Whilst the initial lockdown was only expected to last a handful of weeks, as it became clear that the lockdown was going to be extended, churches began to invest more time and effort into producing professional and high-quality services for streaming. A challenge that the Church faced during the transition to online services was the maintenance of the authenticity and integrity of the services that were offered, particularly around the Eucharist. The need to transform the rituals of religious service to a format that was engaging for online attendees, and the participatory nature of services such as the

¹⁷⁶ Pillay, Church more Flexible, 268

¹⁷⁷ John R. Bryson, Lauren Andres, and Andrew Davies, "Covid-19, Virtual Church Services and a New Temporary Geography of Home," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 111, no. 3 (June 22, 2020): 360–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12436>.

¹⁷⁸ "The State of the Church 2020," Barna Group, November 30, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/collections/the-state-of-the-church-2020/>.

¹⁷⁹ Andrew Davies, "A Refuge from the Storm? The English Church during COVID-19," in *Living with Pandemics: Places, People and Policy*, ed. J. R. Bryson et al. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021), 140–48.

Eucharist, and Catholic Mass presented an opportunity for the church to create new sacred spaces, and a reinterpretation, however temporary, of church traditions.¹⁸⁰

As the first lockdown continued, and worshippers were faced with how long they may be isolated from their churches for, more worshippers, particularly those aged between 18 and 25 turned to the internet to participate in religious observances. One study by Durham University found that in July and August of 2020, between 45 and 56 percent of survey participants aged between 18 and 35 participated in worship, meditation or prayer online.¹⁸¹

Even in 2023, as the world began to settle into the ‘new normal’ that reflected a pre-covid world, churches returned in a hybrid format, offering in-person services, and a full Eucharist, whilst also livestreaming the services for those who were unable, or perhaps unwilling, to attend in person.

5.3 Website Analysis

The following section is a digital and visual ethnography of four church websites, considering both the sites themselves and the content that they host and link to. The four churches that have been chosen are the four churches analysed in Chapter 2, namely St Luke’s Gas Street in Birmingham, St Peter’s in the Diocese of Chichester, St Mary’s Iffley, and Canterbury Cathedral. By choosing these four diverse churches,

¹⁸⁰ Mai Khanh Tran and Andrew Davies, “Revisiting Benjamin’s Aura in the Age of Mediatisation – the Digital Aura of Megachurches,” *Journal of Marketing Management* 39, no. 17–18 (November 22, 2023): 1765–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2023.2289369>.

¹⁸¹ Peter Phillips et al., issue brief, *Offline and Online Religious Activity in the UK during Lockdown and Post-Lockdown* (University of Durham, August 2020), <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/digitaltheology/PressReleasereOnlineChurch.pdf>.

I was able to analyse the web offerings from the different wings of the church, Charismatic Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and the traditional parish church.

The analysis is loosely based around the Aladwani-Palvia instrument¹⁸², using technical adequacy, web content presentation and web appearance as the overarching areas for analysis, taking into consideration the themes of worship, teaching, evangelisation and any emphasis on community within the sites.

5.3.1 St Luke's Gas Street

St Luke's Gas Street is a Charismatic Evangelical church, based in Birmingham. It is part of the HTB network, and one of four churches in the Gas Street group. The church website¹⁸³ is a group website for the four churches, with one page covering details specifically relating to activities at St Luke's.

5.3.1.1 Technical Adequacy

Technically, the website is well designed. It loads well, with a connection time of 0.142s across Europe when it was tested. The site has been well optimised for SEO, and is the first site that appears in a Google search for the phrase 'St Luke's Gas Street'. Whilst the site is easy to navigate, with a header menu, there is no search functionality, which can make it longer to locate a specific piece of information that

¹⁸² Adel M. Aladwani and Prashant C. Palvia, "Developing and Validating an Instrument for Measuring User-Perceived Web Quality," *Information & Management* 39, no. 6 (May 2002): 467–76, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-7206\(01\)00113-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-7206(01)00113-6).

¹⁸³ "About - Gas Street Church, Birmingham," Gas Street Church Birmingham - Light for the city, accessed August 8, 2023, <https://gasstreet.church/about>.

you may be wanting. Navigation across the wider Gas Street site is supported by the link sections that are found at the bottom of the page.

5.3.1.2 Web Content

General

The website is shared between the network of Gas Street churches, and as such has a lot of content available to access. This content is frequently updated, with a long list of upcoming events that are kept current by the team. The presence of an option menu in the lower right corner which provides easy access to a lot of quick links is very helpful for navigating the site as a whole. The website proves to be welcoming for prospective members, and it provides a contact form, as well as an 'I'm New' section, which provides an overview and welcome to the church and its congregation.

Worship and Teaching

The website links directly to the Gas Street YouTube channel¹⁸⁴, which has, among other things, a playlist of 34 videos of the Gas Street worship bands performing worship music, often written by Nick Herbert, who is the Prayer Pastor at St Lukes. It also has 206 full recordings of the weekly gathering for worship, all of which are also available on the website as an audio file. This means that the website can provide a good overview, and examples of what worship is like at St Lukes, for those who are keen to find out more before they decide to commit to attending.

¹⁸⁴ "Sunday Gatherings," YouTube, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEc1JoM7uAe3VuYZkZ-iTXUGxyS-FVhxx>.

Evangelism

There is a section of the website that is usually used for ‘Gas Street Groups’¹⁸⁵, which provide the opportunity to meet with a small group of believers to discuss bible verses, or to follow study plans. For 2024, these have been replaced with ‘scatter sessions’ which are designed to empower members to be ‘a light in the city’, and to share the message with those they meet outside the church.

Community

The ‘Love Your Neighbour’¹⁸⁶ section of the website covers a large number of the community outreach activities that the church is involved with. These include a foodbank, support for refugees, a parent and carers support group, and both a debt advice service and a job club provided with support from Christians Against Poverty (CAP), a Christian charity who aim to end poverty in the UK. They also run a group called Gas Street Business, a multi-faith group of businesses in the area who are seeking to support those who live in the local area.

5.3.1.3 Web Appearance

The website is well designed. Each page has a good balance of text and graphics, and there aren’t any pages that feel like they have an overwhelming amount of text on them. There is a clear style guide being used, and across all the pages, there is a real consistency of design and structure, which means that the eye flows smoothly

¹⁸⁵ “GS Communities - Gas Street Church, Birmingham,” Gas Street Church Birmingham - Light for the city, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://gasstreet.church/communities>.

¹⁸⁶ “Love Your Neighbour - Gas Street Church, Birmingham,” Gas Street Church Birmingham - Light for the city, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://gasstreet.church/loveyourneighbour>.

across every page, which means you are able to better take in the information that is being shared. The pages are an appropriate length for the amount of information that they want to convey, and work well both on mobile and on desktop. On mobile the site is also very accessible with a screen reader, which means that the information is accessible to those with additional needs.

5.3.1.4 Conclusion

The website is very welcoming, and contains a lot of useful information that would help a newcomer learn, and feel confident in attending one of the Gas Street churches. The pictures that have been chosen, and that appear on every page offer a good representation of the diversity of the congregation, as well as how others experience the weekly services. The website provides images of the full Leadership Team as well as the PCC, so that anyone who chose to attend would know who they may be able to approach, if they had any questions.

As I would expect from a church that has several hundred members and a large staff team, the website is very well designed and maintained, and offers a range of multimedia experiences. It creates a welcoming atmosphere, and a feeling of openness, as there is provision of a great deal of information, especially on joining a service. Overall, this is a highly effective website in attracting potential visitors, and providing them with the information that they may need or want, when deciding if or when they would like to attend the church.

5.3.2 St Peter's, Diocese of Chichester

St Peter's East Blatchington is a small parish church in West Sussex. It is part of the United Benefice of East Blatchington and Bishopstone, another small church in the locality. The website is a shared website¹⁸⁷ for both of the churches, with no clear distinction on what applies to East Blatchington and what applies to Bishopstone.

5.3.2.1 Technical Adequacy

The website is very easy to navigate, with clear drop-down menus at the top of every page, helping to segregate the information into useful categories. There is no search function on the website, which means that some pieces of information can be difficult to locate without navigating through multiple pages. The website loads quickly, with a 0.016 second connection time across Europe at the time of testing. The website is fairly easy to locate in a Google search, as long as you specify the location, which is to be expected, given the multitude of 'St Peter's' churches within the UK.

5.3.2.2 Web Content

General

The website contains a lot of content, particularly around the history of the church. It links out to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, although these are updated sporadically. There is a calendar of events that is shared by both churches, which is kept up to date. However, there is evidence that not all pages are as well maintained,

¹⁸⁷ "Home: Ebb Churches - St Peter East Blatchington & St Andrew Bishopstone.," EBB Churches, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://www.ebbchurches.org.uk/>.

as the 'Past Events'¹⁸⁸ page does not display any information about any events that have taken place since 2022. The website offers a contact page, which provides details on who to contact at either church, although this is not supported by photos, which would be beneficial for any new attendee of the church. The website has fairly good accessibility settings, with the majority of pages functioning well with a screen reader.

Worship and Teaching

The website offers access to online prayer and meditation sessions,¹⁸⁹ as well as a live-streamed Compline service several times a week. It also links to their YouTube channel, which hosts a selection of recordings from services and events, as well as short 'thought for the day' style posts.

Evangelism

The website makes little or no reference to any evangelism work that is being done, or any work that is being led by the church within the local community.

Community

There is little evidence that the church is involved in any activity within the community. There is reference to a foodbank collection site, and a link provided to a local aid group, but even with these, there is minimal detail provided.

¹⁸⁸ "What's On," EBB Churches, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://www.ebbchurches.org.uk/what-s-on>.

¹⁸⁹ "Services: Ebb Churches - Online and in St Peter's or St Andrew's Church," EBB Churches, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://www.ebbchurches.org.uk/services>.

5.3.2.3 Web Appearance

The website has a simple design, with most pages containing pictures that give an insight into the life of the church, the events that it hosts, and the people who are usually in attendance, both at the events and at worship services. The pages are largely monochromatic, and feel fairly old-fashioned. The lengths of the pages vary somewhat, but none of the pages feels overly long.

5.3.2.4 Conclusion

Overall, this website feels like the quintessential Church of England parish website. It serves a purpose in effectively communicating the events that are happening at the church. It serves as a digital parish noticeboard, but does not create a particularly welcoming feel for those who are considering visiting the church. The photos used suggest an ageing population, which is to be expected of a small parish community, but can be off-putting when trying to attract younger generations to the church. From the site, I got a sense of the history of the church, but not so much about the life of the church now.

5.3.3 St Mary's Iffley, Diocese of Oxford

St Mary the Virgin is a small parish church in Iffley, in the Diocese of Oxford. The website covers both the current life of the church, and the heritage of the church building itself, an example of a Romanesque church built in the 1160s.

5.3.3.1 Technical Adequacy

The website is well-designed, if simple, and can be navigated around with a single menu at the top of every page. The website is fairly fast to load, with a 0.9 second

connection time across Europe at the time of testing. The site is somewhat optimised for SEO, appearing as the first church for St Mary's Iffley, or church in Iffley, boosted in part by the use of the iffleychurch.org.uk domain. The website has a search function, which allows for quick navigation to key information, especially given the compact nature of the website menu.

5.3.3.2 Content

General

The website contains a large amount of history, both about the day to day running and life of the church, and the history of the building itself. The website links out to the 'Friends of St Mary's Iffley'¹⁹⁰ site, as well as to the 'St Mary the Virgin, Iffley Living Stones'¹⁹¹ site, to provide more information about the heritage of the church, as well as hosting tours and events of the buildings. The website also links to Twitter and Facebook, where the church provides photos of the locale, as well as details of the sermons from each week. The livestream of each Sunday's sermon is hosted on YouTube, and these videos can be accessed from the church website. The website hosts a contact page, with named contacts and email addresses and phone numbers for specific purposes. The page also contains photos of the named contacts, to help with easier identification if you were to meet them in person. The website is mostly

¹⁹⁰ Friends of St Mary's, Iffley, "Friends of St Mary's, Iffley," Friends of St Mary's, Iffley, accessed April 26, 2024, <https://iffleyfosm.org.uk/>.

¹⁹¹ "Living Stones," St Mary the Virgin, Iffley - Living Stones, accessed April 26, 2024, <https://livingstonesiffley.org.uk/>.

well-maintained, and kept up to date, although there are several sections including the 'current service leaflet' section that are not up to date, and contain broken links.

Worship and Teaching

The website links to a variety of liturgical resources, including the Book of Common Prayer online, and common worship online. The site also contains the schedule for regular Sunday worship at the church, including a range of different styles of service, including Taizé, traditional Holy Communion and Evensong. There is also reference made to the Fish and Chip Club¹⁹², a children's group that runs during the service.

Evangelism

There is no reference to any evangelism activity or work on the website. A search for 'evangelism' only brings up one result, the text of a sermon entitled 'Talking about faith'¹⁹³ that was delivered in October 2017.

Community

There is minimal reference to any work that the church is performing in, or for, their local community. A search brings up information on 'Community Cupboard'¹⁹⁴, a

¹⁹²"Fish and Chip Club," St Mary's Iffley, April 21, 2020, <https://iffleychurch.org.uk/children/fish-and-chip-club/>.

¹⁹³ James Ganett, "Sermon: 'Talking about Faith,'" St Mary's Iffley, October 31, 2017, <https://iffleychurch.org.uk/sermons/sermon-talking-about-faith/>.

¹⁹⁴ "Community Cupboard," Rose Hill Methodist Church, accessed April 26, 2024, <https://rosehillmethodists.org.uk/mission/community-cupboard/>.

good pantry service which is run in collaboration with Rose Hill Methodists. Outside of the youth group run during church services, there is no youth offering from the church.

5.3.3.3 Web Appearance

The website has a simple design, with clean, clear pages, and some occasional use of photographs. The majority of the photos appear on the Fish and Chip Club page, and on the heritage page, documenting both the physical building, and a range of children, and the activities that they take part in. There is a range of ages and ethnicities within the photos, which would suggest a varied community within the church. The individual pages are well designed, with clear distinct sections for disparate pieces of text. Aside from the photos, the pages are largely monochromatic and a simple, unsophisticated design. The pages are a manageable length, and work well on both laptops and mobile.

5.3.3.4 Conclusion

Overall, the site is very similar in feel to the website of St Peter's East Blatchington. The website serves its purpose in communicating the events that are happening at the church, and is effectively used as a digital parish noticeboard. There is no clear welcome to anyone who is visiting the website, or considering visiting the church in person. The photos suggest a varied population, and mix of ages in attendance, which may reflect the relative affluence and diversity of the area. From the website, it is very easy to get a sense of the history of the church, but it is difficult to get an understanding on what the life of the church is like, beyond a listing of the services.

5.3.4 Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury Cathedral is one of 42 Anglican cathedrals in the UK, and arguably one of the most famous, both due to the Archbishop and thanks to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The Cathedral serves as a place of worship, and a tourist site, as well as being the cathedral used for enthroning the new Archbishop of Canterbury.

3.5.4.1 Technical Adequacy

The website¹⁹⁵ is well-designed, and can be navigated around using the multiple navigation menus on the site. It is a fast website, and had a 0.015 second connection time across Europe at the time of testing. As would be expected of such a well-known location, it is the first result in a Google search for Canterbury Cathedral. The website has a search function, which is very useful for quickly navigating to key information, especially on a website with such a large amount of content.

5.3.4.2 Web Content

General

The website contains a large amount of content, both about the history and location of the Cathedral, as well as about the Cathedral as a functioning place of worship. There is an extensive contact list, with key contacts, plus contacts for twenty other departments within the team. The website is frequently updated with information about events that are coming up in the life of the Cathedral. The website has a lot of accessibility information, especially for those with limited mobility, or those that

¹⁹⁵ "Home," Canterbury Cathedral, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/>.

require large print or a hearing loop. This helps to create a welcoming environment for those that may require additional support to be able to attend services at the cathedral. The site links out to Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram, allowing for multiple avenues for visitors to learn more about the Cathedral and its worshipping community.

Worship and Teaching

Many services are live streamed,¹⁹⁶ using YouTube, where the videos are then stored, and publicly available for people to watch. This allows for potential visitors to get a better feel for the type of worship they will encounter if they decide to visit the cathedral. It also invites worshippers from around the world to be involved virtually with services hosted by the cathedral. Additionally, the site hosts the Orders of Service for live streamed events, allowing for those who are unfamiliar with High Anglican services to follow along, and feel more involved with the service as it happens.

Evangelism

Disappointingly for a church that is the flagship of a Church that is seeking to evangelise the nation, there is no mention of Evangelism work on the cathedral website. Even a search of the website for anything containing the word ‘evangelism’ does not generate any results.

Community

¹⁹⁶ “Online Worship,” Canterbury Cathedral, accessed April 28, 2024, <https://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/worship/our-services/online-worship/>.

There are a few references to the worshipping community of the Cathedral, and how you can get involved with events that are running. There is little mention, if any, of work within the local community. In fact, a search for anything including the word 'outreach' brings up just three results, none of which are about outreach, or work within the local community. There is reference made to the Cathedral Trust, but this is a group that focuses on the works that need doing within the site itself, rather than being outward focused on the surrounding community.

5.3.4.3 Web Appearance

The website contains three navigation bars, two across the top, and one down the left-hand side, which leads to the pages feeling very cluttered, and overwhelming at first glance. The pages themselves are also very long, and contain large amounts of text. The website functions much better on desktop than on mobile, where it often appears as walls of text, with a very long scroll required. There is a good use of visuals throughout the site, which provide an insight into the site itself, its surroundings and the types of people who worship there. Owing to the website's dual purpose, as information about both a tourist destination and an active place of worship, the website contains very large amounts of information, and it can be hard to view that volume of information on one page.

5.3.4.4 Conclusion

Overall, this website feels a little cluttered and confusing. I expect that this is due to the website trying to serve two purposes, both as a website for the cathedral as a tourist attraction and pilgrimage site, and also as a place of worship for both locals and visitors. There are features of it that serve to attract people to visit, including the

accessibility information, and clear details of what to expect from a service, such as through the provision of the orders of service.

5.4 Conclusion

Through the use of digital ethnography, I was able to analyse the online presence of four churches. The online presence of the churches varied greatly, in quality and content, with church websites ranging from being a bulletin board through to being highly interactive multimedia sites. Church websites offer an opportunity for effective communication of the message and values of the church, which can expand their reach, and improve public perception of them.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, many churches have maintained a hybrid presence of in person and online services. This allows them to reach out to the local community, and maintain engagement during periods of social isolation, as well as reaching a broader audience than they may have done pre-pandemic. As the population was forced to stay at home, being able to attend church services anonymously through Facebook and YouTube live streams allowed a wider array of people to experience church services.

St Luke's Gas Street's website is a model for well-designed, accessible and welcoming content. It provides a great deal of information that is relevant to both active members of the church community, and prospective new members, as well as information specifically targeted at those who have never engaged with the church before.

Canterbury Cathedral's website offered a similar amount of information regarding the worship services, but due to its dual purpose as a tourist destination, there was a lot of extra information, which can make the site feel overwhelming, and difficult to navigate, especially if you are only interested in finding information about the worship services.

The more traditional, and very basic websites of St Peter's and St Mary's offered functional information about the services that the church was offering, as well as some historical information about the church building and the parish. However, these sites lack a welcoming feel, and are not designed to engage those who are not already attending these churches.

Using their website to provide a warm welcome, and useful information is a relatively straightforward, and cost-effective way for the church to reach potential worshippers within their community. Sites should ensure that they are usable and easy to navigate, to help users find the information they are searching for before they reach the point of abandoning the site.

Using multimedia, including videos and audio recordings that allow people to experience a worship service from the comfort of their home can help new worshippers to familiarise themselves with what to expect when attending, which can help to overcome any fear or anxiety about attending a new church, or a new style of worship. Having sections that are specifically targeted at newcomers, providing information about how services operate, what to expect, and people who can support you can create a sense of welcome before people have even reached the physical church building.

A focus on community outreach, and ways that the church is operating for the benefit of its local community, that is kept current and regularly updated can provide opportunities for potential worshippers to experience the church in a non-religious context before committing to attending a worship service, which is likely to draw in those who have not attended churches, either recently or at all in their lives.

Churches who continue to offer hybrid services should make an effort to ensure that their worship services translate well to the online environment, and that their services are high-quality and engaging to both those in person, and those attending online.

By applying some of these principles, churches are increasing their likelihood of attracting both non-worshippers and those who are looking for a new worshipping community to join. Increasing visibility both online, and in their community can help to reach out to the widest population possible.

CHAPTER SIX - LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

This chapter considers the challenges and opportunities facing the Church in the present day. To discuss Leadership, it is important to first reach a shared definition of the word. John Maxwell describes leadership as ‘influence, nothing more nothing less.’¹⁹⁷ Shiels¹⁹⁸ proposes that leadership within a church context be defined as was defined by Ledbetter and Banks, ‘an individual or group that bring about change.’¹⁹⁹ This is then balanced against the idea of management ‘a means of reducing chaos in an organisation.’

A recent criticism of the Church, revived again with the appointment of Sarah Mullally as the 133rd Bishop of London is that the church has become more interested in ordaining experienced managers, rather than experienced ministers, with Martyn Percy arguing ‘it is becoming a bureaucratic organisation, managing its ministry and mission... in a manner that is hierarchically scripted.’²⁰⁰ This criticism is applied particularly to Bishop Mullally and Archbishop Welby, perhaps a reflection of their

¹⁹⁷ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas NELSON, 2007).

¹⁹⁸ Alex Shiels, “A Critical Examination of Christian Leadership in the Light of Recent Trends within the Church of England,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 39, no. 1 (2018): 39–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2018.1539902>.

¹⁹⁹ Bernice Ledbetter and Robert Banks, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*, 2nd ed, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2016)

²⁰⁰ Martyn Percy “Top cleric says Church of England risks becoming a ‘suburban sect’”, *The Guardian*, 13 August 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/13/justin-welby-church-of-england-suburban-sect>

corporate origins. Bishop Mullally was the former Chief Nursing Officer for England, and Archbishop Welby was an executive in the oil industry prior to his ordination. Since 2010, potential bishops, cathedral deans and other senior clergy are expected to attend a course frequently derided as a ‘sort of clerical MBA’²⁰¹, looking at management theory, and the place for the church in the modern world. There is a view that the focus of the Church has been affected by ‘managerialism’, leading to the potential for a decentralisation of pastoral or priestly focus, and a focus on profit, or tangible results, rather than focusing on benefit to the congregations that these leaders serve. In contrast, Banks and Ledbetter highlight that the structure of the church is reflective of the structure of the early New Testament churches, with decentralised power, receiving oversight from one individual.²⁰² These views highlight differing ideas on the function of leadership within the church, and a question as to whether the function of leadership within the church is more focused on administrative or religious duties. Abraham Kuyper described this difference in ideology as dependent on whether the church was viewed as an *organism* or an *institution*.²⁰³ Those who view the church as an institution see the importance and value of the rules, and structure and leadership, whilst those who see the church as an organism centre the importance of pastoral care and outreach. I would suggest that the truth lies somewhere in the middle, with the risk of ‘managerialism’ potentially

²⁰¹ Gerry Lynch, “The Failure of Anglican Managerialism: Gerry Lynch,” The Critic Magazine, January 11, 2024, <https://thecritic.co.uk/the-failure-of-anglican-managerialism/>.

²⁰² Ledbetter and Banks, *Reviewing Leadership*, 39

²⁰³ Abraham Kuyper, Nelson D. Kloosterman, and John Halsey Wood, *Rooted & Grounded: The Church as Organism and Institution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian’s Library Press, 2013).

impacting on individual churches or church groups, but it is not having a large-scale impact, as some are concerned it might.

These concerns about leadership styles and structures within the church are one of the challenges that the Church is facing. Areas where the church has seen benefit from a variety of leadership styles are discussed within this chapter, as well as areas where there would appear to be room for growth.

6.1 Capacity

Capacity among the clergy has long been an issue within the Church of England, with plans being set in motion since 1994 in an attempt to combat this. This capacity issue is distinctive within Christianity. Most other large religious traditions have a clear separation between their religious and organisational functions, allowing for specialisation, rather than a clergy who are also responsible for organisational issues. Additionally, these religions are even more heavily reliant on volunteers in roles at all levels, contrasted with the Church of England's use of stipendiary clergy and senior leaders.

Within the Anglican Communion, a wide range of styles in leadership can be found. Perhaps the most traditional form of leadership is a church with one minister, or one minister and a curate. However, this can lead to these people becoming extremely busy, trying to balance all facets of their congregation, and as such, they may not have much time for the pastoral needs of the congregation. This is true even more so in churches without a curate. However, Evangelical churches tend to have a far wider leadership team. For example, they may have a vicar, a curate, a worship pastor, a prayer ministry leader, a youth team leader, and many other roles. As an example,

the leadership team at my home church of St Matthias consists of: A vicar, a curate, a church centre manager, a Kids and Youth Pastor, a Worship and Creative Pastor, an Operations Director, a Student Pastor, a Prayer Pastor and several interns. Having this wide a leadership team, with 11 separate roles, can have both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage would be that each person is less likely to feel overwhelmed, having a large team to share the workload across. However, for the person seeking support, it can be difficult. It can be hard to know who to approach, and, if the wrong person is approached, you then have to tell extra people about the things that you are struggling with, and it can feel like the entire team knows about your personal issues. There have been several articles^{204 205}, outlining the advantages of having a leadership team. Some of these include lightening the load, having more strengths and less weaknesses, safety and balance in ministry and strengthening of discipleship. However, there are some advantages to having a singular leader in the church, or two, including a curate. It allows a church to have unified leadership, and ensures that people know exactly who to speak to about any issues. However, within the 'Daily Life of an Anglican Priest'²⁰⁶ Tony Harwood-Jones identifies that it can be difficult, even in a church with a few leaders, to manage the ever-expanding workload within the church.

²⁰⁴ David Mathis, "Twelve Benefits of Team Leadership," Desiring God, 2014, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/twelve-benefits-of-team-leadership>.

²⁰⁵ Frank Damazio, "7 Purposes and Advantages of Team Leadership," Church Staffing, 2016, <https://www.churchstaffing.com/articles/employer/7-purposes-and-advantages-of-team-leadership/>.

²⁰⁶ Harwood-Jones, T Daily Life of an Anglican Priest

Within Christianity as a whole, there has been a move in recent years more towards a team of leaders, rather than a single priest heading up a congregation.²⁰⁷ Within the Catholic church and the Church of England, there is a growing recognition that there is a need to develop both lay and ordained leaders, in order to sustain the future of the church.²⁰⁸

6.1.1 One Priest for One Parish

The traditional model for the Church of England has long been to have 1 vicar, and sometimes 1 curate per parish. This model has allowed each vicar to be focused on the needs of their local congregation and their local community. This traditional model led to deepened relationships between the clergy and their parishioners, as well as a greater understanding of the needs of both the parish, and the surrounding areas. However, a decline in the number of people seeking ordination over past decades, as well as the increasing average age of the existing clergy means that there has been a steep decline in the number of ordained priests available to congregations. Surveys of priests have found that many feel that there is ‘too much work for one minister’. This leads to feelings of overwhelm and stress.²⁰⁹ The perception of too many

²⁰⁷ “A Guide to Setting up a Parish Shared Leadership Team,” Diocese of Salford, 2019, <https://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-GUIDE-TO-SETTING-UP-A-PARISH-SHARED-LEADERSHIP-TEAM-1.pdf>.

²⁰⁸ “Diocese of Blackburn Parish Leadership and Deployment Strategy,” Diocese of Blackburn, 2019, https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/storage/general-files/shares/Resources/For%20clergy/parish_leadership_strategy_2.pdf.

²⁰⁹ Benjamin R. Doolittle, “The Impact of Behaviors upon Burnout among Parish-Based Clergy,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, no. 1 (October 24, 2008): 88–95, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-008-9217-7>.

intrusive demands from a congregation are also correlated with a greater risk than normal of burnout, owing to the pressures of the job.²¹⁰

This has led to the suggestion of a new model, establishing networks of churches in a local area that may then share one or two clergy members among them.

6.1.2 One Priest for a network of Churches

Owing to the aforementioned lack of ordained clergy working in the Church, the Church of England in 1994²¹¹ proposed a model to establish a network of churches within a local area, with shared members of clergy leading services across the network. Research has been done on various models for church planting, and identified several key models, including the Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) Model, the St Helen's Bishopsgate (SHB) model, and a Network church model, with varying levels of success being seen.^{212 213} This has had both positive and negative effects, both for the clergy themselves, and their parishioners. It has allowed churches that do not have the funds to support a full-time clergy member to join a network of other churches and share access to one or more stipendiary clergy. This has allowed for

²¹⁰ Doolittle The Impact of Behaviors, 89

²¹¹ Church of England, Breaking New Ground: Church Planting in the Church of England ; a Report Commissioned by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England (London, UK: Church House, 1994).

²¹² Anglican Church Planting Network, "Church Growth Research Project: Church Planting," Church of England, November 2013, https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/cgrp_church_planting_from_cgrd_website.pdf.

²¹³ George Lings, "The Day of Small Things: An Analysis of Fresh Expressions of Church in 21 Dioceses of the Church of England," Church Army, 2016, <https://churcharmy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/the-day-of-small-things.pdf>.

services and communion to be offered on a more regular basis across these churches. It has additionally reduced the workload for lay members of the congregation who may have stepped up to lead services during interregnum periods. However, sharing clergy between churches can lead to parishioners not forming as strong of a bond with their vicar as they might if they saw them for multiple services each week, every week of the year.

Additionally, the workload that these network vicars might experience can be substantially higher than their post may suggest. Whilst a church may not have the funds to support a full-time stipendiary clergy member, their community and members may have needs that require the full attention of the vicar, for more than their proportional capacity allows for. This can lead to vicars being burnt out, overworked and retiring early, as they are unable to sustain the level of work and commitment that being responsible for multiple churches requires.

Richard Coles, when discussing the reasons for his retirement from a stipendiary clergy position in Finedon, raised the concerns faced by vicars who are serving multiple churches. Exploring the situation of another local vicar who has '14 parishes within her care'²¹⁴ instead of the one that was traditional, he looks at the level of work and commitment that is facing those currently in stipendiary ministry.

²¹⁴ Coles, Richard The Rev Richard Coles on Retirement and What Comes Next (The Times, 2022)

6.1.3 Leadership Teams

Some churches, particularly those within the Evangelical wing of the church are beginning to move towards a team-led approach. These churches are often found to have a head vicar, a curate, and a number of other, non-ordained leadership positions, including a Worship Leader, Children's Ministry Leader, a Youth and Student Leader, a Prayer team leader, and an Operations director, alongside those who take the lead in smaller areas such as hospitality or running Alpha groups. This has the benefit of sharing the load among a team, with the vicar taking the theological lead, but being supported, both in the ministry of the church, and in the day to day running of the building and services. This reduced administrative workload for the vicar allows them to focus more on the spiritual leadership of the church, particularly on the vision for their church in the local area, whilst being confident that the organisational work of finance, building management etc. is being handled by someone else within the leadership team.

These positions mean that it can be easier for members of the congregation to know who to approach with a query, which can lead to a swifter resolution to any problems or concerns that they might be facing. Having responsibility for one specific area of Christian service allows those in leadership to specialise, and develop a level of mastery in that area, rather than serving as a jack-of-all-trades in a more generalist role within the church. Whilst this can prove to be beneficial to the smooth operation of the local congregation, it can make it more difficult for the vicar to be aware of anyone that may be particularly struggling within their congregation. As each role takes the lead for their own area, it can be hard to identify those who are facing

issues in multiple areas, as each problem has been handled by a different member of the leadership team.

To combat this distance, these churches often establish a network of home groups, or life groups who meet on a weekly basis for bible study, prayer and companionship. This allows individuals to form stronger relationships, and allows them to feel more united as a member of the church community, which can be hard in a larger church community

6.2 Charisma

To discuss the importance or impact of 'Charisma' as a leader in a church, it is necessary first to define Charisma in this context. Weber in 1978 defined Charisma as

A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a "leader".²¹⁵

Sociological studies in the 2000s into Charismatic leadership have shown that the latter half of Weber's idea is key – Charisma is derived from followers believing that

²¹⁵ Weber, Roth and Wittich, *Economy And Society* (University of California Press, 1978)

their leader has extraordinary qualities, and it is on the basis of these qualities that their leadership is recognised and affirmed.²¹⁶²¹⁷²¹⁸ Dawson's 2006 study defines charisma by 3 key features: 1) It is grounded in the perceived display of exceptional abilities by a person; 2) 'these abilities are thought to be divinely granted or inspired' and 3) it is 'highly personal in nature... which typically leads followers to place an extraordinary measure of trust.. in their leader.'²¹⁹ Weber distinguished between two types of authority, 'pure' charismatic authority where the power is rooted in the person, and their perceived abilities or 'routinized' charisma, where the power is rooted in an office or position, such as that of a vicar.²²⁰

Charismatic leadership is particularly visible in megachurches that may eschew traditional liturgy and practice for contemporary music and dynamic preaching styles from their ministers, with the goal of appealing to the cultural norms, and tastes of their attendees.²²¹ This leadership attempts to strike a fine balance between the preacher appearing as charismatic, and having 'extraordinary abilities' and appearing as 'ordinary', allowing the congregation to relate to them as an average person, which is enhanced by their preaching in a conversational and casual fashion,

²¹⁶ Lorne L. Dawson, "Psychopathologies And The Attribution Of Charisma: A Critical Introduction To The Psychology Of Charisma And The Explanation Of Violence In New Religious Movements." *Nova Religio* 10, No.2

²¹⁷ Kimmo Ketola, *The Founder of the Hare Krishnas as seen by devotees: A Cognitive study of Religious Charisma* (Brill, 2008)

²¹⁸ Lorne L. Dawson in *Cults, Religion & Violence* (University of Cambridge Press 2002, p80-101)

²¹⁹ Lorne L. Dawson, "Psychopathologies And The Attribution Of Charisma: A Critical Introduction To The Psychology Of Charisma And The Explanation Of Violence In New Religious Movements." *Nova Religio* 10, No.2

²²⁰ Weber, Roth and Wittich, *Economy And Society* (University of California Press, 1978)

²²¹ Stephen Ellingson in *Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Blackwell, 2010)

including the ordinary and everyday human experiences from their own life as an aspect that their congregation can identify with.

A study conducted in 2011²²² found that, among the megachurches surveyed, 35% of respondents described the senior pastor as being special, unique, extraordinary or better than other people. Of these, 53.68% connected this description to being a quality associated with being given by God, or as being called by God. For a percentage of respondents, this 'divine calling' or 'divine appointment' was what drew them to the church, as they felt the benefits of their pastor being called, or blessed in this way. 52% of respondents also described their pastor's teaching as exceptional, identifying that he was both 'very relevant and... very biblical'. Others shared that they felt his preaching was definitely 'the Holy Spirit speaking through him every time he got up on stage.' This view of the pastor as being supernatural was balanced against their view of their pastor as also being human. This was particularly recognised when pastors identified their own flaws, and things that they were working through. This expression of imperfection was highlighted as a positive attribute that made their pastors more human.²²³

These study results would suggest that it is beneficial for leaders to strike a balance between appearing charismatic and extraordinary, and appearing as human and relatable to their congregants. This allows for a strong emotional bond to be formed between a congregation and their leaders, which leads to higher levels of retention

²²² Scott Thumma and Warren Bird *Changes in American Megachurches* (2008)

²²³ Katie E. Corcoran and James K. Wellman Jr., ' "People Forget He's Human": Charismatic Leadership in Institutionalized Religion' *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 2016 77:4 (p309-332)

within the church, as well as higher levels of engagement within the church community.

6.2.1 Vision and Vision Direction

One common way that charisma is shown by leaders within a congregation is by sharing their vision for the church, and for the community that the church is serving. Recognition of the importance of having a clear vision for the church can be seen throughout the Church of England. In 2019, the Archbishop of York was asked to create a vision for the next ten years of the church. This focused in on three areas: 1) Simpler, with the goal of becoming a church that is multi-generational, younger and more diverse; 2) Humbler, with a goal of becoming a church where 'mixed ecology' is the norm, with emphasis on strands such as Fresh Expressions and an increased digital presence and 3) Bolder, with the goal of becoming a church full of missionary disciples, a 'barrier-breaking' and 'prophetic' church. This feeds into the overall goal for the Church to become more fully 'the church for all people in all places.'

This desire, and recognition of the need to have a clear vision for the church can be seen in the number of churches that have a vision statement, displayed on their websites, or within their churches. The engagement of the church congregation in the vision of their church can be at least partially impacted by the charisma of their leader. When a church has a shared vision, shared with them by a charismatic leader that they trust, they are willing to make personal sacrifices in order to support that

leader in making the vision a reality.²²⁴ Whether this personal sacrifice is financial, or through the giving of their time and resources, engaged congregations are more likely to make tangible progress towards their goal.

One particularly famous church with a vision is Saddleback Church in Los Angeles. Led by Rick Warren, and the foundation of his 'Purpose Driven Life' message, his vision was to 'send out hundreds of career missionaries and church workers'²²⁵ and building a 'regional church for Southern Orange County'. He concluded that he was confident that these dreams would become a reality because they 'are inspired by God'. Objectively, this vision can be seen as a success. Twenty-five years after the foundation of the church, it had twenty thousand active members, and eighty-two thousand occasional attendees.

This idea of a divinely inspired vision for the church is becoming more common among churches within the UK. Michael Rusk reflected on the need for the vision for the church to be variable, and suited to the locality²²⁶. An example is the Diocese of Trichy, part of the Anglican Church of South India. The diocese had seen great growth flourishing, and so were charged with doubling their numbers between 2009 and 2014. Here, a vision and commitment to evangelism was key in supporting the

²²⁴ Tim Nichols. "The pastor's role in vision-based leadership." *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2007): 20-31.

²²⁵ Randall Balmer 'Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America, 25th Anniversary Edition' (Oxford University Press, 2014)

²²⁶ Michael Rusk 'Reconfiguring Anglican Leadership for the Twenty-first Century' *Anglican Theological Review* 92:1 (2010) 123-131

growth of the church. But that vision of exponential growth would have not been successful within the UK in the same period. As such, increasingly, individual churches are expressing their own distinctive vision.

A simple Google search for Church visions in the UK brings up almost twenty-five million results, from a variety of churches within the UK. Myton Church in Leamington Spa has a vision of being a congregation of 'humble dependence, transformational teaching, sacrificial generosity, authentic community, outward focus and distinctive living.'²²⁷ Ashwood Church in Kirkby has a vision 'to be a Spiritually Healthy Growing Church for all ages'²²⁸. Some churches choose to have a more general vision such as 'inviting everyone to encounter Jesus'²²⁹ whilst other churches choose to focus their vision very clearly on their local area 'The Church on fire, Feltham alive.'²³⁰

Often accompanying this outward facing vision are specific Sundays, dedicated to sharing the vision with the congregation, deepening their understanding of the church's goal, and increasing their engagement in the work that the vision requires. Christ Church Feltham holds a 'Vision Sunday' twice a year, expanding on their vision for the Church on fire, and what that looks like as an outworking in their local community.

²²⁷ Anon, "Vision & Values" Myton Church, accessed 1st August 2022, <https://www.mytonchurch.org.uk/vision-values>

²²⁸ Anon, "Vision and Values" Ashwood Church, accessed 1st August 2022, <https://www.ashwoodchurch.org.uk/about-us/vision-and-values/>

²²⁹ Anon, "Vision and Values" The City Church, accessed 1st August 2022, <https://www.thecitychurch.org.uk/visionandvalues>

²³⁰ Anon, "Our Vision" Christ Church Feltham, accessed 1st August 2022, <https://www.christchurchfeltham.org/vision>

6.3 Celebrity

6.3.1 Hillsong and HTB Churches

One potential explanation for the rise in attendance at some churches can be the 'celebrity' nature of their clergy, or church leadership. As an example, Nicky Gumbel is a very visible, recognisable and respected preacher and teacher. It would not be difficult to suppose that a number of people are choosing to attend Holy Trinity Brompton, at least in part so that they can see him preaching, or meet him. This rise of the celebrity pastor has been particularly visible in the US, from the time of Billy Graham onwards, it has begun to happen more in the UK over the past few decades. Another example of this would be Steve Chalke. Steve Chalke founded Oasis UK, a megachurch in London, as well as a number of charter schools and an anti-human trafficking organisation. He has served as a spiritual adviser to several recent prime ministers, and is a special adviser to the United Nations. He is a very visible member of the Evangelical clergy within the UK, and it would not be surprising if a number of people chose to attend Oasis UK, in order to be able to see, or perhaps meet him.

Of course, none of this is to say that having visible, or potentially even 'famous' clergy is a disservice to the church. Whilst having a celebrity preacher may initially intrigue people enough to draw them to attend the church, it is the culture and teaching within the church that will help them to decide whether or not they are going to stay. This interest may artificially inflate attendance figures at these churches, and can disadvantage the potential growth of other local congregations, who may be serving their community faithfully, but not have the 'celebrity' to draw upon to help them reach their growth goals.

This engagement, and draw from ‘celebrity’ pastors has the potential to be measured in the short-term, with the announcement that Nicky Gumbel was stepping down from the leadership of Holy Trinity Brompton in July 2022. Nicky Gumbel has led HTB since 2005, and taken the lead on rolling out church planting across the UK, leading to significant growth in church attendance, and it will be of interest to see if this growth continues, or slows down once the new vicar designate begins his role in September 2022.

6.3.2 Billy Graham and TV Evangelists

Whilst TV evangelism was once only the purview of the church in America, with preachers such as Billy Graham working and being described as ‘among the most influential Christian leaders’ of the 20th century, it has also extended to the UK, with the arrival of providers such as God TV. This channel, based out of Plymouth in the south-west, as well as Orlando in Florida now has a national and international reach, with an audience of an estimated one billion people worldwide. This has led to a rise in Evangelical preaching and viewpoints reaching people even in their homes. One European study ²³¹ found the perception that watching television worship was less burdensome than attending physical church services, and provided similar levels of benefit, although the benefits were different.

Televangelism has long had connections with big business, and being well-funded, both by industry and by individuals. The *Fundamentals of Faith* leaflet was funded

²³¹ Thorleif Pettersson, “The Audiences’ Uses and Gratifications of TV Worship Services,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25, no. 4 (December 1986): 391–409, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1385907>.

almost entirely by Lyman Stewart, the oil baron who went on to found the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (Biola).²³²

In more recent times, the funding has come from individual donors, with TV evangelism raising billions of dollars from their electronic audiences. This suggests a strong investment in the message being preached by televangelists, to feel the desire to donate, without the usual social pressure of being viewed by your fellow congregants.²³³ One suggested reason for this success is the topics that they tend to preach about. As the message of televangelism tends to focus on the future, both in life and the hereafter, of which there is ‘absolutely no knowledge’, televangelists are able to employ plenty of hyperbole to engage with the hearts and minds of their viewers.²³⁴

6.3.3 Celebrity

Another factor that has had an impact on the attendance of churches is the rise of celebrities within a church, whether these be mainstream celebrities, such as Chris Pratt and Justin Bieber, or celebrity personalities from within the Church itself, such as could be seen at Hillsong.

²³² Darren E. Grem, “Christianity Today, J. Howard Pew, and the Business of Conservative Evangelicalism,” *Enterprise and Society* 15, no. 2 (March 29, 2014): 337–79, <https://doi.org/10.1093/es/khu012>.

²³³ Edward H. Shaffer, “TV Evangelism, Public Goods, and Imperfect Competition,” *Journal of Economic Issues* 27, no. 2 (June 1993): 639–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.1993.11505444>.

²³⁴ Shaffer, TV Evangelism, 642

6.3.3.1 Celebrity Congregants

In recent years, there has been a growing trend of celebrities attending and becoming members of evangelical Christian churches. This has raised questions about the impact these high-profile churchgoers have on evangelical congregations and church culture. The focus, both in the media and by churches themselves, on these celebrity personas can be said to be ‘damaging the ordinary witness of faithful Christians’²³⁵, who may live lives more in line with Bible teaching, without the recognition or adulation that celebrities receive.

One of the most noticeable effects celebrity attendees can have is drawing more people and attention to the church. When news gets out that a major celebrity is attending services at an evangelical church, it generates buzz and curiosity. This can lead to increased membership and participation as people come to check out the church to potentially see the celebrity in person. For mega-churches that already have large congregations, celebrity attendees can boost weekly attendance. One way that churches are seeking to use celebrity to increase membership is to reframe what it is that the church is offering. Religion is often seen in a negative light in society, particularly in the wake of frequent scandals. As such many churches are focusing on relationships, with one pastor at Hillsong going as far as to state ‘Religion has no power. But a relationship with God is a superpower.’²³⁶

²³⁵ Katelyn Beaty, “A Toxic Celebrity Culture Has Infiltrated the Church. We Must Root It Out,” Premier Christianity, July 29, 2022, <https://www.premierchristianity.com/features/a-toxic-celebrity-culture-has-infiltrated-the-church-we-must-root-it-out/13506.article>.

²³⁶ Laura Turner, “The Rise of the Star-Studded, Instagram-Friendly Evangelical Church,” Vox, February 6, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/2/6/18205355/church-chris-pratt-justin-bieber-zoe-hillsong>.

Critics argue that celebrity membership tends to give disproportionate influence and sway to the famous over average church members. Their outsized fame and wealth leads to them being highlighted by church leadership and given privileged roles. Some contend this goes against the egalitarian spirit at the core of many evangelical congregations. Churches often carefully cultivate a politically neutral image, in the hopes of not alienating members from opposite ends of the political spectrum, especially in the increasingly partisan USA. This can be challenging when celebrities become outspoken on their own political viewpoints.

A large number of Evangelical churches in particular are closely affiliated with the idea of the 'Prosperity Gospel', the idea that financial blessings, and prosperity are a sign of being in God's favour. This is mirrored through their support and elevation of celebrity attendees, who can be seen as evidence of the Gospel, and that God will provide material wealth for those who follow him.²³⁷

6.3.3.2 Celebrity Clergy

The other risk that churches face with the rise of celebrity can be seen in the case of churches like Hillsong or Willow Creek. Where a leader becomes so visible, and synonymous with the church and its mission, it can be difficult to separate the leader's personal brand from the 'collective whole', particularly in the wake of a scandal.²³⁸

²³⁷ Kate Bowler and Wen Reagan, "Bigger, Better, Louder: The Prosperity Gospel's Impact on Contemporary Christian Worship," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 24, no. 2 (2014): 186–230, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2014.24.2.186>.

²³⁸ Beaty, Toxic Culture

6.4 Training

Although in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of people applying for ordination, there is a gap between the number of vicars who are entering training each year and those who are retiring from stipendiary posts.

In 2020, 580 ordinands began training,²³⁹ with the same number being ordained, either as stipendiary or self-supporting clergy. Despite this, the mean age of stipendiary clergy was 52.5 years, and self-supporting clergy was 62.3 years. The church has long suffered from an ageing population, and this is reflected in the clergy. Of the nearly 20,000 ordained ministers in the UK, 7210 are clergy with permission to officiate, who are mostly retired clergy that have continued to serve in a reduced capacity. This group had an average age of 74.9 years old.

The increase in numbers reaching ordination offers some hope for a younger clergy in the future, although the average age at the beginning of training was 42.9 years old in 2020, and has ranged between 41 and 43 over the period of 2015-2020. 2020 did see more people join the clergy than leave, with 580 being ordained, and only 320 retiring. This has been comparable to previous years, allowing for a small growth in the number of clergy each year.

This increase in clergy numbers does represent a growth in the number of female clergy, with 55% of those ordained in 2020, and 54% of those entering training being female. However, the clergy is still overwhelmingly white, which is not representative

²³⁹ *Statistics for Ministry*, 2020, Church of England Statistics Unit

of the nation that it serves. In 2012, 96.9% of stipendiary clergy identified as white. In 2020, that number had decreased, but only slightly, to 95.9% with those from mixed, or black backgrounds seeing the majority of the increase at 0.4% each.

6.4.1 Ordination of Women

The other debate currently surrounding leadership within the Anglican Communion is around the ordination of Women and LGBT Ministers. Andy Walton wrote an article for Christian Today in July 2017, asking whether there was finally movement around the ordination of women in Evangelical churches.²⁴⁰

HTB has created 'Arise', a movement that aims to gather 'young women in HTB network churches who are called to ordained leadership but who have unanswered questions.' Described as 'one of the leading voices in British Evangelism', the hope is that, by HTB embracing women in roles of leadership, other churches will notice, and empower their own women to take leadership roles.

However, the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) takes a far more traditionalist view. In their 'Women in Ministry Statement', they say that whilst 'mainline denominations and other Christian groupings' have changed their viewpoint, they believe that the traditional view that 'the role of pastor and elder was only open to suitably qualified men' is in line with the Bible²⁴¹. They still hold the

²⁴⁰ Andy Walton, "Is the Tide Finally about to Turn for Women in Leadership in Evangelical Churches?," *Christiantoday.com*, 2017, <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/is-the-tide-finally-about-to-turn-for-women-in-leadership-in-evangelical-churches/110460.htm>.

²⁴¹ "Women in Ministry Statement," Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, 2016, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/article/women-in-ministry-statement>.

traditional viewpoint, that whilst women have a role in teaching, they should not be in positions of ordained leadership.

The Evangelical Alliance, the 'oldest and largest evangelical unity movement in the UK'²⁴² offers resources for women in leadership and retains statistics on the number of women in leadership roles within various sections within the Anglican Communion, and outside, such as Methodist communities.

The reasonings offered for the rejection of women in the clergy is based on the biblical principle of subjection. As men are subject to Christ, so women are expected to be subject to men, a point that is used to argue that this can be interpreted to mean that women cannot be placed into a position where they may hold authority over men.²⁴³ When asked about the role of women in the clergy, one priest told Sharon Jagger that women 'could not be priests because they menstruated.'²⁴⁴ Others were told that they would not be accepted into a vacant post, because clergy in nearby parishes believed that 'the altar's consecrated status would be compromised by a female presiding.'²⁴⁵ The role of the woman as priest challenges the system within which they operate and are ordained. In one study, conservatives voiced that having a woman priest made it difficult to 'maintain the sense of the

²⁴² Evangelical Alliance, "About Us - Evangelical Alliance," Evangelical Alliance, 2020, <https://www.eauk.org/about-us>.

²⁴³ Nancy Nason-Clark, "Ordaining Women as Priests: Religious vs. Sexist Explanations for Clerical Attitudes," *Sociological Analysis* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 259–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3711522>.

²⁴⁴ Sharon Jagger, "Presiding Like a Woman: Menstruating at the Altar," essay, in *From the Shores of Silence: Conversations in Feminist Practical Theology*, 1st ed. (London: SCM Press, 2023), 144–60.

²⁴⁵ Jagger, Presiding Like a Woman, 147

catholicity... of the Church of England.’²⁴⁶ Indeed, the ordination of women as priests did mark a large step away from the Roman Catholic church, a decision that saw many parishioners, and priests, step away from the Church of England in search of a more conservatively catholic organisation. These conservatives hold the view that the origin of a male priesthood can be seen in the fact that God ‘became man in the general sense and... in the particular sense.’²⁴⁷ Any decision to ordain women into a priestly role is in direct opposition to the model of male headship set by God through Jesus.²⁴⁸ For a select few conservative Christians, this viewpoint of women in subjection to men, or ‘subordination in the Trinity’²⁴⁹ should also be mirrored in other areas of life, where no woman should hold power or authority over a man.

There was less opposition to the decision to accept women into the diaconate in 1986. It was viewed by conservatives that this was a decision that consolidated women’s ‘subordinate and marginal position in the clerical profession’²⁵⁰, and offered an opportunity for those women who felt the call to be ordained, without making them part of the priesthood.

²⁴⁶ Paul Yates, “The Priesthood of Women: Resourcing Identity in the Anglican Church,” *Oral History, Religion and Belief*, 24, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 59–65.

²⁴⁷ Yates, *Resourcing Identity*, 61

²⁴⁸ Alex D. J. Fry, *Gender Inequality in the Ordained Ministry of the Church of England: Examining Conservative Male Clergy Responses to Women Priests and Bishops* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2024).

²⁴⁹ Fry, *Gender Inequality*, 53

²⁵⁰ Alan Aldridge, “Discourse on Women in the Clerical Profession: The Diaconate and Language-Games in the Church of England,” *Sociology* 26, no. 1 (February 1992): 45–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038592026001004>.

Despite the decision in 1992 to accept women into the priesthood, the church still made allowances, and exceptions for those who were uncomfortable with, or opposed to, the idea of women as priests. This dual structure, previously known as the 'two integrities' allows for parishes to avoid the ministry of women priests. This leaves ordained women priests in a 'liminal space' between 'ordination and unequivocal acceptance as a priest'²⁵¹, rather than wholly accepted members.

Those in favour of the ordination of women commonly hold one of two beliefs. One is the desire for equality, and for the priesthood to be wholly representative of the congregations that they serve. Seeing women holding senior liturgical roles, including in the diaconate, the priesthood and the convocation of bishops leaves female worshippers with a 'positive sense of inclusion in church'²⁵², where they feel appropriately represented and valued. Those holding this viewpoint often argue that the role of men in the leadership of the church in the time of Jesus represented a 'cultural situation rather than a timeless truth'.²⁵³ They acknowledge that in the ancient church, women would not have been accepted, or respected in a role of leadership, but that our society is wildly different from the society of the apostles.

The second justification used for the appointment of women as priests relates to their role as pastoral leaders. As shepherding, and pastoral work forms a central part of

²⁵¹ Jagger, *Presiding like a Woman*, 146

²⁵² Ian Jones, "Earrings behind the Altar? Anglican Expectations of the Ordination of Women as Priests", *Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 83, no. 1 (2003): 462–76, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187607502x00293>.

²⁵³ Alex D. J. Fry, *Gender Inequality in the Ordained Ministry of the Church of England: Examining Conservative Male Clergy Responses to Women Priests and Bishops* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2024).

the role of a vicar or priest, women are seen as more naturally suited to pastoral care than men. Women are seen as dominant in the 'ethic of care'²⁵⁴, compared to their male counterparts, who are commonly viewed as moral or evangelistic leaders. This comparison, or compartmentalising of women priests as nurturers is often rejected by feminists, who view it as infantilization of women, or an attempt to force women back into traditional sex roles that have long since been rejected.

The idea of women in the priesthood and in senior roles is becoming more widely accepted, with an overwhelming 80% of priests stating that they would support a female Archbishop of Canterbury.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Lesley Stevens, "Different Voice / Different Voices: Anglican Women in Ministry," *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 3 (March 1989): 262–75, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3511511>.

²⁵⁵ Kaya Burgess and Ryan Watts "Most Church of England Priests Support Ban on Gay Conversion Therapy", *The Times*, September 8, 2023

CHAPTER SEVEN - METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

7.1 Background

Globally, religious affiliation and church attendance is high, but in the western world, most faiths are seeing a decline in both attendance and religious identity. Since the 1980's the Church of England has been seeing a decline in attendance figures, although attempts have been made to slow, or even reverse this. One example of this is the guidance *Renewal and Reform* issued by the Church in 2015, which sought to increase the number of people worshipping on a regular basis, as part of evangelising the nation. Whilst in the last eight years, this has seen a growth in the number of churches within the UK, the 2021 census revealed that there is still an ongoing decline in religious affiliation, with the census marking the first time that England was not a majority Christian country.

Studies in recent years have examined a number of reasons for the ongoing decline that is seen in religious affiliation in the Western World. Kelley and de Graaf identified a decline in the number of children who were inheriting the faith of their parents. Similarly, Voas and Watt found that there was a failure to pass religious belief from parent to child within Christianity, which was leading to a reduction in church attendance figures as the church population aged. McMullin identifies areas where increased secularisation, and growing competition for parishioners' time on a Sunday may be a cause for the decline in church attendance in the US and Canada, from which parallels can be drawn to the UK.

Contrastingly, the Church Army Research Unit looked into the areas of the church that are seeing growth, and identified that nationwide, Fresh Expressions are seeing a growth in attendance figures, as were traditional Anglican cathedral services.

Deficiencies in the studies

Whilst Kelley and de Graaf, and Voas and Watt identified that there is a decline in religious attendance due to a decline in children sharing their parents' beliefs, neither study looked to identify ways for this to be rectified, or to bring new, previously unchurched people into the Church. Voas and Watt also suggest that retention of existing believers is the only way to ensure growth, and that there is minimal growth to be gained from evangelism to the previously unchurched. McMullin's study focused solely on secularisation, and does not consider disparate opinions within a church as a potential disincentivizing factor on attendance.

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to understand the relationship between worship, theological viewpoints and leadership on religious affiliation for members of the Church of England. The study sought to identify whether one factor has a dominant influence when choosing which type of church to attend, as a proxy for examining why some church styles are seeing growth in attendance, against the backdrop of a general decline. The study seeks to understand the experiences of individuals from across the spectrum of churches across the UK.

This study seeks to answer the following three hypotheses:

H¹ - Charismatic evangelical church services are more appealing to young people (<30 years).

H² - The style of worship music is the key factor used when deciding on which church to attend.

H³ - Charismatic worship is concentrated in cities, with traditional worship dominant in rural communities.

The following terms are used frequently throughout the data analysis, and would benefit from being defined in the context of this research:

Charismatic - The charismatic movement is a movement within Protestantism, with a particular focus on the baptising in the Holy Spirit, and on the use of gifts of the spirit (charismata), as a normal part of daily life. Originally grown out of the Pentecostalism movement, it grew in popularity during the *Healing Revival* of the 1940s and 1950s, and has become widespread in the later part of the 20th century and into the 21st. This focus on spiritual gifts, and encountering the Holy Spirit is the defining factor in this thesis for identifying a church, or individual as part of the charismatic movement.

Evangelical - The evangelical movement is a movement within Protestantism, with a focus on being born again, and on preaching the Word of God among the nations. Rather than being a denomination, evangelicals can be found in all denominations, and are a leading force in the charismatic movement. Within this thesis, the focus on

preaching, and sharing the word of God is the defining factor for identifying a church or individual as being an Evangelical.

Worship - Within this thesis, worship is used to describe anything that forms part of a church service. This includes, but is not limited to the worship music, the sermon, any periods of prayer, and any opportunities for community with fellow attendees within the confines of the service. It does not include opportunities for community either directly before, or after the service itself.

Theological viewpoint - Within this thesis, theological viewpoint is used to describe the views of the church, or the movement that the church is a part of. This includes viewpoints on theological and wider social issues, including LGBTQ+ inclusion, 'conversion' therapy, and the ordination of women. It also includes the frequency of use of the Bible within church services.

Leadership - Within this thesis, leadership is a term used to describe both those in charge of a church, whether that be a vicar or leadership team, as well as to cover the work that they are undertaking. This includes the decisions on the mission and values of the church, what social outreach the church undertakes, and what evangelism the church undertakes.

The three key limitations of the study are as follows. Firstly, by using an online survey, the participants self-selected. This meant that there was not the diversity of demographics across the responses that could have been achieved with completion of a physical survey. Secondly, the distribution was semi-targeted, to allow for greater numbers of completion. This means that there is a chance that the data is skewed towards a younger demographic, as two of the distribution channels that were used were within the University context, although they were also distributed to staff in these contexts. Thirdly, as with any qualitative analysis, there is a level of subjectivity to the analysis, and the findings could be subject to other interpretations.

This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative questioning, to examine whether there was evidence of one of the three core factors having a dominant influence on participants when they were choosing which style of church to attend.

Data was collected by means of an online survey using SurveyMonkey. The survey was distributed through the mailing lists of the Anglican chaplaincy at the University of Exeter, as well as through various postings online by the researcher, including the use of social networks such as Twitter and Reddit. The survey consisted of 15 questions. Three of these questions used a Likert scale, ranging from 'not at all important' to 'extremely important'. There were two opportunities for qualitative data collection through the use of free-text responses to questions about worship music and the leadership team of their church. The other questions collected factual

information, such as the size of the leadership, the style of music, and the frequency of use of the bible. These responses were analysed using a combination of R Studio and SPSS.

The survey population was made up of 130 people, ranging in age from 18 to 74. The participants represented all 9 geographic areas across the UK that were options for this survey. Data was collected over a period of approximately three years, between November 2020, and early February 2024. The survey used two filtering questions at the beginning, to ensure that complete responses were only received from participants based within the UK, and those over the age of 18.

Ethical considerations that were included in the design and execution of this study included:

- The right to participate voluntarily, and for a participant to withdraw, at any time.
- The provision of a clear description of the purpose of the study at the beginning of the survey.
- The right for the participant to ask questions prior to taking part, and to receive the results of the study.
- The anonymity of all captured data, and the secure storage of this data

This was to ensure that there was no risk of harm coming to any of the participants, as well as ensuring that we were collecting fully informed consent from anyone who chose to complete the survey. Ethics approval was sought from the University of

Birmingham Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee, and approval was granted on 8th August 2019, reference ERN_19-0584.

7.2 Results

7.2.1 Demographic Data

In total, 129 results were collected. From that, 16 of them had to be removed prior to analysis for not meeting the criteria, and therefore not being able to complete the survey. One person responded from outside the UK, one person under the age of 18 attempted to respond, and fourteen responses were from Catholics, so not relevant to these research questions. Of the remaining 113 responses, there were respondents from each of the nine geographic regions of England, as well as each of the six age ranges that were available.

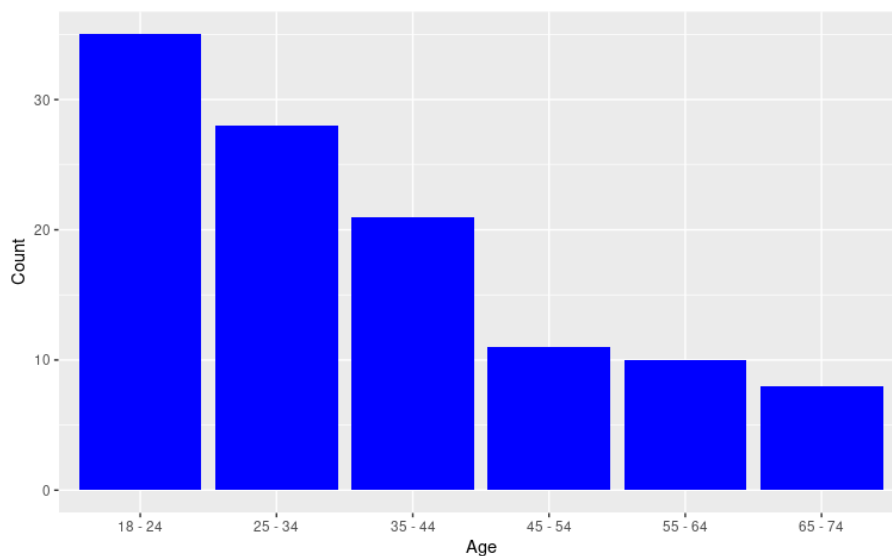


Figure 8 - Age Distribution of Respondents

Considering the age of the respondents, the mean age was 36.15. The median age of respondents was 29.5, with a modal age of 21. The range of ages between respondents cannot be calculated specifically, due to the use of age ranges in the data collection, but the range covered was 48.5 years, with a standard deviation of 15.18.

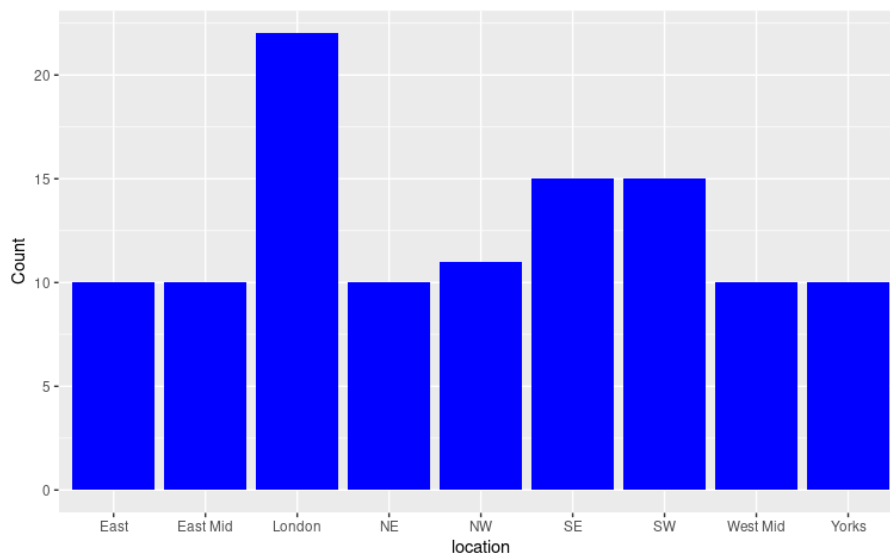


Figure 9 - Geographic Distribution of Respondents

The respondents covered a range of worship styles, as shown below in Figure 10, with 24 respondents selecting 'Other' as their main style of worship music. Additional information provided by these respondents clarified that these churches often provide a mixture of services, with answers such as 'mixture of modern at some services and classical at others', 'organ mass' and 'organ and congregation' being the most frequent responses among the 'Other' category.

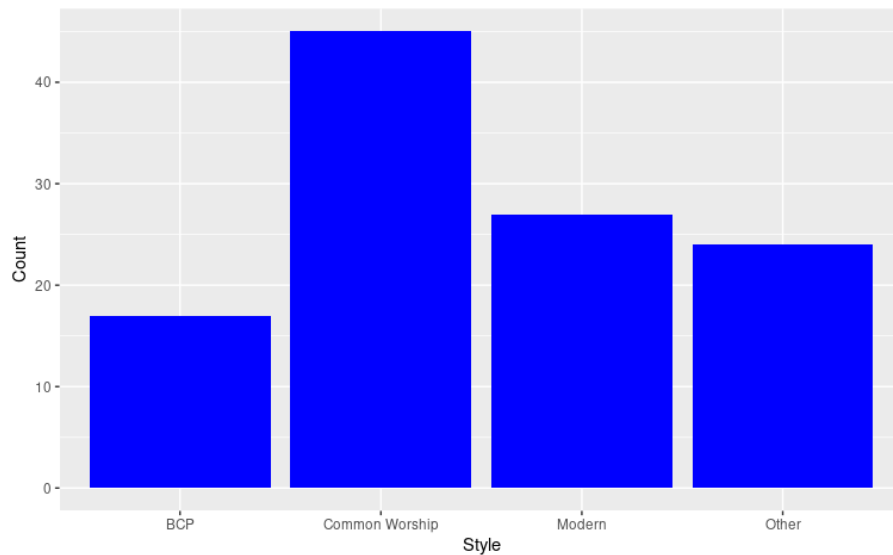


Figure 10 - Worship Style of Respondent's Churches

All respondents fell into one of three categories for who was responsible for leading the worship in their church, with 44% of respondents having a Choir and Organist leading the worship in their church. 29% of respondents said that worship in their church was led by just a choir, and the remaining 27% of respondents having a worship band lead their services on a weekly basis.

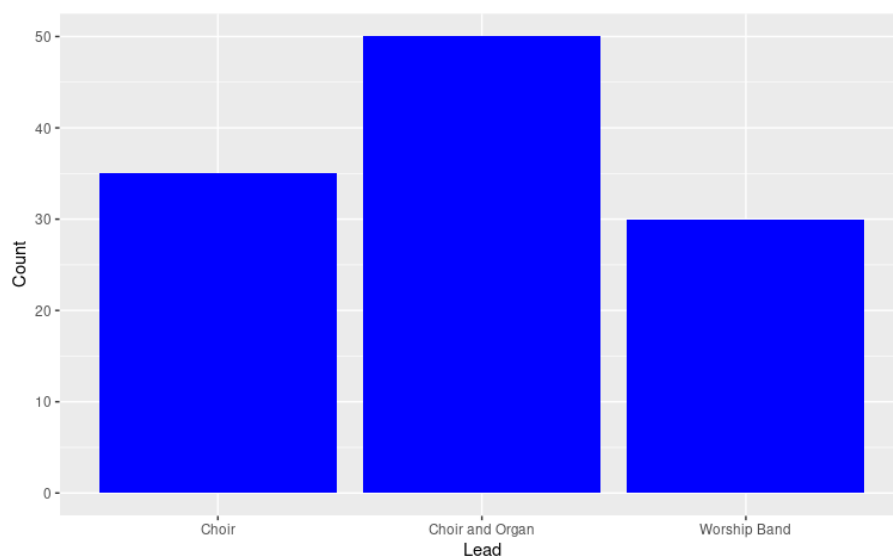


Figure 11 - Worship Leadership of Respondents

There was a very even distribution of theological viewpoints, split between 'conservative', 'moderate', and 'liberal'. Liberal respondents made up 31% of the responses, with moderates making up 32% of respondents, and the remaining 37% of respondents identifying the theological viewpoint of their church as 'conservative'.

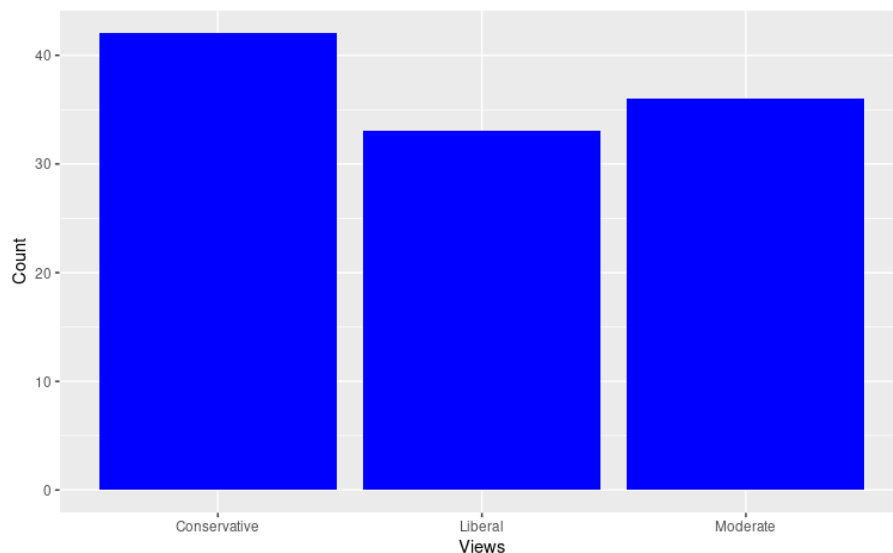


Figure 12 - Theological Viewpoint of Respondents' Churches

Only 6% of respondents said that the Bible was never used in their services, compared with 35% of respondents who said that the Bible was always used during their services.

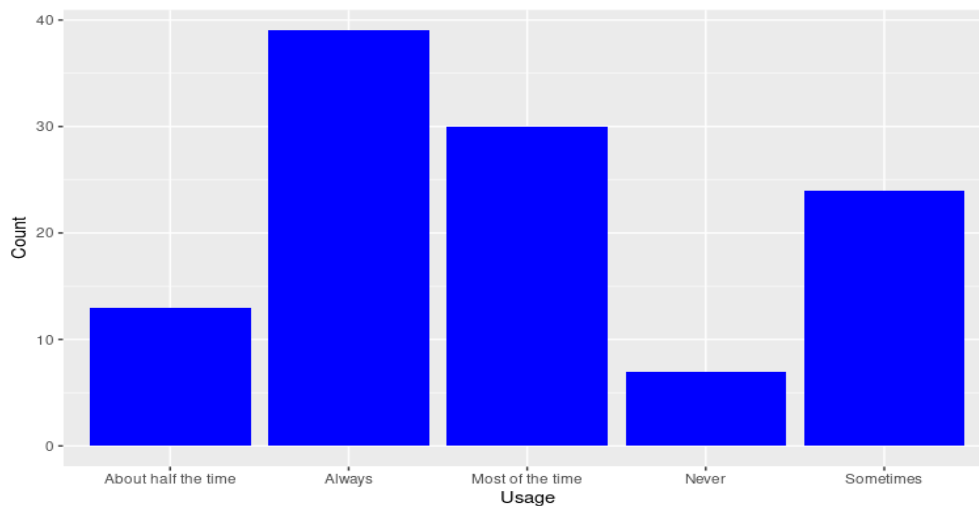


Figure 13 - Frequency of Bible Usage in Church

When asked what their priority was when deciding which church to attend, 39% of respondents stated that the theological viewpoint of the church was their deciding factor. 30% of respondents stated that the style of worship on offer at the church was their priority when deciding on a church, and 26% stated that they were impacted most by the leadership team at their church. The remaining 5% stated that 'Other' was their key priority. The detail on these 'other' responses was not collected, but it could be expected that factors such as location, or service times may also have an impact on deciding which church to attend.

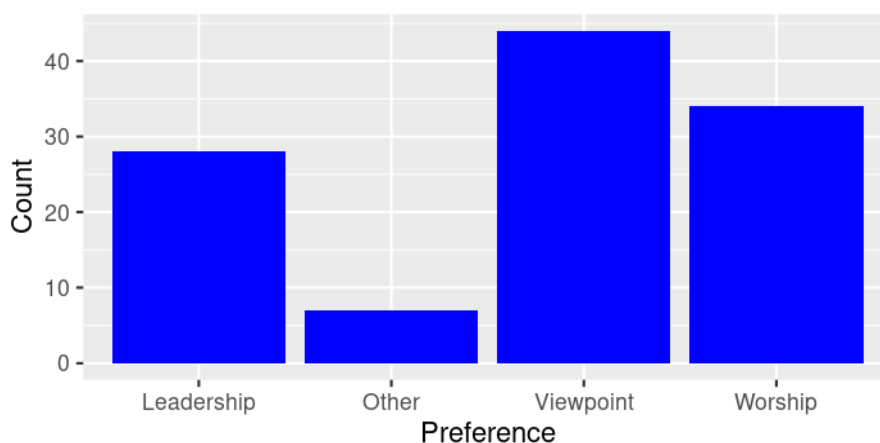


Figure 14 - Top Priority Factor for Respondents

The following pages contain tables looking at the intersection of several key factors, including theological viewpoint mapped against bible usage, worship style or the top factor impacting on church affiliation. The implications of these results will be discussed in section 6.3 below.

		Book of Common Prayer	Common Worship	Modern (i.e. Hillsong, Matt Redman etc.)	Other	Total
Theological Viewpoint	Conservative	10	11	10	11	42
	Liberal	5	16	6	8	35
	Moderate	2	18	11	5	36
Total		17	45	27	24	113

Table 1 – Theological Viewpoint by Worship Type

Table 1 measures how respondents describe the theological viewpoint of their church, against the worship style that is prevalent there. 37% of respondents identify their church as conservative, but there was no clear dominant worship style amongst conservative churches. The same cannot be said for those who attend moderate or liberal churches, with 50% and 46% respectively attending churches that offer Common Worship services. This is reflected in the 40% of all respondents who

attend Common Worship services, which could be seen as a reflection of the traditional history of the Church of England, but a desire to move past the Book of Common Prayer, first issued in 1662.

		Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Always	Total
Theological Viewpoint	Conservative	0	3	5	12	22	42
	Liberal	6	11	4	7	7	35
	Moderate	1	10	4	11	10	36
Total		7	24	13	30	39	113

Table 2 - Theological Viewpoint by Bible Usage

Table 2 measures how respondents describe the theological viewpoint of their church, against how frequently the bible is used there. Here, 35% of respondents stated that the bible is always used in their churches. It is surprising that this number is not higher, when considering that 55% of all respondents attend with a BCP or Common Worship service. It is also surprising that 6% of respondents, all of whom attend either moderate or liberal churches, state that the Bible is never used during their services.

		Theological Viewpoint	Leadership	Worship Music	Other	Total
Theological Viewpoint	Conservative	23	4	12	2	41
	Liberal	10	12	10	3	35
	Moderate	11	12	11	3	37
Total		44	28	33	8	113

Table 3 -Theological Viewpoint against Top Priority when selecting a church

Table 3 considers the theological viewpoint of the church each respondent attended, mapped against their primary factor when deciding on which church to attend. Across all respondents, 39% stated that the theological viewpoint of the church was the most important factor for them. Amongst liberals, leadership was the dominant deciding factor, with 35% of respondents who attend a liberal church selecting leadership as their key factor. Across all respondents, only 29% of respondents rate worship music as the most important factor.

		Conservative	Liberal	Moderate	Total
Age	18 - 24	13	12	10	35
	25 - 34	11	12	5	28
	35 - 44	10	7	4	21
	45 - 54	3	1	7	11
	55 - 64	3	3	4	10
	65 - 74	2	0	6	8
Total		42	35	36	113

Table 4 - Age against Theological Viewpoint

Table 4 measures the age of respondents against the theological viewpoint of the church that they attend. Across the three younger age brackets, 40% of respondents attend a church that they believe holds a conservative theological view. This is somewhat in keeping with the responses of the NatCen survey of 2022, which identified that younger age groups tend to be more socially liberal. In contrast, among the three older age brackets, 59% of respondents identified that they attend a moderate church. It is somewhat surprising that 37% of respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 choose to attend conservative churches, given the tendency for this age to be more liberal, but there is the possibility that they are not entirely in agreement with the viewpoint of their church, which is examined in Table 8.

		Theological Viewpoint	Leadership	Worship Music	Other	Total
Age	18 - 24	17	10	6	1	35
	25 - 34	10	6	8	4	28
	35 - 44	8	6	6	2	21
	45 - 54	3	2	6	0	11
	55 - 64	4	3	2	1	10
	65 - 74	2	1	5	0	8
Total		44	28	33	8	113

Table 5 - Age against Top Priority when selecting a church

Table 5 measures the age of respondents against their top priority factor when deciding what church to attend. Amongst respondents from the oldest age bracket, 65-74, 62.5% of respondents stated that the style of worship music was the most important. It is important to note that this statistic shouldn't be considered representative of the population as a whole, as the sample of that age range was only 8 people, and so a small number of responses can have a large impact on the percentages. Contrastingly, among the youngest age group, respondents aged between 18 and 24, 49% of respondents stated that the theological viewpoint of the church was their deciding factor. Indeed, across the three lower age brackets, respondents between the ages of 18 and 44, 42% of respondents agree that the

theological viewpoint of the church is their most important factor when deciding on which church to attend.

		Theological Viewpoint	Leadership	Worship Music	Other	Total
Leadership Size	1	11	4	5	0	20
	2	13	8	16	0	37
	3-5	15	15	6	5	41
	6-9	3	1	6	2	12
	10+	2	0	0	1	3
Total		44	28	33	8	113

Table 6 - Leadership Size against Top Priority when selecting a church

Table 6 measures what a respondent's top priority is in selecting a church, measured against the size of their church's leadership team. Where the church has a leadership 'team' of just one person, 55% of respondents stated that the theological viewpoint of the church is their most important factor when deciding on a church. At the other end of the scale, attendees at churches with a leadership team of six to nine people, which are likely to be more evangelical churches, or churches with a modern worship style, value worship music as their top priority when deciding on a church to attend.

		Theological Viewpoint	Leadership	Worship Music	Other	Total
Worship Style	BCP	10	1	5	0	16
	Common Worship	15	12	15	4	46
	Modern	9	9	7	2	27
	Other	10	6	6	2	24
Total		44	28	33	8	113

Table 7 - Worship Style against Top Priority when selecting a church

Table 7 considers the worship style of churches that the respondents attend, and measures this against the deciding factor of which church they attend. As may be expected, 62.5% of respondents who attend BCP services value the theology of their church over any other factor, which may go some way to explaining why they choose to attend such a traditional style of worship service. Those who attend services with modern worship music are fairly evenly split across the deciding factors, with 33% each valuing theological viewpoint and leadership as their most important factor. This is a slight surprise, as this thesis posited that the style of worship would be the most frequent deciding factor among attendees.

		Strongly D	D	Somewhat D	Neither A Nor D	Somewhat A	A	Strongly A	Total
Age	18- 24	1	7	5	2	6	11	3	35
	25- 34	3	4	5	4	4	7	1	28
	35- 44	1	2	4	2	5	3	4	21
	45- 54	0	4	3	1	2	1	0	11
	55- 64	3	4	0	1	0	2	0	10
	65- 74	0	4	1	1	1	1	0	8
Total		8	25	18	11	18	25	8	113

Table 8 - Age against level of agreement with Church Theological Viewpoint

Table 8 measures that age of respondents against the extent to which they agree with the theological viewpoint of the church. 57% of respondents aged between 18

and 24 selected 'somewhat agree', 'agree', or 'strongly agree' with the theological viewpoint of their church. In contrast, 62.5% of respondents aged between 65 and 27 stated that they 'somewhat disagree', 'disagree', or 'strongly disagree' with the theological viewpoint of the church. This mirrors the data that 62.5% percent of that age group selected worship style as their most important factor. Overall 42% of respondents stated that they either 'somewhat agree', 'somewhat disagree', or 'neither agree or disagree' with the theological viewpoint of their church, which suggests a strong level of indifference to the theology of the church that they are attending.

When considering the free text responses that were received the majority made reference to modern music services. One respondent in the 18-24 age range stated, 'most people my age like the modern type of worship, but I (personally) hate it'. This mirrored other comments from respondents who stated that they did not like the worship music at their church, but that they choose to attend that church for the sermons. One respondent suggested that the model that their church uses, in combining both a choir and modern worship services, has led to an increase in the number of children and young families that are attending the service. This has led to the church having a congregation that is 'far greater than the average for a village church', and suggests that this pattern could be copied elsewhere to see growth within church congregations.

This research study aimed to answer three hypotheses, those being:

H¹ - Charismatic evangelical church services are more appealing to young people (<30 years).

H² - The style of worship music is the key factor used when deciding on which church to attend.

H³ - Charismatic worship is concentrated in cities, with traditional worship dominant in rural communities.

I will now consider each of these in turn, to examine whether the data has been able to prove or disprove these hypotheses.

With regards to H¹, the data collected was unable to prove this hypothesis. It was expected that the highest level of attendance at charismatic churches would be in the younger age ranges, or respondents aged between 18 and 30. In contrast, the data showed that the age group with the largest proportion who attend a charismatic evangelical church is the 35-44 age range.

With regards to H², the data was also unable to prove this hypothesis. Only 29% of respondents stated that the theological viewpoint of their church was the most important factor for them. There was a high level of variation across the age ranges of respondents, but only the 45-54 and 65-74 age groups showed an affinity towards worship music over any other of the key factors.

With regards to H³, the structure of the data collection made this difficult to prove or disprove. To allow for the greatest level of anonymity of data, location was only collected at the level of geographic region, and does not consider whether the respondent lives in a metropolitan, suburban or rural area. However, given that a majority of large churches are based in London, it was surprising to see that only 28% of respondents from the Greater London area attend a charismatic evangelical

church. In contrast to this, in Southeast England, 40% of respondents stated that they attend an evangelical church.

The findings of this study suggest that the sceptics of the more modern wing of the church, as a goal for seeing church growth may be somewhat justified. The results suggest that the more modern aspects of the church, including increasingly liberal theology, and modern worship music are not the main focus of people when seeking a church, even among younger generations. This is also upheld by the data that is showing that one of the main areas of the church that is seeing growth is the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church.

The data would challenge the assertion made in 'That was the Church that was' that the Church's failure to modernise is what is losing the interest of the younger generation, as the younger respondents within this study preferred to attend more conservative or traditional churches, with only 26% of respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 attending services with modern worship.

Further research in this area could seek to explore the regional differences in worship style and church attendance in greater detail, with the goal of identifying whether there are differences between rural and urban churchgoing populations. Insight could also be gathered from an examination of churchgoers' attitudes to a variety of social issues, including same-sex marriage and pre-marital co-habitation, to identify what variance there is between different theological viewpoints, and levels of tradition. These would lead to further insight into what churchgoers are looking for the Church to provide, and may provide suggestions for ways to generate an increase in church attendance.

7.3 Conclusion

Whilst the results of this survey have disproved the initial hypotheses of this thesis, they have identified several areas for further investigation, which could provide insights into avenues for church growth. In addition, the study has identified several trends that might explain the changing levels of church attendance among churchgoers.

Whilst church attendance continues to decline, the push for the church to modernise is not delivering the growth that the Church of England was hoping for. A focus on delivering modern styles of leadership, and modern forms of worship may not be the areas to deliver growth as would be expected. In contrast, the data suggests that people are being drawn to the church by the sense of tradition and familiarity that it delivers, and that a rise in traditional forms of worship, or churches that strive to strike a balance between traditional and modern are the avenues that might see the largest growth in attendance figures within the Church.

CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the complex factors influencing decline and potential growth within the Church of England, with particular attention to the goals established in the Renewal and Reform guidance. Through a multi-faceted approach incorporating data collection, netnography, and observational analysis of worship services, this research has provided insights into the dynamics of church attendance patterns and identified potential strategies for revitalization. The investigation centred on three key hypotheses:

Charismatic Evangelical church services possess greater appeal for younger demographics (under 30 years).

Worship music style constitutes the primary factor in church selection decisions.

Charismatic worship predominates in urban environments, while traditional worship remains dominant in rural communities.

This concluding chapter synthesizes the findings from the preceding chapters, discusses their implications for church growth and ministry, acknowledges limitations of the research, and proposes recommendations for future investigation and practical application.

8.2 Summary of Findings

8.2.1 Patterns of Decline and Pockets of Growth

The research confirmed the overall pattern of numerical decline within the Church of England, a trend that extends to other faith traditions in the United Kingdom.

However, significant exceptions to this pattern were identified, particularly within charismatic evangelical congregations and Anglican cathedrals. These growth centres suggest that specific approaches to worship, community engagement, and theological expression may offer pathways to revitalization.

8.2.2 Worship Styles and Engagement

The investigation into worship styles revealed that contemporary worship music creates a stronger sense of personal involvement for participants, though it may sacrifice some theological depth compared to traditional hymns. Contemporary music's accessibility for non-musicians and its stylistic familiarity to younger generations appear to facilitate engagement, even in smaller congregational settings without full instrumentation.

Free prayer practices were found to foster deeper personal connections with God for established worshippers but could present barriers for newcomers or those without church backgrounds. Traditional liturgical prayer, while offering less opportunity for spontaneous engagement, provides comfort and familiarity to those with previous church experience or religious education.

8.2.3 Theological Orientations and Church Growth

The research identified a complex relationship between theological positioning and church growth. While social conservatism has seen resurgence in some growing churches, there is simultaneously an increasing demand for socially liberal congregations, particularly those affirming of LGBT+ Christians and relationships. This tension reflects broader societal polarization and suggests that clarity of theological identity—whether conservative or progressive—may be more important for growth than the specific theological position itself.

8.2.4 Social Engagement and Community Outreach

Community engagement emerged as a significant factor in church growth. The research demonstrated that churches actively responding to socioeconomic challenges through food banks, job clubs, and other support services create meaningful connections with non-churchgoers. These initiatives not only fulfil the church's social mission but also provide non-threatening entry points for individuals to encounter faith communities. Programs like Alpha offer structured pathways for those whose interest is piqued through these initial contacts.

8.2.5 Digital Adaptation and Technological Integration

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the church's adoption of digital technologies, with between 45-56% of worshippers aged 18-35 participating in online worship during lockdown periods. The research indicates that hybrid services have become standard practice for many churches, enhancing accessibility for both physically constrained individuals and those hesitant to attend in person. Churches with more

sophisticated digital presence, particularly megachurches with dedicated staff for website maintenance, demonstrate greater effectiveness in welcoming potential new members.

8.2.6 Leadership Models and Ministerial Capacity

The traditional parish model, with priests serving multiple congregations, was found to create significant capacity challenges and contribute to clergy burnout. In contrast, the leadership team model prevalent in Charismatic Evangelical churches distributes responsibilities more effectively and creates structured pathways for developing new leadership. The research suggests that effective church leaders must balance charismatic authority with relational authenticity, fostering both respect and connection.

8.3 Addressing the Research Hypotheses

8.3.1 Hypothesis 1: Appeal of Charismatic Evangelical Services to Young People

The research provides substantial support for the hypothesis that Charismatic Evangelical services hold greater appeal for younger demographics. The contemporary worship styles, participatory prayer practices, and team-based leadership models characteristic of these churches align with preferences expressed by younger respondents. The integration of modern technology and multimedia presentations in these services further enhances their accessibility to digitally native generations.

8.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Primacy of Worship Music in Church Selection

The findings offer qualified support for the hypothesis regarding worship music's importance in church selection. While music style emerged as a significant factor, it appears to function as part of a broader experiential package rather than as the singular determining factor. The research suggests that worship music serves as a gateway to engagement but must be complemented by meaningful community, theological alignment, and opportunities for participation to effectively retain attendees.

8.3.3 Hypothesis 3: Geographic Distribution of Worship Styles

The research confirms the hypothesis that charismatic worship predominates in urban environments while traditional worship remains more common in rural communities. This pattern reflects both demographic differences and resource constraints, with urban centres typically offering the critical mass of younger attendees and musical talent necessary to sustain contemporary worship programs. The digital divide between urban and rural areas further reinforces this distinction, with urban churches better positioned to leverage technological resources.

8.4 Implications for Church Growth and Ministry

8.4.1 Limitations of Current Growth Strategies

The continued decline in church attendance despite existing evangelism efforts clearly indicates that traditional outreach methods have proven insufficient. The research suggests that simple programmatic adjustments or incremental changes to

existing structures are unlikely to reverse long-term trends. Instead, more fundamental reconsideration of ministry models may be necessary.

8.4.2 Resource Church Model as a Potential Framework

The research findings support the potential viability of the "resource church" model, wherein a central hub church with substantial resources supports smaller congregations within its network. This approach capitalizes on economies of scale while maintaining local presence and could address multiple challenges identified in the research:

It provides a sustainable structure for developing and supporting new clergy

It enables the sharing of musical and technical resources across multiple sites

It creates capacity for significant community outreach initiatives

It facilitates the development of high-quality digital content for hybrid worship

This model represents a middle path between the traditional parish system and the megachurch approach, potentially preserving the strengths of both while addressing their respective limitations.

8.4.3 Balanced Approach to Tradition and Innovation

The research suggests that effective church growth strategies must balance innovation with tradition. While contemporary worship styles and digital engagement strategies show promise for attracting younger demographics, traditional liturgical elements continue to provide meaningful connection points for many worshippers.

Churches that thoughtfully integrate both aspects may be best positioned for sustainable growth.

8.4.4 Theological Clarity and Authentic Positioning

The findings indicate that churches with clear theological positioning—whether conservative or progressive—tend to demonstrate greater vitality than those with ambiguous identities. This suggests that authentic engagement with contemporary social questions, rather than avoidance of potentially divisive issues, may actually strengthen church communities. However, this approach requires careful attention to creating environments where respectful dialogue can occur across differences.

8.5 Limitations of the Research

This study has several important limitations that should be acknowledged. The online nature of much of the data collection likely skewed participation toward younger, more digitally engaged respondents and those in urban areas where the survey was most widely distributed. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent the experiences and perspectives of older congregants or those in more rural settings.

The research was conducted during a period of significant disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have influenced both church attendance patterns and respondents' perceptions of various worship styles. The unprecedented acceleration of digital adoption during this period makes it difficult to distinguish between temporary adaptations and long-term trends.

Additionally, the study focused primarily on the Church of England and may not fully capture dynamics within other denominations or independent churches. The

intersection of denominational identity with the factors examined in this research warrants further investigation.

8.6 Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

8.6.1 Research Recommendations

Future research would benefit from a more comprehensive sampling approach to ensure greater representation across age groups, geographic locations, and theological perspectives. Longitudinal studies tracking attendance patterns and engagement levels over time would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of various growth strategies.

Additional investigation into the resource church model is particularly warranted, examining whether this approach genuinely stimulates overall growth or merely redistributes existing attendees. Research should assess whether the "hub and spoke" structure effectively supports revitalization of smaller congregations or potentially accelerates their decline through resource concentration.

8.6.2 Practical Recommendations

For church leaders and denominational bodies, several practical applications emerge from this research:

Intentional Digital Strategy: Develop comprehensive approaches to digital ministry that extend beyond simple service broadcasts to create meaningful online engagement opportunities.

Flexible Leadership Development: Implement team-based leadership models that distribute responsibilities and create structured pathways for identifying and nurturing new ministry leaders.

Community Needs Assessment: Conduct systematic evaluations of local community needs to identify meaningful service opportunities that align with church resources and mission.

Worship Integration: Explore thoughtful integration of contemporary and traditional worship elements based on congregational context rather than wholesale adoption of either approach.

Clear Communication: Articulate theological positions and community values clearly while maintaining respectful dialogue across differences.

8.7 Conclusion

The Church of England faces significant challenges in the contemporary religious landscape, yet this research identifies promising pathways for revitalization. By acknowledging the limitations of current growth strategies while embracing innovative approaches to worship, leadership, and community engagement, churches may develop more sustainable models for ministry in the twenty-first century. The resource church framework offers particular promise as a structural response to current challenges, though its implementation requires careful consideration of local contexts and needs.

As the church continues to navigate societal changes and shifting religious affiliations, its capacity for thoughtful adaptation while maintaining core theological

commitments will likely determine its long-term vitality. This research contributes to that adaptive process by identifying specific factors that influence church growth and decline, providing an empirical foundation for strategic ministry development.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“About - Gas Street Church, Birmingham.” Gas Street Church Birmingham - Light for the city. Accessed August 8, 2023. <https://gasstreet.church/about>.

Addison, Steve. “HTB and the Beginning of the End.” Movements, December 7, 2022.
<https://www.movements.net/blog/blog/2022/12/7/xmjvgvrvnalczhn9ukexbj1llwtepe>.

“Affiliation and Attendance from 1983 |.” Brin.ac.uk, 2017.
<http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures/affiliation-and-attendance-from-1983/>.

Aladwani, Adel M., and Prashant C. Palvia. “Developing and Validating an Instrument for Measuring User-Perceived Web Quality.” *Information & Management* 39, no. 6 (May 2002): 467–76. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-7206\(01\)00113-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-7206(01)00113-6).

Aldridge, Alan. “Discourse on Women in the Clerical Profession: The Diaconate and Language-Games in the Church of England.” *Sociology* 26, no. 1 (February 1992): 45–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038592026001004>.

Allan, Robert. “How Do Anglicans Worship? | Synonym.” Classroom.synonym.com, 2018. <https://classroom.synonym.com/how-do-anglicans-worship-12086100.html>.

Almasy, Rudolph P. “Richard Hooker and Places of Worship – ‘In Due Season They Are All Pleasaunt and Good.’” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 85, no. 3 (2016): 306–30. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43973339>.

“The Alpha Course.” Coastal Church. Accessed January 31, 2024.
<https://coastalchurch.org/alpha/>.

“Alpha Host Notes.” Alpha Course. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://alpha.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Host-Notes.pdf>.

Amalgamating Parishes and Declining Clergy Numbers: Consequences and Causes. Church of England, 2016.

Ammerman, N. T. “Finding Religion in Everyday Life.” *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 2 (2014): 189–207. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sru013>.

Ammerman, N. T., and C. J Bender. “Touching the Transcendent: Rethinking Religious Experience in the Sociological Study of Religion.” Essay. In *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, 201–18. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Ammerman, Nancy T, and Grace Davie. “Vicarious Religion: A Methodological Challenge.” Essay. In *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Life*, 21–36. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Ammerman, Nancy T, and Paul Lichterman. “A Place on the Map: Communicating Religious Presence in Civic Life.” Essay. In *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, 137–52. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Andrade, G., and M. Campo Redondo. “Is Conversion Therapy Ethical? A Renewed Discussion in the Context of Legal Efforts to Ban It.” *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health* 20 (February 2022): 100732. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2021.100732>.

Anglican Church Planting Network. “Church Growth Research Project: Church Planting.” Church of England, November 2013.

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/cgrp_church_planting_from_cgrd_website.pdf.

Annette, John. "Faith Communities, Communitarianism, Social Capital and Youth Civic Engagement." *Ethnicities* 11, no. 3 (August 22, 2011): 383–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796811407856>.

Appau, Samuelson, and Ye (Nicole) Yang. "Church Advertising and the Marketization of Religious Hegemony." *Marketing Theory* 24, no. 2 (September 8, 2023): 263–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14705931231202434>.

Appleton, Luke. "Questions Raised about Archbishops' Appointment." *Anglican Ink* (blog), January 0, 2022. <https://anglican.ink/2022/01/07/questions-raised-about-archbishops-appointment/>.

Arthur, Tim. "Find Out About Evangelical Worship as Time Out London Looks at Christian Worship." Time Out London, 2007. <https://www.timeout.com/london/things-to-do/evangelical-worship-in-london>.

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. "Christ Must Increase: New Horizons in Mission and the Influence of the Spirit." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 31, no. 4 (October 2014): 282–90.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378814537756>.

"ASLAN - All Souls Local Action Network." ASLAN - All Souls Serve the City. Accessed April 17, 2024. <https://asstc.org.uk/aslan>.

Atherstone, Andrew. *Evangelicalism and the Church of England in the Twentieth Century*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014.

Atkinson, Paul. *Thinking ethnographically*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2017.

Balmer, Randall. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America, 25th Anniversary Edition*. NEW YORK: OXFORD University Press, 2014.

Banks, Robert J, and Bernice M Ledbetter. *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches (Engaging Culture)*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

Barnes, Philip. "Anglo-Catholic Mission: A Landscape Alive with God's Presence." *Church Times*, September 5, 2018. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/14-september/features/features/anglo-catholic-mission-a-landscape-alive-with-god-s-presence>.

Barringer, M. N., and David A. Gay. "Happily Religious: The Surprising Sources of Happiness among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Adults." *Sociological Inquiry* 87, no. 1 (December 2, 2016): 75–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12154>.

Beaty, Katelyn. "A Toxic Celebrity Culture Has Infiltrated the Church. We Must Root It Out." *Premier Christianity*, July 29, 2022. <https://www.premierchristianity.com/features/a-toxic-celebrity-culture-has-infiltrated-the-church-we-must-root-it-out/13506.article>.

Best, Ernest. "The Interpretation of Tongues." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (February 1975): 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0036930600034591>.

Bethel Music, Jonathan David Helser, Brian Johnson, and Joel Case. "No Longer Slaves." Bethel Music. Accessed April 1, 2024.

<https://bethelmusic.com/resources/peace/no-longer-slaves>.

Beyer, Peter. "Religious Vitality in Canada: The Complementarity of Religious Market and Secularization Perspectives." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 2 (June 1997): 272. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1387558>.

Bowler, Kate, and Wen Reagan. "Bigger, Better, Louder: The Prosperity Gospel's Impact on Contemporary Christian Worship." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 24, no. 2 (2014): 186–230.

<https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2014.24.2.186>.

Bradfield, Owen M. "Sexual Identity or Religious Freedom: Could Conversion Therapy Ever Be Morally Permissible in Limited Urgent Situations?" *Monash Bioethics Review* 39, no. 1 (July 2021): 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40592-021-00132-6>.

Brady, Anne Marie, and Lauren Burke. Publication. *Vibrant Neighborhoods Forum: Leveraging Civic Engagement for Social Impact*, January 2021.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28524>.

Brasher, Brenda E. *Give me that online religion*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley, 2001.

Brierley, P. W. *UK church statistics number 2*. 1st ed. Tonbridge: ABDC Publishers, 2014.

Bromley, D. G., J. G. Melton, and Lorne L. Dawson. "Cries of Charismatic Legitimacy and Violent Behaviour in New Religious Movements." Essay. In *Cults, Religion & Violence*, 1st ed., 80–101. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2002.

Brompton, Holy Trinity. "Network Churches — HTB Church Online." HTB Church Online. Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://www.htb.org/network>.

Brown, Andrew, and Linda Woodhead. *That was the church, that was: How the Church of England lost the English people*. London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Bruce, Steve. *God is dead: Secularization in the West*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002.

Bryman, Alan. *Social Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Bryson, John R., Lauren Andres, and Andrew Davies. "Covid-19, Virtual Church Services and a New Temporary Geography of Home." *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 111, no. 3 (June 22, 2020): 360–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12436>.

Bullivant, Stephen. Publication. *The "No Religion" Population of Britain* 3. Vol. 3. Catholic Research Forum Reports. London, UK: St Mary's University, 2017.

Burgess, Kaya, and Ryan Watts. "Most Church of England Priests Support Ban on Gay Conversion Therapy." *The Times & The Sunday Times: breaking news & today's latest headlines*, September 8, 2023. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/church-of-england-priests-survey-gay-conversion-therapy-ban-assisted-dying-house-of-lords-net-zero-7kqg3dswr>.

Burns, Stephen. “‘Learning Again and Again to Pray’: Anglican Forms of Daily Prayer, 1979–2014.” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 15, no. 1 (May 16, 2016): 9–36.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1740355316000139>.

Burrell, Jenna. “The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research.” *Field Methods* 21, no. 2 (February 18, 2009): 181–99.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x08329699>.

Campbell, Alastair. “Archbishop Justin Welby Hopes He Does Not Have to Oversee the Queen’s Funeral.” *GQ*, November 5, 2017.

Campbell, H. A. “Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (November 8, 2011): 64–93. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

Cartledge, Mark J. “Charismatic Theology: Approaches and Themes.” *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 25, no. 2 (2004): 177–90.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1361767042000251591>.

Cartledge, Mark, and Andrew Davies. “A Megachurch in a Megacity.” *PentecoStudies* 13, no. 1 (March 19, 2014): 58–79. <https://doi.org/10.1558/ptcs.v13i1.58>.

Cathedral Statistics 2019, 2020.

Cathedral Statistics 2020, 2022.

“Census 2001 Maps of Religious Affiliation.” Brin.ac.uk, 2001.

<http://www.brin.ac.uk/figures/census2001maps/>.

Channon, Max. "Church Introduces Raves and Congregation Goes through the Roof." *plymouthherald*, 2018. <https://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/news/plymouth-news/church-introduces-raves-congregation-goes-2025809>.

Chen, Jianlin. "1 - Introduction." Essay. In *The Law and Religious Market Theory: China, Taiwan and Hong Kong*, 1–12. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Christian Concern. "Same Sex 'Marriage' The Costs and Consequences of Redefining Marriage." Christian Concern, 2012. https://archive.christianconcern.com/sites/default/files/docs/CCO2607_Same-Sex_Marriage.pdf.

"Christian Millennials Are Most Likely Generation to Lean toward Charismatic Worship." Barna Group, July 23, 2020. <https://www.barna.com/research/worship-preferences/>.

Church Army Research Unit. Rep. *An Analysis of Fresh Expressions of Church and Church Plants Begun in the Period 1992-2012*. Church of England, October 2013. https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/church_growth_research_fresh_expressions_-_strand_3b_oct13_-_the_report.pdf.

Church of England. *Breaking new ground: Church planting in the Church of England ; a report commissioned by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England*. London, UK: Church House, 1994.

Church of England. "Growing Numbers of Young People Train as Priests | The Church of England." The Church of England, 2018.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/growing-numbers-young-people-train-priests>.

Church Statistics, 2020.

Clements, Ben. *Attitudes towards Gay Rights*. British Religion in Numbers. British Religion in Numbers, 2017.

Clery, Elizabeth. "BSA 40: A Liberalisation in Attitudes?" National Centre for Social Research, September 21, 2023. <https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/BSA%2040%20Moral%20issues.pdf>.

Cocksworth, Ashley, Rachel Starr, and Stephen Burns. *From the shores of silence: Conversations in feminist practical theology*. London: SCM Press, 2023.

Cocksworth, Ashley. "On Prayer in Anglican Systematic Theology." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 22, no. 3 (2020): 383–411. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12433>.

Coleman, E. Gabriella. "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39, no. 1 (October 21, 2010): 487–505. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104945>.

Coles, Richard. "The Rev Richard Coles on Retirement and What Comes Next." [Thetimes.co.uk](https://www.thetimes.co.uk), 2022. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-rev-richard-coles-on-retirement-and-what-comes-next-vxhf92fxz>.

"Community Cupboard." Rose Hill Methodist Church. Accessed April 26, 2024. <https://rosehillmethodists.org.uk/mission/community-cupboard/>.

“The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church.” The Methodist Church. Accessed July 27, 2023. <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/22811/conf-2021-cpd-vol-2.pdf>.

Conway, Lynn, Donna Lanclos, and Erin Hood. “I Always Stick with the First Thing That Comes up on Google. . .’ Where People Go for Information, What They Use, and Why.” EDUCAUSE Review. Accessed February 2, 2024.

<https://er.educause.edu/articles/2013/12/i-always-stick-with-the-first-thing-that-comes-up-on-google---where-people-go-for-information-what-they-use-and-why>.

Cornwell, Megan. “Archie Coates: Succeeding Nicky Gumbel, Tackling LGBT Issues and Reaching the Lost.” Premier Christianity, August 26, 2022.

<https://www.premierchristianity.com/interviews/archie-coates-succeeding-nicky-gumbel-tackling-lgbt-issues-and-reaching-the-lost/13674.article>.

Crisp, Oliver D., James M. Arcadi, and Jordan Wessling. *Analyzing prayer: Theological and philosophical essays*. Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Cuthbert, Karen, and Yvette Taylor. “Queer Liveability: Inclusive Church-Scenes.” *Sexualities* 22, no. 5–6 (November 12, 2018): 951–68.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718772759>.

Damazio, Frank. “7 Purposes and Advantages of Team Leadership.” Church Staffing, 2016. <https://www.churchstaffing.com/articles/employer/7-purposes-and-advantages-of-team-leadership/>.

Davie, Grace, and Grace Davie. *Religion in Britain since 1945*. 1st ed. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publ., 1994.

Davies, Andrew. "A Refuge from the Storm? The English Church during COVID-19." In *Living with Pandemics: Places, People and Policy*, edited by J. R. Bryson, Lauren Andres, Aksel Ersoy, and Louise Reardon, 140–48. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021.

Davies, Andrew. "'The Evangelisation of the Nation, the Revitalisation of the Church and the Transformation of Society': Megachurches and Social Engagement." In *Handbook of Megachurches*, edited by Stephen Hunt, 214–40. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Davies, Madeleine. "Global, White... Where next for Worship Music?" *Church Times*, December 5, 2018.

Davignon, Phil. "The Influence of Religious Preferences on Choice of Church Congregation and Church Attendance." *Social Compass* 63, no. 2 (2016): 268–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768616629304>.

Dawson, Lorne L. "Psychopathologies and the Attribution of Charisma: A Critical Introduction to the Psychology of Charisma and the Explanation of Violence in New Religious Movements." *Nova Religio* 10, no. 2 (2006): 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2006.10.2.3>.

Dawson, Lorne L., and Douglas E. Cowan. *Religion online finding faith on the internet*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013.

Dein, Simon, and Christopher C.H. Cook. "God Put a Thought into My Mind: The Charismatic Christian Experience of Receiving Communications from God." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 18, no. 2 (2015): 97–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2014.1002761>.

Dewick, E.C. "Evangelicalism in the Church of England: Its Present Position and Future Prospects." *Constructive Quarterly* 3 (1915): 800–813.

"Diocese of Blackburn Parish Leadership and Deployment Strategy." Diocese of Blackburn, 2019. https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/storage/general-files/shares/Resources/For%20clergy/parish_leadership_strategy_2.pdf.

Doolittle, Benjamin R. "The Impact of Behaviors upon Burnout among Parish-Based Clergy." *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, no. 1 (October 24, 2008): 88–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-008-9217-7>.

Dougherty, K. D., and A. L. Whitehead. "A Place to Belong: Small Group Involvement in Religious Congregations." *Sociology of Religion* 72, no. 1 (2010): 91–111. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srq067>.

Dunaetz, David R., Carly Smyly, Carmen M. Fairley, and Colleen Heykoop. "Values Congruence and Organizational Commitment in Churches: When Do Shared Values Matter?" *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000314>.

"Easter Sunday Celebration | HTB Live Stream." YouTube, March 31, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/live/ENhn0yJy9lQ?si=hafG6bbQSDxhSp82>.

Elizabeth, Margaret. "Lex Orandi Est Lex Credendi? The God of Anglican Liturgy." *New Blackfriars* 97, no. 1067 (January 2016): 52–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12157>.

Emberson, Iain. "Faith Survey | Christianity in the UK." Faithsurvey.co.uk, 2018. <https://faithsurvey.co.uk/uk-christianity.html>.

English, Ashley E., and Lisa A. Dicke. "Megachurch Involvement at the Local Level: Examining Conditions for Church Action in Economic Development." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 30, no. 3 (2020): 399–421.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21401>.

Evangelical, Alliance. "About Us - Evangelical Alliance." Evangelical Alliance, 2020.

<https://www.eauk.org/about-us>.

"Fish and Chip Club." St Mary's Iffley, April 21, 2020.

<https://iffleychurch.org.uk/children/fish-and-chip-club/>.

Freeman-Attwood, Jonathan. "The Anglican Dissonance. Music in the Anglican Church Finds Itself Split between Purists and Popularists." *The Musical Times* 133, no. 1792 (1992): 309. <https://doi.org/10.2307/966087>.

Friends of St Mary's, Iffley. "Friends of St Mary's, Iffley." Friends of St Mary's, Iffley. Accessed April 26, 2024. <https://iffleyfosm.org.uk/>.

Froese, Paul, and Rory Jones. "The Sociology of Prayer: Dimensions and Mechanisms." *Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (January 10, 2021): 15.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10010015>.

Fry, Alex D. J. *Gender inequality in the ordained ministry of the Church of England: Examining conservative male clergy responses to women priests and bishops*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2024.

Fuist, Todd Nicholas. "Talking to God among a Cloud of Witnesses: Collective Prayer as a Meaningful Performance." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54, no. 3 (2015): 523–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12209>.

Ganett, James. "Sermon: 'Talking about Faith.'" St Mary's Iffley, October 31, 2017.
<https://iffleychurch.org.uk/sermons/sermon-talking-about-faith/>.

"Gas Street Church, Birmingham - Light for the City." Gas Street Church Birmingham - Light for the city. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://gasstreet.church/>.

Gas Street Church, St Luke's. "Loving Others Is Loving God - Esther Rai | Gas Street Church." YouTube, July 16, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7EsG7nGvvl>.

"General Synod Backs Ban on Conversion Therapy." Church of England, 2017.
<https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-backs-ban-conversion-therapy>.

Gledhill, Ruth. "Heaven's Door." *The Times*, December 2, 1996.

Greig, Pete. *How to pray*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2019.

Grem, Darren E. "Christianity Today, J. Howard Pew, and the Business of Conservative Evangelicalism." *Enterprise and Society* 15, no. 2 (March 29, 2014): 337–79. <https://doi.org/10.1093/es/khu012>.

"GS Communities - Gas Street Church, Birmingham." Gas Street Church Birmingham - Light for the city. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://gasstreet.church/communities>.

Guest, Mathew, Sonya Sharma, Kristin Aune, and Rob Warner. "Challenging 'Belief' and the Evangelical Bias: Student Christianity in English Universities." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 28, no. 2 (April 22, 2013): 207–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2013.783326>.

“A Guide to Setting up a Parish Shared Leadership Team.” Diocese of Salford, 2019.
<https://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-GUIDE-TO-SETTING-UP-A-PARISH-SHARED-LEADERSHIP-TEAM-1.pdf>.

Gumbel, Nicky. *Searching issues*. London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 2018.

Hailes, Sam. “Andrea Williams: The Unstoppable Founder of Christian Concern.” Premier Christianity, 2019. <https://www.premierchristianity.com/home/andrea-williams-the-unstoppable-founder-of-christian-concern/2779.article>.

Hare, David. “LGBT Affirmation and Identity in Christian Teachings and Church Communities.” *Rape Culture, Gender Violence, and Religion*, 2018, 135–44.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72224-5_8.

Hargreaves, Sam, and Sara Hargreaves. *Whole life worship*. London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017.

Harju, Bärbel. “Making Christianity Cool.” *Unpopular Culture*, September 1, 2016, 169–86. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv157bjk.12>.

Harper, Michael. *Let my people grow*. London, 1988.

Harwood-Jones, Tony. “Daily Life of an Anglican Priest.” Tonyhj.ca, 2011.
https://www.tonyhj.ca/Priest/priest_daily_life.html.

Hill, Jonathan P., and Daniel V. Olson. “Market Share and Religious Competition: Do Small Market Share Congregations and Their Leaders Try Harder?” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 4 (December 2009): 629–49.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01470.x>.

Hollinghurst, Steve. *Mission-shaped evangelism: The gospel in contemporary culture*. Norwich, UK: Canterbury, 2010.

Holy Trinity Brompton. "Our Story." HTB Church. Accessed August 8, 2023.
<https://htb.org/story>.

"Home." Canterbury Cathedral. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/>.

"Home: Ebb Churches - St Peter East Blatchington & St Andrew Bishopstone." EBB Churches. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://www.ebbchurches.org.uk/>.

Hopkins, Mary A, and George Lings. "'network Churches' – What Do You Mean?" Anglican Church Planting Initiatives, November 28, 2017.
<https://acpi.org.uk/2017/01/02/network-churches-what-do-you-mean/>.

"How Evangelicals Took over the Church of England." *Premier Christianity*, 2017.

Howlett, Marnie. "Looking at the 'Field' through a Zoom Lens: Methodological Reflections on Conducting Online Research during a Global Pandemic." *Qualitative Research* 22, no. 3 (January 16, 2021): 387–402.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120985691>.

Hugen, Beryl, Terry A. Wolfer, and Jennifer Ubels Renkema. "Service and Faith: The Impact on Christian Faith of Community Ministry Participation." *Review of Religious Research* 47, no. 4 (June 2006): 409–26.
<https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/20058107>.

Hunt, Stephen. *Anyone for Alpha?* 1st ed. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001.

Hunt, Stephen. *The Alpha Enterprise: Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2004.

Hussey, Ian. "The Songs We Sing: A Textual Analysis of Popular Congregational Songs of the 20th and 21st Century." *Ecclesial Practices* 6, no. 2 (November 26, 2019): 217–34. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22144471-00602003>.

Hutchinson, Mark P., and Atola Longkumer. "Mission, Evangelism, and Translation." Essay. In *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume V: The Twentieth Century: Themes and Variations in a Global Context*, 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

"Hymn: Crown Him with Many Crowns." Hymnalnet. Accessed April 1, 2024. <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/142>.

"IFES · International Fellowship of Evangelical Students." IFES, August 5, 2023. https://ifesworld.org/en/?switch_language=en.

Ingalls, Monique Marie. *Singing the congregation: How contemporary worship music forms evangelical community*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Jagger, Sharon. "Presiding Like a Woman: Menstruating at the Altar." Essay. In *From the Shores of Silence: Conversations in Feminist Practical Theology*, 1st ed., 144–60. London: SCM Press, 2023.

Jesse, Daniel. "Over-Generalizing, under-Promising, and over-Promising: Singing Sadness and Joy in the Church." *Religions* 13, no. 12 (December 1, 2022): 1172. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13121172>.

Johnson, Benton. "On Church and Sect." *American Sociological Review* 28, no. 4 (August 1963): 539. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2090070>.

Jones, Ian. "Earrings behind the Altar? Anglican Expectations of the Ordination of Women as Priests'." *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/ Dutch Review of Church History* 83, no. 1 (2003): 462–76. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187607502x00293>.

Jones, Jeff. "Hallelujah! Contemplative Worship: A Case for Compline." *The Choral Journal* 50, no. 2 (2009): 63–68. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23560200>.

Karris, Robert J. *A Symphony of New Testament hymns*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996.

Kaur-Gill, Satveer, and Mohan J. Dutta. "Digital Ethnography." *The International Encyclopaedia of Communication Research Methods*, November 7, 2017, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0271>.

Keller, Timothy J. *Prayer*. London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 2014.

Kelley, Jonathan, and Nan Dirk de Graaf. "National Context, Parental Socialization, and Religious Belief: Results from 15 Nations." *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 4 (August 1997): 639–59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657431>.

Ketola, Kimmo. *The founder of the Hare Krishnas as seen by devotees*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Kettell, Steven. "You Can't Argue with God: Religious Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage in Britain." *Journal of Church and State*, August 4, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csy056>.

Krapohl, Robert H., and Charles H. Lippy. *The evangelicals: A historical, thematic, and biographical guide*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Kuyper, Abraham, Nelson D. Kloosterman, and John Halsey Wood. *Rooted & Grounded: The Church as organism and Institution*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2013.

Laird, Martin S., and Sheelah Trefle Hidden. *The practice of the presence of god: Theology as a way of life*. London, u.a.: Routledge, 2017.

Lankhuff, Perry. "Worship | Christ Church Anglican : Welcome Home." Christchurchanglican.org, 2020. <http://christchurchanglican.org/anglican-faith/worship/>.

Leaver, Robin A. "Hallelujah! Using Historic Music in Contemporary Worship." *The Choral Journal* 43, no. 7 (2003): 51–61. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23554610>.

"LGBT+ Survivors' Experiences of Conversion Practices - Galop." Galop, 2023. <https://galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Galop-Conversion-Practices-Report-Jan-2023.pdf>.

Lings, George. "The Day of Small Things: An Analysis of Fresh Expressions of Church in 21 Dioceses of the Church of England ." Church Army, 2016. <https://churcharmy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/the-day-of-small-things.pdf>.

"Living Stones." St Mary the Virgin, Iffley - Living Stones. Accessed April 26, 2024. <https://livingstonesiffley.org.uk/>.

“Love Your Neighbour - Gas Street Church, Birmingham.” Gas Street Church
Birmingham - Light for the city. Accessed April 28, 2024.
<https://gasstreet.church/loveyourneighbour>.

Luhrmann, T. M. *When god talks back*. 1st ed. New York: Vintage Books, 2013.

Lynch, Gerry. “The Failure of Anglican Managerialism: Gerry Lynch.” *The Critic Magazine*, January 11, 2024. <https://thecritic.co.uk/the-failure-of-anglican-managerialism/>.

Mangelaja, Esa. “Preaching to the Choir? Economic Analysis of Church Growth.” *EconPapers*, January 19, 2007.
https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/grapaoner/07_2f02.htm.

“Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act: A Factsheet - Gov.Uk.” UK Government, 2013.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a750cd2e5274a59fa717007/140423_M_SSC_Act_factsheet__web_version_.pdf.

Martin, Francis. “Church Organisations Urge Bishops Not to Commend Blessings for Same-Sex Couples.” *The Church Times - News, comment, features, book reviews and more*, July 7, 2023. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/7-july/news/uk/church-organisations-urge-bishops-not-to-commend-blessings-for-same-sex-couples>.

Martin, Francis. “Don’t Delay Guidance, Say Bishops.” *Church Times*. November 3, 2023.

Marton, Marius E. *Worship music in the 21st Century: Selecting proper music for worship in regards to lyrics, instrumentation, and Rhythm*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015.

Mathis, David. "Twelve Benefits of Team Leadership." *Desiring God*, 2014.
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/twelve-benefits-of-team-leadership>.

Maxwell, John C. *The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership: Follow them and people will follow you*. Nashville, TN: Thomas NELSON, 2007.

McBRIDE, MICHAEL. "Religious Market Competition in a Richer World." *Economica* 77, no. 305 (December 22, 2009): 148–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0335.2008.00732.x>.

McClure, Paul K. "Tinkering with Technology and Religion in the Digital Age: The Effects of Internet Use on Religious Belief, Behavior, and Belonging." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 3 (September 2017): 481–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12365>.

McDannell, Colleen, and Julie Ingersoll. "Contemporary Christian Worship Music." Essay. In *Religions of the United States in Practice, Volume 2*, 121–28. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

McLeod, Hugh, and Hugh McLeod. *The religious crisis of the 1960s*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007.

McMullin, Steve. "The Secularization of Sunday: Real or Perceived Competition for Churches." *Review of Religious Research* 55, no. 1 (March 2013): 43–59.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-012-0089-7>.

A Minority Within a Minority: A Report on Converts to Islam in the United Kingdom.
Faith Matters, 2011.

Moberg, Marcus. "Understanding Religious-Organizational Marketization: The Case of the United States Mainline." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90, no. 4 (December 1, 2022): 815–35. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfac076>.

Moriarty, Michael G. *The new charismatics: A concerned voice responds to dangerous new trends*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

Murthy, Dhiraj. "Digital Ethnography." *Sociology* 42, no. 5 (October 2008): 837–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094565>.

Nason-Clark, Nancy. "Ordaining Women as Priests: Religious vs. Sexist Explanations for Clerical Attitudes." *Sociological Analysis* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 1987): 259–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3711522>.

Nichols, Tim. "The Pastor's Role in Vision-Based Leadership." *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 2, no. 1 (2007): 20–31.

Nolland, Lisa. *The new normal*. London: Wilberforce Publications Ltd, 2018.

"Online Worship." Canterbury Cathedral. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/worship/our-services/online-worship/>.

ONS. "Population by Religion, Borough – London Datastore." Data.london.gov.uk, 2014. <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/percentage-population-religion-borough>.

Ottaway, Jonathan M. "'I'll Bring You More than a Song': Toward a Reassessment of Methodology in the Study of Contemporary Praise and Worship." *Religions* 14, no. 5 (May 19, 2023): 680. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050680>.

“Our Vision — Christ Church Feltham.” Christ Church Feltham, 2022.

<https://www.christchurchfeltham.org/vision>.

O'Reilly, JoAnn. “A Community of Strangers: Finding Solidarity through Prayer Request Journals.” *The Caregiver Journal* 11, no. 2 (January 1995): 26–30.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1077842x.1995.10781718>.

Parveen, Nazia. “‘This Is What I’m Meant to Be Doing’: The Vicar Welcoming Muslims to Church.” *the Guardian*, 2016.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/18/this-is-what-im-meant-to-be-doing-the-vicar-welcoming-muslims-to-church>.

Paul, Ian. “Is the Future of Leadership Lay or Ordained?” Web log. *Psephizo* (blog), March 17, 2016. <https://www.psephizo.com/life-ministry/is-the-future-of-leadership-lay-or-ordained/>.

Paul, Ian. “On the Appointment of Senior Leaders in the Church.” *Psephizo* (blog), January 6, 2022. <https://www.psephizo.com/sexuality-2/on-the-appointment-of-senior-leaders-in-the-church/>.

Paul, Ian. “Prayers of Love and Faith: The C of E’s Brexit Moment?” *Psephizo*, September 15, 2023. <https://www.psephizo.com/sexuality-2/prayers-of-love-and-faith-the-c-of-es-brex-it-moment/>.

Percy, Martyn. “Top Cleric Says Church of England Risks Becoming a ‘Suburban Sect.’” *The Guardian*, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/13/justin-welby-church-of-england-suburban-sect>.

Perigo, Jeremy. “You Never Stop Working.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 95, no. 1 (April 9, 2024): 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.1163/27725472-09501001>.

Perl, Paul, and Daniel V.A. Olson. “Religious Market Share and Intensity of Church Involvement in Five Denominations.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 1 (March 2000): 12–31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0021-8294.00002>.

Pettersson, Thorleif. “The Audiences’ Uses and Gratifications of TV Worship Services.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25, no. 4 (December 1986): 391–409. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1385907>.

Phillips, Peter, Peter Ward, Alexandra Cristea, and Tahir Olanrewaju Aduragba. Issue brief. *Offline and Online Religious Activity in the UK during Lockdown and Post-Lockdown*. University of Durham, August 2020. <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/digitaltheology/PressReleasereOnlineChurch.pdf>.

Pilavachi, Mike, and Andy Croft. *Everyday supernatural*. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2016.

Pillay, Jerry. “Covid-19 Shows the Need to Make Church More Flexible.” *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 37, no. 4 (October 2020): 266–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378820963156>.

Porter, Mark James. *Contemporary worship music and everyday musical lives*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018.

Publication. *British Social Attitudes* 35. London, UK: National Centre for Social Research, 2018.

Redman, Robb. *The great worship awakening*. 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Reid, Gavin. "The Evangelical Coalition." *Church of England Newspaper*, March 1, 1976.

"Religion (Detailed) - 2021 Census." Religion (detailed) - Office for National Statistics. Accessed January 30, 2024.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS031/editions/2021/versions/1?showAll=religion_58a#religion_58a.

"Religion in England and Wales 2011." Ons.gov.uk, 2012.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religioninenglandandwales2011/2012-12-11>.

Renewal and Reform, 2015. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-reform>.

Report of Proceedings 2020: General Synod February Group of Sessions, 2020.

Response to Question 91. General Synod Reports February 2020, 2020.

Rich, Hannah, and Stephen Cottrell. "Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England." Theos Think Tank, 2020.

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf>.

Rich, Hannah. "Anglican Churches in the UK Are Shrinking in Size but Not Impact." ChristianityToday.com, November 24, 2020.

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/church-of-england-decline-theos-growing-good-social-action.html>.

Rogers, Cris. *Immeasurably More*. Chicago: Lion Hudson, 2015.

Ruhr, Marc von der, and Joseph P. Daniels. "Examining Megachurch Growth: Free Riding, Fit, and Faith." *International Journal of Social Economics* 39, no. 5 (2012): 357–72. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03068291211214217>.

Ruhr, Marc von der, and Joseph P. Daniels. "Subsidizing Religious Participation Through Groups: A Model of the 'Megachurch' Strategy for Growth." *Review of Religious Research* 53, no. 4 (2011): 471–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-011-0024-3>.

Rusk, Michael. "Reconfiguring Anglican Leadership for the Twenty-First Century." *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (2010): 123–31.

Schwadel, Philip, Jacob E. Cheadle, Sarah E. Malone, and Michael Stout. "Social Networks and Civic Participation and Efficacy in Two Evangelical Protestant Churches." *Review of Religious Research* 58, no. 2 (June 2016): 305–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-015-0237-y>.

Schwadel, Philip. "Individual, Congregational, and Denominational Effects on Church Members' Civic Participation." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 2 (May 12, 2005): 159–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2005.00273.x>.

SDF Learning Summary - New Resource Churches. Church of England, 2021.

"Section B." The Church of England. Accessed August 27, 2023.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/canons-church-england/section-b>.

"Services: Ebb Churches - Online and in St Peter's or St Andrew's Church." EBB Churches. Accessed April 28, 2024. <https://www.ebbchurches.org.uk/services>.

Shaffer, Edward H. "TV Evangelism, Public Goods, and Imperfect Competition." *Journal of Economic Issues* 27, no. 2 (June 1993): 639–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.1993.11505444>.

Sherkat, D. E. "Tracking the Restructuring of American Religion: Religious Affiliation and Patterns of Religious Mobility, 1973-1998." *Social Forces* 79, no. 4 (June 1, 2001): 1459–93. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2001.0052>.

Sherwood, Harriet. "Church of England Expects Attendance to Fall for next 30 Years." *the Guardian*, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/17/church-of-england-attendance-decline-30-years-general-assembly>.

Sherwood, Harriet. "Church of England Should Recognise Same-Sex Weddings, Says Bishop." *the Guardian*, 2021.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/26/church-of-england-should-recognise-same-sex-marriage-says-bishop>.

Sherwood, Harriet. "Nearly 50% Are of No Religion – but Has UK Hit 'Peak Secular'?" *the Guardian*, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/13/uk-losing-faith-religion-young-reject-parents-beliefs>.

Sherwood, Harriet. "People of No Religion Outnumber Christians in England and Wales – Study." *the Guardian*, 2016.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/23/no-religion-outnumber-christians-england-wales-study>.

Shiells, Alex. "A Critical Examination of Christian Leadership in the Light of Recent Trends within the Church of England." *Journal of the European Pentecostal*

Theological Association 39, no. 1 (2018): 39–47.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/18124461.2018.1539902>.

Smith, Egb.C, Wi.J Tucker, and J.W Churchill. “Editorial: Social Classes and The Church.” Essay. In *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly* 2, 2:290–304. Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884.

Snodgrass, Jonathan. “The Influence and Inspiration of Negro Spirituals in the Black Worship Experience.” *Our City On A Hill*, February 11, 2016.

<https://www.ourcityonahill.net/the-influence-and-inspiration-of-negro-spirituals-in-the-black-worship-experience/>.

Staff Reports. “World’s Oldest Protestant Churches Now Ordain Gays and Lesbians.” The United Church of Christ, May 31, 2002. <http://www.ucc.org/global-trend-worlds-oldest>.

Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. *A theory of religion*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1996.

“The State of the Church 2020.” Barna Group, November 30, 2022.

<https://www.barna.com/collections/the-state-of-the-church-2020/>.

Statistics for Mission 2018. Statistics for Mission, 2019.

Stevens, John. “Conversion Therapy: A Biblical Response.” FIEC, December 13, 2016. <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/conversion-therapy-a-biblical-response>.

Stevens, Lesley. “Different Voice / Different Voices: Anglican Women in Ministry.” *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 3 (March 1989): 262–75.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/3511511>.

Sturgill, Amanda. "Scope and Purposes of Church Web Sites." *Journal of Media and Religion* 3, no. 3 (August 2004): 165–76.

https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328415jmr0303_3.

A Summary of Progress and Impact. Reform and Renewal, 2021.

"Sunday Gatherings." YouTube. Accessed April 28, 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEc1JoM7uAe3VuYZkZ-iTXUGxyS-FVhvk>.

Swan, Wallace. "Chapter 6: Religion." Essay. In *A Survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, Experiences and Values in Changing Times*, 1–157. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2013.

Temperley, Nicholas. *The music of the English parish church*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Thackway, J.P. "Modernise or Perish!" Bibleleaguetrust.org, 2004.

<https://www.bibleleaguetrust.org/modernise-or-perish/>.

Theodori, Gene L, and Chyrel A Mayfield. "Attendance at Religious Meetings and Community Involvement." *Journal of Rural Social Sciences* 23, no. 1 (June 30, 2008): 266–76. <https://doi.org/https://egrove.olemiss.edu/jrss/vol23/iss1/11>.

Thorlby, Tim. *A Time To Sow: Anglican Catholic Church Growth in London*. Research for the Local Church. The Centre for Theology and Community, 2017.

Thornton, Daniel. "'This Is No Performance': Exploring the Complicated Relationship between the Church and Contemporary Congregational Songs." *Religions* 14, no. 5 (April 26, 2023): 578. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050578>.

Threlfall-Holmes, Miranda. "Evangelism Isn't Just for the Evangelicals." *Church Times*, January 4, 2019.

Thumma, Scott, Warren Bird, Warren Bird, and Scott Thumma. Rep. *Changes in American Megachurches*, 2011.

Tonsing, J. Gertrud, Cas J. Wepener, and Cas Vos. "The 'cognitive' and the 'Emotive' Component in Christian Songs: Tracing the Shifts in Traditional and Contemporary Songs." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no. 1 (March 25, 2015).
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i1.1308>.

Tran, M., and A. Davies. "Church without Walls? Social Media as Ritual Carrier for Megachurch Congregants in the Renegotiation of Ritual Space." LSBU Open Research, September 20, 2022. <https://openresearch.lsbu.ac.uk/item/9191z>.

Tran, Mai Khanh, and Andrew Davies. "Revisiting Benjamin's Aura in the Age of Mediatisation – the Digital Aura of Megachurches." *Journal of Marketing Management* 39, no. 17–18 (November 22, 2023): 1765–99.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2023.2289369>.

Turner, B, and Stephen Ellingson. "New Research on Megachurches, Non-Denominationalism and Sectarianism." Essay. In *Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, 1st ed. Blackwood: Blackwell, 2010.

Turner, Laura. "The Rise of the Star-Studded, Instagram-Friendly Evangelical Church." *Vox*, February 6, 2019.
<https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/2/6/18205355/church-chris-pratt-justin-bieber-zoe-hillsong>.

Vetö, Etienne. “‘Praying in the Holy Spirit’ Spirituality and Pneumatology.” *New Blackfriars* 97, no. 1068 (March 2016): 157–72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12195>.

Village, Andrew, and Leslie J. Francis. “An Anatomy of Change: Profiling Cohort Difference in Beliefs and Attitudes among Anglicans in England.” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 8, no. 1 (2009): 59–81. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1740355309990027>.

“Vision & Values — The City Church.” The City Church, 2022. <https://www.thecitychurch.org.uk/visionandvalues>.

“Vision & Values.” Mytonchurch.org.uk, 2022. <https://www.mytonchurch.org.uk/vision-values>.

“Vision and Values - About Us - Ashwood Church.” Ashwoodchurch.org.uk, 2022. <https://www.ashwoodchurch.org.uk/about-us/vision-and-values/>.

Voas, David, and Alasdair Crockett. “Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging.” *Sociology* 39, no. 1 (2005): 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038505048998>.

Voas, David, and Laura Watt. Rep. *Numerical Change in Church Attendance: National, Local and Individual Factors*. Church of England, February 2014. https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/report_strands_1_2_rev2-from-cgr-website.pdf.

Walker, Marcus. “Why Anglo-Catholicism Appeals to Millennials - Catholic Herald.” Catholic Herald, 2019. <https://catholicherald.co.uk/why-anglo-catholicism-appeals-to-millennials/>.

Walton, Andy. "Is the Tide Finally about to Turn for Women in Leadership in Evangelical Churches?" *Christianitytoday.com*, 2017.
<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/is-the-tide-finally-about-to-turn-for-women-in-leadership-in-evangelical-churches/110460.htm>.

Ward, Pete. *Selling worship how what we sing has changed the Church*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008.

Weber, Max, Guenther Roth, and Claus Wittich. *Economy and society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Webster, Danny. "What the Government Must Consider in Its Upcoming Conversion Therapy Bill." Evangelical Alliance, January 25, 2023. <https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/what-the-government-must-consider-in-its-upcoming-conversion-therapy-bill>.

"What's On." EBB Churches. Accessed April 28, 2024.
<https://www.ebbchurches.org.uk/what-s-on>.

White, Emma. "Religion in England and Wales 2011 - Office for National Statistics." *Ons.gov.uk*, 2012.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religioninenglandandwales2011/2012-12-11>.

Wilkins, Clara L., Jaclyn A. Lisnek, Kimia Saadatian, and Lerone A. Martin. "Congregation over Denomination: Analyzing Psychological Reactions to a Church Ruling on Same Sex Marriage." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 63, no. 3 (February 9, 2024): 501–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12905>.

Wilkins, Clara L., Joseph D. Wellman, Negin R. Toosi, Chad A. Miller, Jaclyn A. Lisnek, and Lerone A. Martin. "Is LGBT Progress Seen as an Attack on Christians?: Examining Christian/Sexual Orientation Zero-Sum Beliefs." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 122, no. 1 (January 2022): 73–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000363>.

Williams, Hattie. "Church Census 2016 Cancelled after C of E Drops Out." *Church Times*, May 0, 2016. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/13-may/news/uk/church-census-2016-cancelled-after-c-of-e-drops-out>.

Wilson, Bryan R. *Contemporary transformations of religion*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1979.

Wilson-Dickson, Andrew. *The story of Christian music*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

Winchester, Daniel, and Jeffrey Guhin. "Praying 'Straight from the Heart': Evangelical Sincerity and the Normative Frames of Culture in Action." *Poetics* 72 (February 2019): 32–42. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2018.10.003>.

"Women in Ministry Statement." Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, 2016. <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/article/women-in-ministry-statement>.

Woodhead, Linda. *"No Religion" Is the New Religion*. Westminster Faith Debates. Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 2013.

Woodhead, Linda. "Time to Get Serious." *Churchtimes.co.uk*, 2014.
<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2014/31-january/features/features/time-to-get-serious>.

Worcester, Diocese. "Diocese of Worcester | Resourcing Churches." Cofe-worcester.org.uk, 2020. <https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/parish-support/resourcing-churches/>.

Wright, Kevin B. "Researching Internet-Based Populations: Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Survey Research, Online Questionnaire Authoring Software Packages, and Web Survey Services." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10, no. 3 (2006): 00–00. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2005.tb00259.x>.

Yates, Paul. "The Priesthood of Women: Resourcing Identity in the Anglican Church." *Oral History, Religion and Belief*, 24, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 59–65.

Yip, Jeaney, and Susan Ainsworth. "You Need 'Help for the Journey': Freedom and Regulation in a 'Market-Friendly' Megachurch." *Marketing Theory* 20, no. 1 (June 19, 2019): 103–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593119856654>.

Yoon, Sunny. "Tuning in Sacred: Youth Culture and Contemporary Christian Music." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 47, no. 2 (December 2016): 315–42.

Zech, Charles, William Wagner, and Robert West. "The Effective Design of Church Web Sites: Extending the Consumer Evaluation of Web Sites to the Non-Profit Sector." *Information Systems Management* 30, no. 2 (April 2013): 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10580530.2013.773800>.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Factors affecting attendance within the Anglican Communion in the UK

This study is seeking to gain information about what helps you to choose which church you attend. By looking at Worship Music, Leadership Culture and Theological viewpoints, we hope to discover which factors have the largest impact on church attendance.

You are invited to participate in this research by completing an online survey.

Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw up until the completion of the survey. All data will be anonymous, and no identifiable data will be gathered at any point.

The questionnaire should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete, and you will be asked questions about your church that you regularly attend. These will cover the style of worship music that is used at your church, the leadership team within your church, and the overall theology of your church.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact either the student or supervisor:

Madison Pollard-Shore



Dr Andrew Davies:



APPENDIX B - PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This Consent Form formed the first page of the online survey. Participants will be asked to tick a box stating that they agree to the information provided, and understand their right to withdraw

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with Anglican church attendance in the UK, by the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply, and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research, and statistical and audit purposes. By supplying this information, you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, and the General Data Protection Regulation 2016. No identifiable personal data will be published.

By ticking the box below, you are agreeing to the following statements:

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have had these answered satisfactorily.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw until the end of the survey. If I withdraw, my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed.
- I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2016.