

SPECIAL EDITION
FOCUS ON CENSUS
50th
ISSUE!



Providing Facts for Forward Planning



... getting the bigger picture
in 2016

GROWTH AMIDST DECLINE

The Church Census held in May 2016 was the fourth Census which has been undertaken of Scottish Church attendance, the first being held in 1984, thus giving an overall time frame of 32 years. Each has encompassed a variety of factors, but has especially focused on congregational numbers attending a place of Christian worship on a Sunday. The 2016 Census showed that some 390,000 people regularly attended church, being 7.2% of the Scottish population, down from 17% in 1984.

This special issue of *FutureFirst*, is a summary of the results being sent, as promised, to every church which completed a form almost a year ago. It focuses on numbers attending church and other aspects of church life rather than on the mission of the church, but the detail hopefully will be a stimulus to the fulfilment of this divine commission. "The exercise was certainly well worthwhile and has given us some food for thought," wrote one Finance Convener in a Church of Scotland congregation in the Scottish Borders.

A significant finding was the attendance decline in all denominations except for the Pentecostals where attendance has almost doubled since the third Census in 2002 and stands at 19,000, 5% of all Scottish churchgoers in 2016. However, many immigrant churches (called "Overseas National" churches in the report) and Messy Churches have also started in the last 10 years, so this is not a pessimistic story of inevitable decline.

1) Growth. Many of the new churches have the characteristics of being led by local lay people, often without theological training, informality in worship, sometimes food, certainly a warm welcome, full fellowship, enterprise, borrowing of premises, with a deep concern for reaching out to others and making sure the worship service is relevant and in the appropriate language! Some 12,000 people regularly attend some 300 new churches started since 2002.

In addition a number of congregations (over 500) reported significant growth over the last five years, leading to an additional 6,000 people in church each Sunday. Over 52,000 children also now attend church who weren't born in 2002 (6% of births), making a total of at least 70,000 new people in Scottish church life, 1.3% of the population.

The growth that has been seen has caused the previously expected decline to moderate, and, although the future trend remains downwards, numbers could fall to just under 300,000 by 2025 if the present trend continues.

2) Congregations. The Census has focused on congregations rather than churches per se as a number of church mergers have

taken place in the last few years without the usual closure of some church buildings. The number of congregations in 2016 was 3,700, down from 4,100 in 1984. While over 300 churches have started in Scotland since 2002, this has been offset by a greater number of closures. Nearly half, 46%, of congregations acknowledged decline in the last 5 years. The average congregation in 2016 was 105, but 15% were over 200. The decrease in numbers is equivalent to losing 10 congregations per month.

Two-fifths, 40%, of the churches (as given by their minister) were Evangelical, up from 38% in 1994 (not measured in 1984), while 24% were Broad/Liberal, 17% were Reformed, 13% Catholic. A large proportion of churches in current use were built in the 19th (30%) or 20th (47%) centuries, with 9% of the churches (as given by their minister) having started since the year 2000. These latter were either Church of Scotland mergers or new Independent, Pentecostal or Smaller Denominational (which included Messy Church) churches.

3) Age and gender of churchgoers. A key finding from this Census was that two-fifths, 42%, of Scottish churchgoers are 65 or over, of which a fifth are aged 65 to 74, and a fifth 75 or over. This is twice the proportion in the population, and has obvious implications for the future. Two-fifths of churchgoers, 40%, are male, slightly more than the 37% in 1984. The oldest churchgoers are either in the Church of Scotland or Scottish Episcopal Church, the youngest are Pentecostal or among the Smaller Denominations group. Declining numbers are especially seen in those under 45.

4) Other characteristics. Four-fifths, 80%, attend weekly, the remaining fifth less frequently, those aged 35-44 attending less often. 4% of those in church on Census Sunday in 2016 were visitors. An extra 3% of the population attend church at Christmas, especially in Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic churches. A large majority, 94%, of Scottish churchgoers were White, with half the other 6% being Black (four times the population proportion). These latter were mainly aged 25 to 34 and Pentecostal.

Almost half, 45%, of churchgoers had been in their present church for over 20 years, and half, 50%, lived between ½ and 3 miles from their church. A third, 35%, of all churchgoers (counting congregational numbers as against churches) were Evangelical, up from 26% in 1994, while another third, 32%, were Catholic, with 16% Broad/Liberal (twice as many women as men), 13% Reformed, and 4% Low Church. Catholics and Charismatic Evangelicals were the youngest. As might be expected, particular parts of Scotland tended to be dominated by certain denominations.

5) Leadership. Four-fifths of church leaders, 79%, are male, with an average age of 57. They have been leading their present church on average for 8 years (11 if Pentecostal). Two-fifths, 43%, were responsible for more than one church. One ninth, 11%, of churches had a youth-worker, 4% full-time, 7% part-time.

6) Mid-week attendance. Three-fifths, 60%, of churches had some kind of mid-week worship, especially Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Baptist churches. Average attendance was 34, up from 27 in 2002, and younger than those who come on a Sunday. Most, 89%, also came on a Sunday.

Half of all churches, 48%, held a mid-week youth activity, with an

Continued from page 1

average attendance of 41, down from 59 in 2002. Only two-fifths, 42%, of these also came on a Sunday. Half of all churches, 46%, also held other kinds of mid-week ministry, with an average attendance of 51, slightly fewer men, again younger than Sunday attendees, although these were not Sunday churchgoers. This excludes people coming to events held by those hiring church premises.

Together the mid-week work reached almost a quarter of a million people, 235,000, of whom three-fifths, 58%, did not attend on a Sunday, giving a **total reach of 10% of the Scottish population** coming to church either on a Sunday or mid-week.

7) Local Community. Sponsored questions showed that three-quarters, 72%, of churches sought to meet local social needs and half, 48%, undertook regular neighbourhood visitation. A third of churches, 35%, had undertaken an *Alpha* course, half (17%) in 2015, giving a total of 940 courses run that year. This included Youth Alpha as well as Adult Alpha, with an average attendance of 12 each. *Christianity Explored* courses had been undertaken by 10% of Scottish churches.

Three-quarters, 77%, of churches supported charities if they could direct their donation to a specific project or place, the most important factor, however, being whether the purpose to which it was going fitted in with the church's vision. A third, 34%, of churches had been involved with Tearfund, and three-fifths, 61%, with Christian Aid Week. Poverty reduction was well supported, environmental conservation was much lobbied. A quarter, 24%, of churches had raised the topic of legacies.

The Census provides much information. The full Report has an Appendix suggesting how individual local congregations might use some of the findings. Senior leadership will wish to consider the strategic implications of the key findings about the rate of decline, the serious age factor, and the undoubted fact that within overall decline there are definite shoots of growth along mostly non-traditional lines. Will formality, rules, inflexible structures, resistance to innovation, tradition and rigid denominationalism hinder these shoots of growth or adapt to encompass them?

Peter Brierley

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

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Total Scottish Church Attendance in 2016

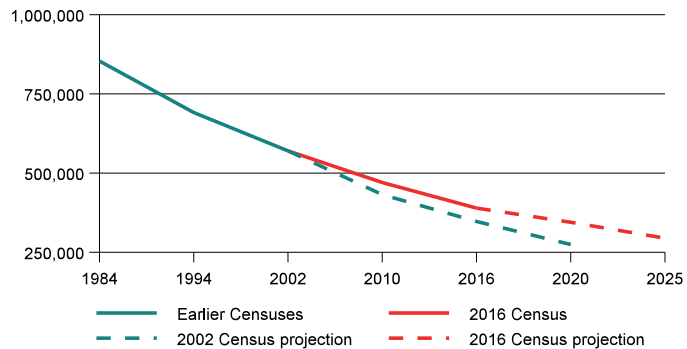
Data came from 40% of the 3,689 congregations in Scotland in 2016. The total attendance on or around Census Sunday of 8th May was 389,510 people, which rounds to 390,000. This figure is derived from a comparison of those obtained by grossing up for churches not replying by denomination, by churchmanship and by the geographical area in which a church was located. This is not the total number of Christians in Scotland (2.9 million according to the 2011 Census), but it will certainly exclude the thousands mentioned in *The Invisible Church* by Steve Aisthorpe.

The 1984 Scottish Census recorded total church attendance as 854,000, and between 1984 and 2002 it reduced by 33% to 570,000 in 2002. That 2002 attendance figure has reduced over 14 years to 390,000 in 2016, a reduction of 32%. These figures indicate two very similar falls in total church attendance on a typical Sunday, though the first was over 18 years and the second over 14 years. That difference in period will mean that the average per annum rate of decline will be slightly different, being -2.2% per annum for the first period and -2.7% for the second period.

Better than expected

The result of the 2016 Scottish Church Census will be disappointing for most church leaders, but a forecast based on the results of the 2002 Census would give an estimate of 350,000 by 2016, so the actual result is better than expected, 11% higher, partly as a result of the numbers of immigrants coming into Scotland, and the growth of the Pentecostal churches.

Number of churchgoers in Scotland, 1984 to 2025E

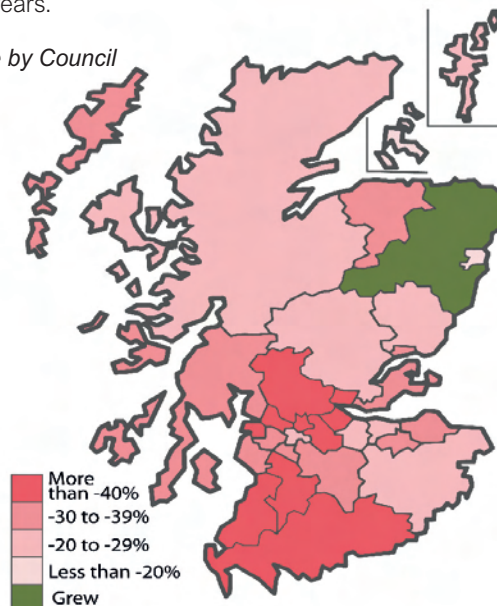


The red trend line shows the impact of Scottish Pentecostals, immigrants, others who are attending ethnic churches or who are starting new churches for their language group. The rate of decline has clearly lessened even though the line continues to go downwards.

Change in attendance by Council

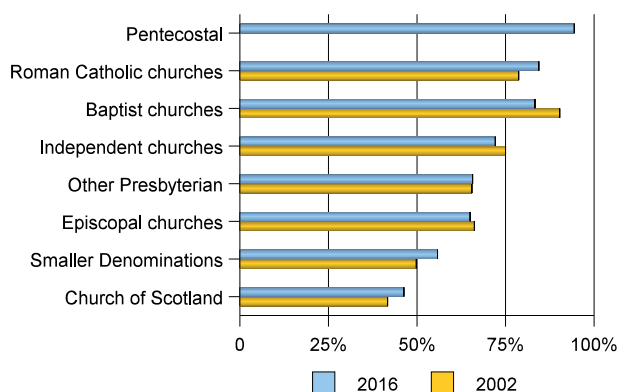
There are 27 Polish churches in Scotland, according to their website, all but a few new since 2002. Where are they located? There is one in Dundee, one in Edinburgh, but 25 in Aberdeen (11) or in the Aberdeenshire countryside (14) among the postcodes immediately to the west of Aberdeen, because many Polish labourers are working in the oil industry and the north east of Scotland is where its strength is located. There are also Polish language Masses for congregations in Glasgow. As a consequence the number of churchgoers in 2016 in Aberdeenshire is higher than in 2002. Aberdeenshire in fact has seen the number of its churches increase from 196 in 2002 to 228 in 2016. The change in numbers attending church by Council are shown in the map, and Aberdeenshire is the only Council to have seen growth in the last 14 years.

Change in attendance by Council

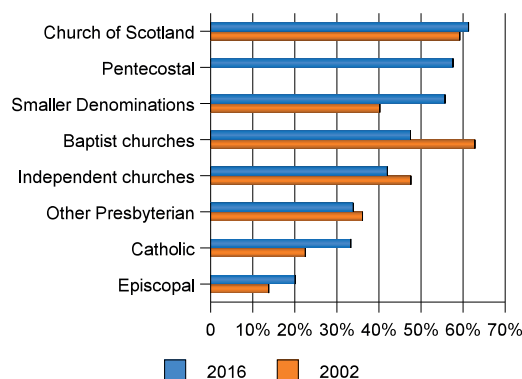


Midweek Attendance

Churches with midweek worship, 2002 and 2016



Proportions of churches with young people's activities, 2002 and 2016



Midweek Worship

A greater proportion of the Smaller Denomination and Roman Catholic churches are having more mid-week meetings now than they did in 2002, while Baptist churches are having slightly fewer, with other denominations about the same as before. More people are now attending midweek worship as overall the number of people attending in 2016 was 75,350, or 1.4% of the population, the same fraction as in 2002, but 9% above the 69,300 attending then.

Mid-week activity	% of churches having this		Average attendance		% attending on a Sunday		Total mid-week attendance Scotland 2016	Of whom attending midweek only 2016	
	Scotland 2002	Scotland 2016	Scotland 2002	Scotland 2016	Scotland 2002	Scotland 2016			
Services	56	60	27	34	95 ¹	89	75,350	8,300	
Youth	47	48	59	41	14	42	72,460	42,000	
Church-run	36	46	73	51	0	0	86,710	86,700	
¹ Estimate							TOTAL midweek 2016	234,520	137,000
							Sunday attendance		389,500
							Total attendance Sunday and mid-week		526,500

Youth Activities during the Week

Did young people attend a regular youth activity such as Boys' Brigade, Youth Club, Brownies and so on? Half the churches, 48%, replied YES, virtually the same percentage as in 2002 (47%). This varied by denomination.

Only the Church of Scotland, Pentecostal churches and the churches in the Smaller Denominations (mostly the Salvation Army and Fresh Expressions churches in that group) had more than 50% with youth activities. The Church of Scotland had more young people coming during the week than on a Sunday. Among Baptist and Independent churches good midweek attendance is reflected in reasonable Sunday youth attendance. The question did not ask for an age breakdown, just the total number attending under the age of 19. The average was 41 young people, a third drop from the average of 59 in 2002, but (as with the 2002 figure) this is distorted by the high Church of Scotland numbers. Without them the average figures would be 38 and 26 respectively for 2002 and 2016.

Year	Sunday churchgoers 65 and over				% of all attenders	The figures of older churchgoers have a number of implications – their impact on church life, how best can they help their grandchildren, likely less physical and financial support for the church, transport to church, image of church, spiritual help for those no longer able to get to church, and so on.
	65 - 74	75-84	85 & over	Total		
1990	88,990	71,830	18,980	181,790	24%	The full report is available as a PDF. For details contact: peter@brierleyres.com. It may also be purchased as a book (details back page).
2000	82,140	69,820	21,540	173,500	28%	
2010	77,450	64,090	22,520	166,070	35%	
2020	69,080	57,060	23,390	149,530	45%	

WHY A CENSUS?

A comprehensive survey of all denominations in Scotland enables trends in church attendance to be measured and explores many other facets of church life. Every church can benefit from it.

Why another Census? Many changes are taking place in Scottish life at the moment, and religious life is an important factor.

A national Steering Committee was formed, shown opposite, and they commissioned Brierley Consultancy to carry it out (its Director had been behind the previous three Censuses also). Who paid for it? The church denominations shown and some agencies.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Rev Colin Sinclair (Chair), then Convener, Mission and Discipleship Council, Church of Scotland

Lt Col Carol Bailey, Secretary for Scotland, Salvation Army
Father Thomas Boyle, Assistant General Secretary, The Bishops' Conference of Scotland

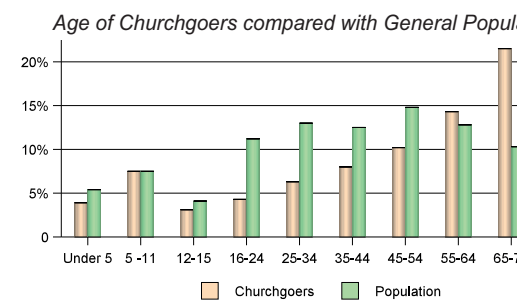
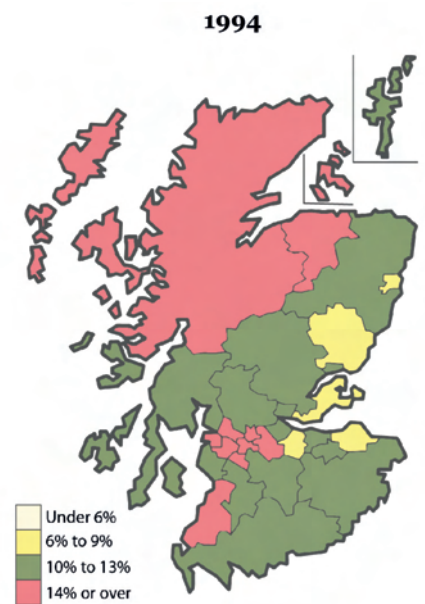
Rev Alan Donaldson, General Director, Baptist Union of Scotland
Rev John Fulton, General Secretary, United Free Church of Scotland

Rev Canon Fay Lamont, Scottish Episcopal Church
Rev Dr Fergus Macdonald, Past Moderator, Free Church of Scotland
Rev David Meredith, Mission Director, Free Church of Scotland
Dr Alastair Noble, The Christian Brethren

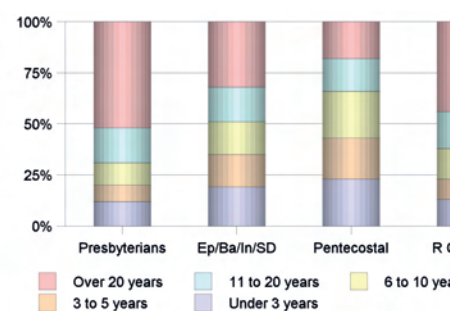
Rev David Pickering, Moderator, United Reformed Church, Synod of Scotland
Rev Dr Fiona Tweedie, Mission Statistics Co-ordinator, Church of Scotland

Attendance by Council

Council	2002	% change 2002-16	2016	As % of pop'n	2016 churches
Aberdeen City	16,180	-19	13,050	6	117
Aberdeenshire	21,690	+2	22,040	8	228
Angus	7,390	-26	5,490	5	107
Argyll & Bute	6,790 ¹	-32	4,650	5	77
Clackmannanshire	4,830 ¹	-46	2,590	5	34
Dumfries & Galloway	12,800	-47	6,820	5	133
Dundee City	14,030	-33	9,470	6	90
East Ayrshire	13,610 ¹	-40	8,120	7	80
East Dunbartonshire	14,260	-44	8,020	8	51
East Lothian	7,070 ¹	-35	4,630	4	57
East Renfrewshire	12,210 ¹	-39	7,460	8	31
Edinburgh City	40,670	-20	32,420	7	219
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	16,120	-25	12,020	45	141
Falkirk	14,100	-40	8,420	5	78
Fife	28,040	-38	17,440	5	223
Glasgow City	82,750	-26	60,890	10	361
Highland	29,410 ¹	-23	22,530	10	362
Inverclyde	14,340	-42	8,250	10	51
Midlothian	6,600 ¹	-36	4,210	5	52
Moray	9,170	-30	6,450	7	97
North Ayrshire	14,670 ¹	-39	8,980	7	92
North Lanarkshire	52,360	-42	30,250	9	182
Orkney Islands	2,480	-15	2,100	10	39
Perth & Kinross	13,520	-23	10,390	7	140
Renfrewshire	28,650 ¹	-35	18,690	11	97
Scottish Borders	9,730	-29	6,910	6	111
Shetland Islands	2,890	-27	2,110	9	45
South Ayrshire	14,110 ¹	-41	8,300	7	59
South Lanarkshire	28,870	-39	17,610	6	139
Stirling	9,350 ¹	-46	5,050	6	64
West Dunbartonshire	10,470	-47	5,580	6	52
West Lothian	10,970	-22	8,570	5	80
TOTAL	570,130	-32	389,510	7	3,689



Length of time in present church



Ep/Ba/In/SD = Scottish Episcopal Church + Baptist Churches + Smaller Denominations

The chart shows that the Presbyterians (combined with the Catholic Church) have the smallest percentage (averaging 10%) of churchgoers who have been coming for over 20 years, while the Pentecostals have the highest percentage (averaging 20%). The latter is not just because they are strong churches, but because they are seeing many new churches being started.

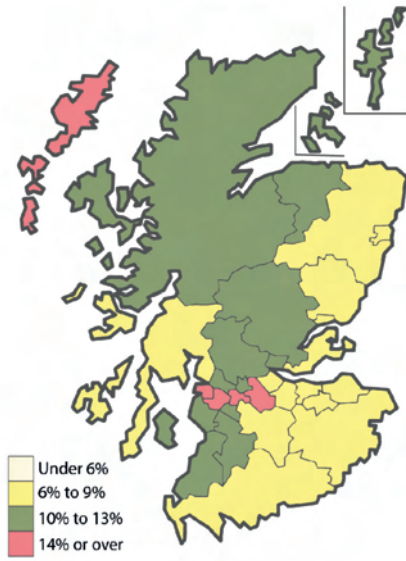
The differences in the chart are quite substantial with significant implications for church dynamics and church culture. One large Scottish church leader in a separate survey in 2013 found a similar result to the chart in terms of percentages of length of attendance, at a meeting with a Presbyterian church. On seeing the results the minister said, "I can see why decisions to change things are so difficult; from now on we need to focus on evangelism." He had a large number who had been attending for a long time, and he needed more younger people in the church who could be trained to be replacement leaders.

The rate of decline in numbers between 2002 and 2016 is equivalent to

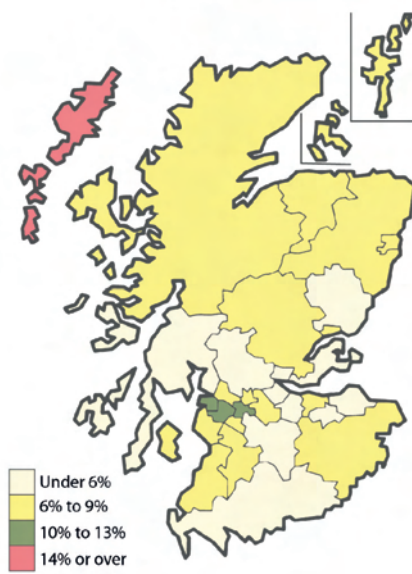
losing 10 congregations every single month!

Attendance as Percentage of Population

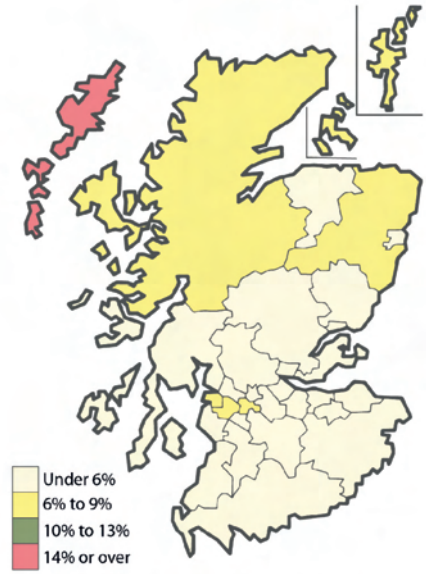
2002



2016

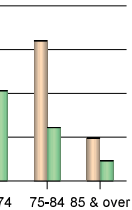


2025E

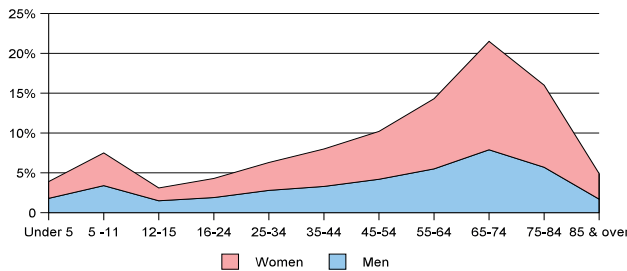


Age of Churchgoers

ation, 2016



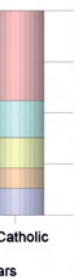
Gender proportions of Scottish Churchgoers in 2016 by age



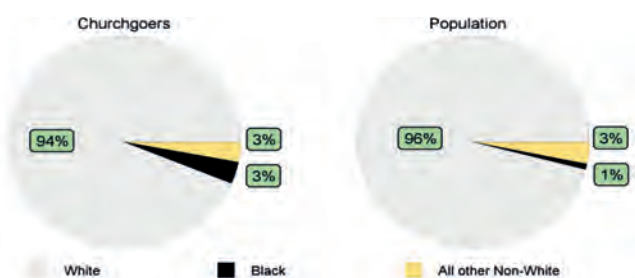
The bar-chart shows that the church has proportionately far fewer people aged between 16 and 54 and far more aged 65 and over compared with the general population. The largest differences are with those aged 65-84, accounting for almost two-fifths, 38%, of all churchgoers but only 16% of the population. The proportion of men in church in 2016 in Scotland was 40% of the total against 60% of women, and has been growing (37% in 1984).

The difference in numbers between men and women is especially marked after the age of 55 to 64, with almost twice as many women as men aged 65-74. The large majority of older people will have retired; an advantage as many of these will still have reasonable amounts of energy and health. It poses obvious problems for the future and for the churches image.

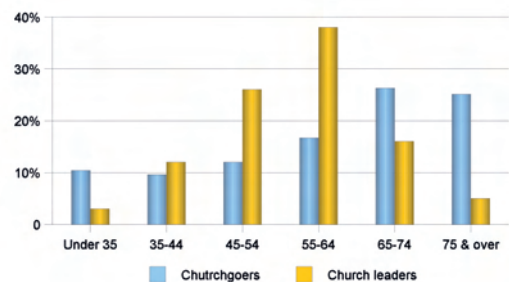
Church



Ethnicity of Churchgoers



Age of church leaders



sts + Independent

and the Roman age 12%) of those less than 3 years age (23%, almost in mission but also started.

respect to church church which had a Church of Scotland although it wasn't a r said, "Now I know ow on I am going to been in the church his congregations

In Scotland the churches have greater proportions of Non-White people attending than in the general population. There are more of Mixed background, many more Blacks (over three times the population percentage), but fewer Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (almost certainly because fewer of these come from a Christian background). The percentage of Asians and Other Non-Whites is about the same as in the population. Some of the Whites in Scotland are Polish, an unknown percentage of churchgoers, but 1.7% of the population when measured in 2014.

The Non-White churchgoers are generally much younger than the White churchgoers – the average age of Non-Whites is 33 and for Whites it is 55! Exactly a quarter, 25%, of all those going to church in Scotland aged between 25 and 34 are Non-White as are 15% of those aged 16 to 24 and 12% of those aged 35 to 44, with smaller percentages in other age-groups.

The average age of Scottish church leaders was 57, which varied very little by denomination. Baptist and Other Presbyterian leaders were slightly younger, Scottish Episcopal and Independent church leaders slightly older. One seventh, 15%, of all leaders were under 45, while almost a fifth, 21%, were serving beyond the normal retirement age of 65. A tenth of Roman Catholic priests, 10%, were 75 or over, as were 14%, one in seven, of Independent church leaders.

With two-fifths, 38%, of leaders currently aged between 55 and 64, there are likely to be hundreds of retirements over the next ten years. It may be, however, that lay leaders in the congregations may be able to take up some of their responsibilities.

The average age of a leader varied across the country. The youngest leaders were in Aberdeen City, East and Mid Lothian, West Dunbartonshire and East Ayrshire, with the oldest being in Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Scottish Borders and the Shetlands as well as Councils near to Glasgow.

Churchmanship of Churchgoers

Churchmanship is a church's "ethos". Ministers were asked to tick up to three boxes describing their congregation's theological position. Many respondents wrote in words like Traditional, Reformed, Presbyterian, Church of Scotland, and so on in the "Other" box. A complete list of the tick combinations will be given in *UK Church Statistics No 3* to be published later in 2017.

The ethos words were not defined in any way on the form or elsewhere. They would therefore have slightly different meanings for ministers of different theological persuasions. This means that their numbers or percentages will not be a collection of totally homogeneous answers.

Churchmanship of Scottish churchgoers, 1994-2025E

Churchmanship	Evan: Reformed	Evan: Main.	Evan: Charis	Evangelical TOTAL	Low Church	Liberal	Broad	Catholic	Total	
1994	79,930	67,840	31,190	178,960	107,570	29,790	69,300	84,100	221,490	691,120
2002	62,060	72,580	28,560	163,200	85,050	23,880	51,710	62,390	183,900	570,130
% change 02-16	-44	+4	+2	-15	-42	-40	-47	-44	-32	-32
2016	34,540	75,520	29,030	139,090	49,100	14,390	27,380	35,080	124,470	389,510
1994 % of total	12	10	4	26	16	4	10	12	32	100
2002 % of total	11	13	5	29	15	4	9	11	32	100
2016 % of total	9	19	7	35	13	4	7	9	32	100

These ticks were then turned into one of six "churchmanship" groups used for analysis purposes. These groups, determined by the various tick combinations made, are: Broad, Liberal, Reformed, Evangelical, Low Church or Catholic. "Catholic" is not synonymous with "Roman Catholic" although the majority of Roman Catholic churches did so describe themselves. A number of Scottish Episcopal Churches described themselves as Catholic, as did others.

As there are many Evangelical congregations these were broken down further into: Reformed Evangelical, Mainstream Evangelical and Charismatic Evangelical. "Reformed", "Evangelical" and "Charismatic" were either boxes for ticking or for writing in under "Other." "Mainstream" is not one of these words, but is used to differentiate those ticking just "Evangelical" from the other two groups to save confusion.

It is assumed that all those in a particular church are of the churchmanship persuasion given by the minister, something almost certainly not true. However, when surveys have been taken of churchmanship by asking individual attenders, it has usually been found that between two-thirds and three-quarters of a congregation are of a similar churchmanship description to that given by the minister. There is therefore a certain amount of "swings and roundabouts" in the attendance numbers in each category of churchmanship.

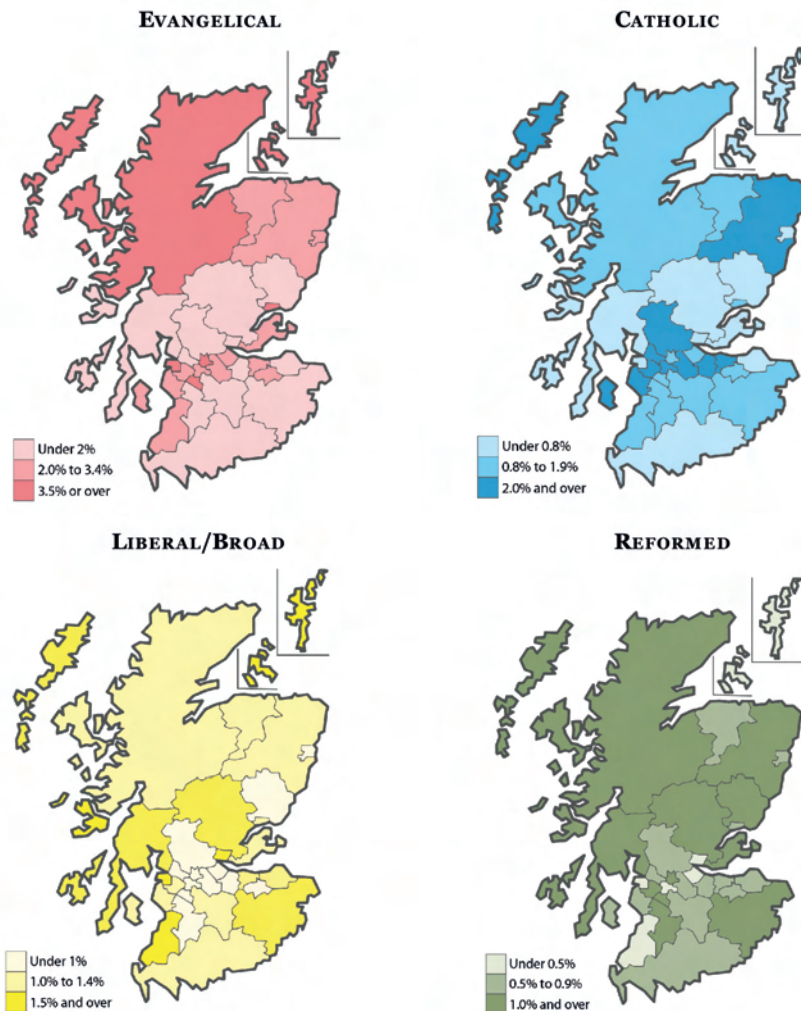
The Table shows that Evangelicals only declined at half the rate that occurred across all churches (-15% compared with -32%). Within the Evangelical group, it is the Reformed Evangelicals which have dropped most, paralleling the decline in the Reformed group (-44% and -42%). Mainstream Evangelicals and Charismatic Evangelicals have grown slightly, reflecting the rise of the Pentecostals, although these are only a quarter, 25%, of all Charismatics.

The proportion of Scottish churchgoers who are Evangelical has been increasing over the last 20 years, whereas the other types of churchmanship are either static or declining. Catholic churchmanship, a very important and large segment of the whole, similar to the proportion of Evangelicals, has not changed proportionately but remained at a third of the total, 32%, nor has the Low Church percentage changed (a much smaller 4%). A very small number of Roman Catholics describe themselves as Evangelical, a number which is slowly growing, up a quarter, 28%, to 3,600 in 2016 from 2,800 in 1994.

There are slightly more Evangelical men than Evangelical women (with most of the difference being more Charismatic men), rather more Catholic men than Catholic women, and twice as many Liberal women as Liberal men.

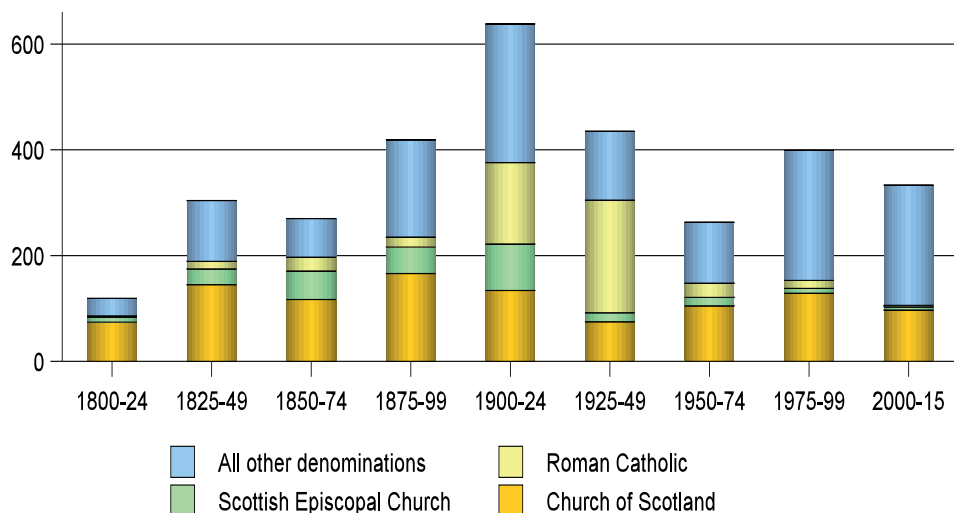
Catholics are strongest in the Roman Catholic corridor between Glasgow and Edinburgh and also Aberdeenshire, 23%, because of the Poles. Evangelicals are concentrated more in the cities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and the North-West, Catholics around Glasgow and the North-West.

Churchgoers who are Liberal or Broad are strongest in the Islands and central Scotland outside the Glasgow-Edinburgh belt of Councils, where they are generally fairly weak as a percentage of the population. Reformed churchgoers, on the other hand, are strong in the north of Scotland (except Moray) and also in East Ayrshire, the Renfrew shires and the Scottish Borders.



When Scottish Churches were started

Scottish churches built or congregations started in 19th to 21st centuries



The large amount of church building/planting which went on in Scotland in the first quarter of the twentieth century is clearly seen from this chart, as well as the relatively small number built in the third quarter – a complete contrast to England where a large number of churches were built to replace those bombed during WWII. The large number of Roman Catholic churches built in the first half of the 20th century is also clearly shown.

In addition, the chart reveals the very different nature of church plants being started in the 21st century where only 3% are either Scottish Episcopal Church or Roman Catholic and 29% Church of Scotland (which are mostly congregational mergers, not strictly new churches), leaving two-thirds, 68%, to all the other denominations, especially the Smaller Denominations (which includes immigrant or “Overseas National” churches), Independent churches and Pentecostals.

MESSY CHURCHES



Messy Churches were included together for convenience as a unit within “Small Denominations,” and not included with their particular denomination. They are a prominent part of a general description of church planting often now called “Fresh Expressions”. Determining exactly how many Messy Churches there are in Scotland is not easy. The Messy Church Administrator reckons there are 600 in Scotland in 2016, but this number is an estimate. The number included in the total number of congregations is 82, 2% of the 3,689 churches in Scotland. Many churches run a Messy Church but these do not always meet monthly, and their numbers would thus be excluded from Census counts. Most churches see them as part of their normal church activities and not as being potential church plants or new congregations. However, the official definition of a Fresh Expression is a group which has the expectation of eventually becoming a separate church congregation.

They are essentially informal gatherings where food, fun and fellowship are all important ingredients. Many families with young children are attracted to them but, in addition, many who used to attend church regularly but have lapsed (part of the “invisible” Christians) have re-started coming to these groups. Worship and a warm welcome are key attractive characteristics.

Why should they be started? Essentially for a theological reason – God is missional and wants us prayerfully to join Him. Or, as Donald McGavran, the founder of the “church growth” movement in the 20th century, put it, “God wants His lost sheep found”.

Statistics of Messy Churches

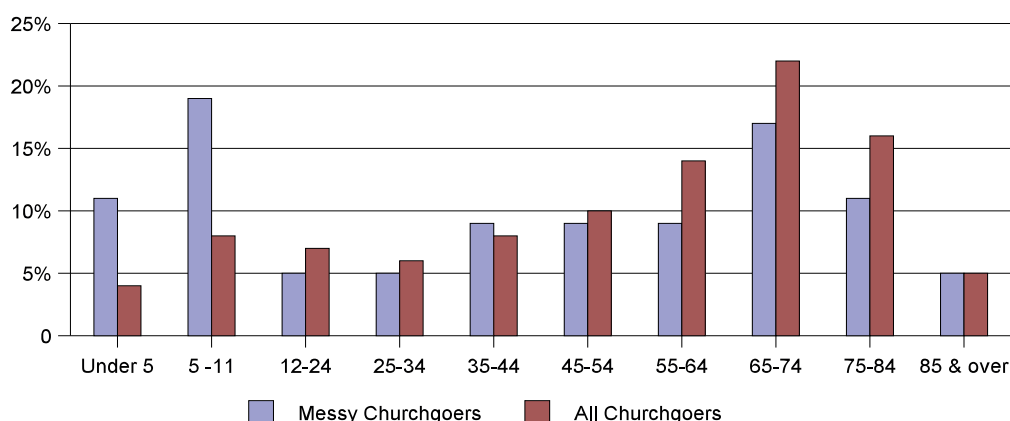
The average length of time they had been running in 2016 was 4 years, excluding one which started in 2001; including it puts the average at 5 years! The average size was 48 people. The smallest was 16 and the largest 108. A third, 32%, had fewer than 40 people, two-fifths, 39%, had between 40 and 60, and the remaining 29% had 60 or more. The Church of Scotland ones were larger than the others, 60 compared with 35. Messy Churches seem to occur more in the east of Scotland than the west!

Most would define their mission as Evangelical, but a minority described themselves as Liberal, Reformed or Low Church. Many Messy Church leaders are lay people.

Age of attenders

The bar-chart indicates there are many more children under 12 present at Messy Church services than in services generally, which is to be expected. However, the pattern of others at these churches is very similar to the general pattern of churchgoers in Scottish churches, although they have a few more adults aged 35-44, these being the parents. It is significant that Messy Churches do not, at present, attract any greater proportion of teenagers.

Age of those attending Scottish Messy Churches and all congregations, 2016



Reaching the Local Community

Four organisations kindly sponsored specific questions on the Census form, thereby enabling the necessary funding for the project to be available.

One of these sponsors was Alpha Scotland. In 2015 some 940 *Alpha* courses had taken place across Scotland, through 630 churches, an average of 1.5 courses per church, and an average of 17% of all churches. The attendance at each course, *Youth Alpha* or *Adult Alpha*, was 12 people. The Baptist churches held the most (36% of their churches), followed by the Pentecostals (23%), Smaller Denominational churches (22%) and the Church of Scotland (20%). Roman Catholic churches held the fewest (5%). 20% of churches had held an evangelistic course other than *Alpha*, of which half, 10%, were for *Christianity Explored*. Presbyterian churches other than the Church of Scotland were most likely to have run this course (39% of churches).

What would help a church support a charity? Answers were:

- 77% Helps us direct our donations to specific projects/themes/places
- 73% Links our faith to the issues it works on
- 40% Helps us pray for the issues it works on
- 15% Helps us campaign on the issues it works on
- 19% Think financial support is more useful to charities than non-financial support.

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Providing Facts for Forward Planning

A milestone! This is the 50th issue of this popular bi-monthly bulletin. It has hundreds of regular readers, who clearly enjoy it judging by the comments they make. "This is worth producing; keep at it," they say. "I really enjoy the articles."

The aim of *FutureFirst* is to provide facts, comment and stimulated thinking for those interested in the future of the church and wanting to plan forwards for their local (or wider) strategy. Those who already subscribe will have known instantly this issue is not like the previous 49 publications! Normally it is only 6 pages long, and has regular features like Snippets, Snowflakes, Reflection and Humour.

Not this time! So many salient details have emerged from the fourth Scottish Church Census that it's worth spending a whole issue digging at its findings as it should be of interest and concern for all church leaders, Scottish or otherwise. The trends shown here are not unique to Scotland, but the next issue is back to normal!

FutureFirst comes from Brierley Consultancy, an organisation set up by the former director of Christian Research, Dr Peter Brierley, but aided by others in the team. We hope you enjoy this 50th issue! If you would like to receive it on a regular basis, then please complete the form opposite (or make a copy of this page first) and return to the address below.

This issue of *FutureFirst* summarises some of the main findings of the fourth Scottish Church Census, the full results of which will be published mid-2017 in the book *Growth Amidst Decline*, What the Census Revealed, at £9.99 (ADBC Publishers). As a special incentive, we are offering those subscribing to *FutureFirst* from this particular issue a subscription for £15 instead of the regular £20, and for those taking out a subscription they have the option to purchase a copy of *Growth Amidst Decline*, for £7.50 instead of £9.99, a saving of 25%.

Your details will not be passed on to any third party. Return the form to:

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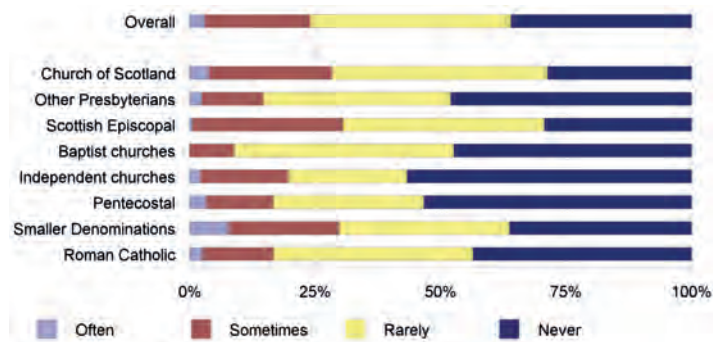
The key motivation for supporting a charity which helps the poor was whether its work fitted in with church's vision. Secondly it needed to have a global concern, and thirdly churches wanted the ability to be to support specific project.

A fifth, 22%, of churches had given or been involved with Tearfund over the last 2 years, and 54% had taken part in Christian Aid Week.

Two-thirds, 65%, of churches made advocacy about Scottish environmental conservation their concern within a church's denomination, and almost the same proportion, 61%, about international environmental projects. Local poverty-reduction charities were supported financially by five-sixths, 86%, of churches, and 84% for international poverty-reduction policies.

Teaching on legacy giving was most undertaken by the Scottish Episcopal Church, Smaller Denominations and the Church of Scotland and least by Baptist churches.

Teaching on legacy giving by denomination



If you would find 7 copies of each issue of *FutureFirst* more useful for your team than just one copy, then the subscription is £25 instead of the usual £32.

YES! Please send me the next six issues of *FutureFirst* and/or *Growth Amidst Decline*

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