



A Survey of Parish Life

This report has been prepared by the Church Property Trustees as a resource for the wider church

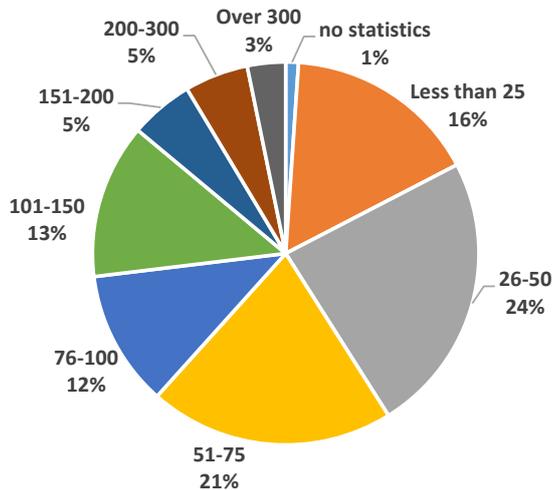
Our Congregations

Key findings:

- While we have a lot of small parishes, most people worship with at least 100 others
- Participation is higher at larger parishes and they are also more likely to grow

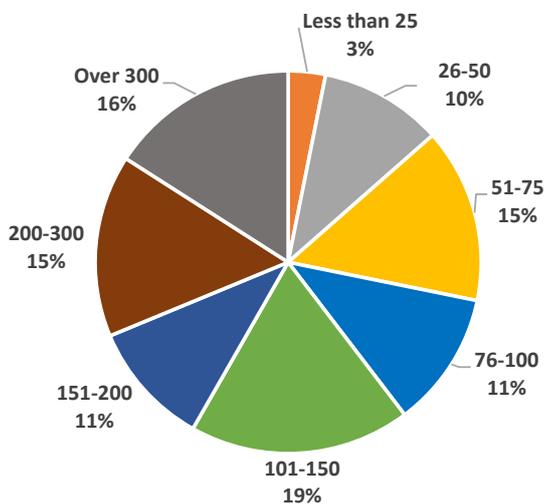
- ❖ On an average June Sunday about 26,000 adults and 5,200 young people and children worship at one of our 375 parishes. About 10% of the population goes to church on any given Sunday, and about 20% at least once a month, and we estimate that about 9% of worshippers are at a Presbyterian or Union parish.
- ❖ Most Presbyterian parishes are small –about two-thirds of parishes have less than 75 at worship.

The size of parishes

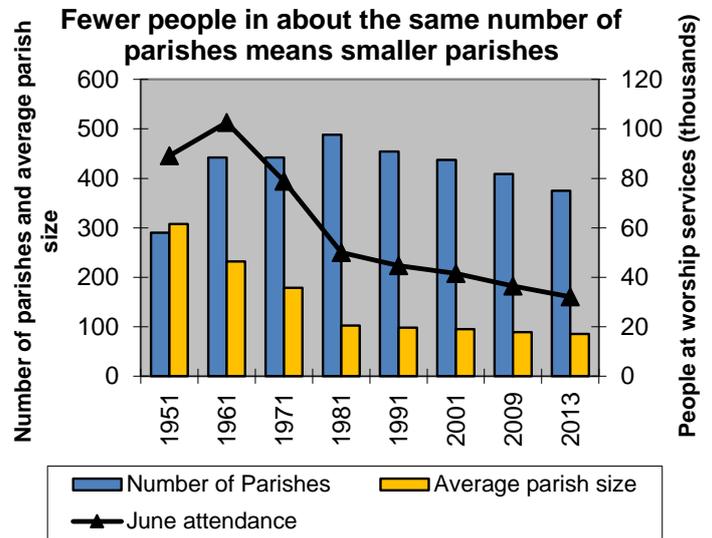


- ❖ But most people belong to large parishes. Almost three-quarters of us worship with more than 100 others and almost one-third with more than 200.

Where people worship

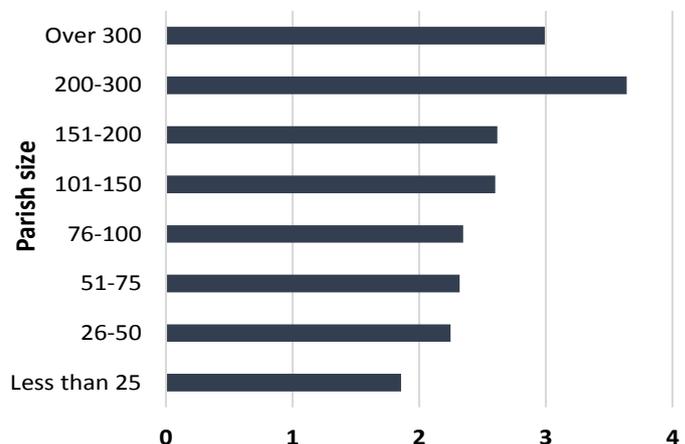


- ❖ In 2013 the average parish had 83 people at worship. In 1951 it had 308. One reason for smaller parishes is that the number at worship has dropped significantly, but the number of parishes has not fallen by anywhere near as much.



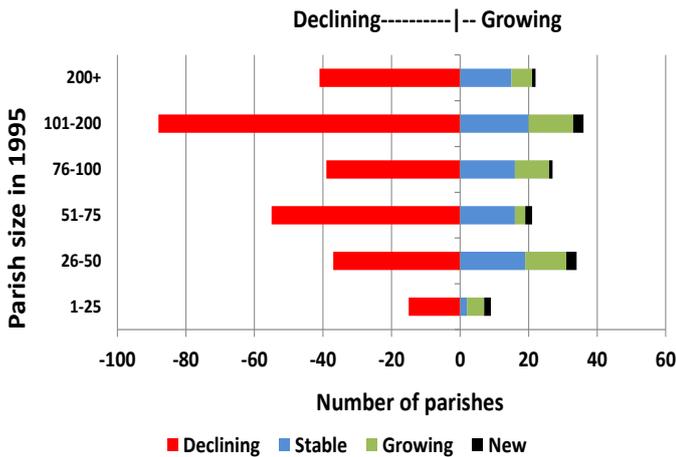
- ❖ On average, Union parishes are smaller than Presbyterian parishes, with a 60 at worship compared to 93. They also have fewer youth and children (9 per parish on average) than Presbyterian parishes (19 on average).
- ❖ Members of larger parishes go to church more often. Comparing the roll with the attendance, members of larger parishes go to church at least 3 times a month, while those at smaller parishes go around twice. One reason may be that larger parishes have more worship events for people to choose from. This is particularly true for churches with over 200 at Sunday worship.

Average number of times a month those on the roll attended worship



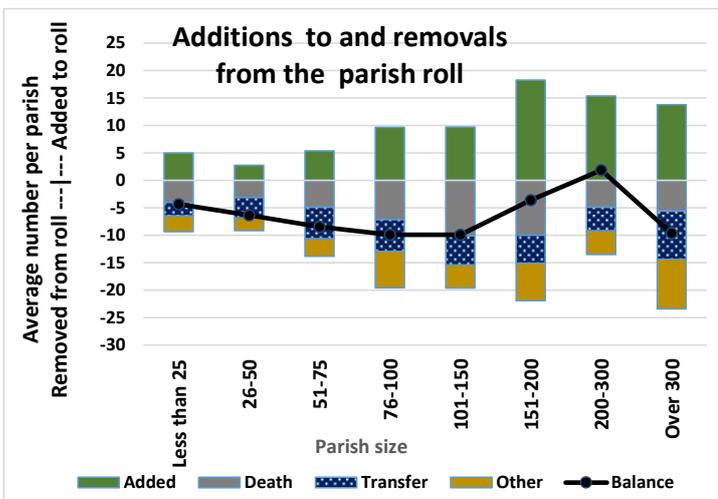
- ❖ The drop in the number of times people go to church has been a significant additional reason why congregations are smaller. In 1961 the average person on the roll attended church 6.3 times a month, but by 2013 average attendance was 3 times a month.
- ❖ Parishes of all sizes grow and decline. A study of parishes between 1995 and 2007 showed large parishes are more likely to grow. Parishes with under 25 at worship have little likelihood of growing

Growth between 1995 and 2007



Source: Based on a linked database of church statistics by MN Galt

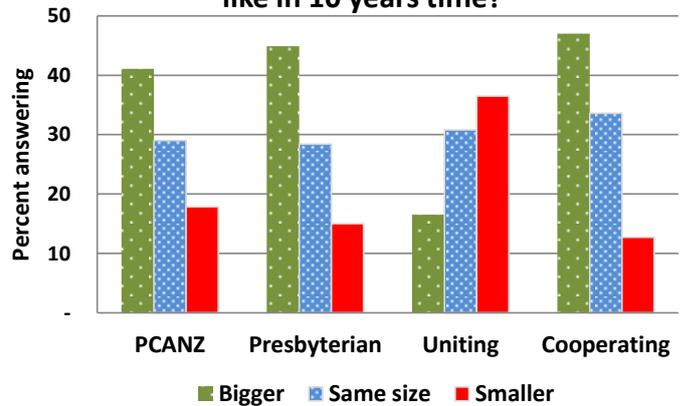
- ❖ All parishes added and lost members on the roll, but the middle size parishes had the most pronounced losses. This was because they had a higher proportion of people who were removed because they had died. Only parishes between 200 and 300 at worship had an overall increase in their roll.



- ❖ Members of Presbyterian and co-operating parishes were far more likely to think their parishes would be bigger in 10 years' time than those in Union parishes. This may reflect the fact that Union parishes had significantly older members. Presbyterians also

thought their parishes were likely to be a mix of all ages and diverse in terms of ethnicity.

What do you think your parish will look like in 10 years time?



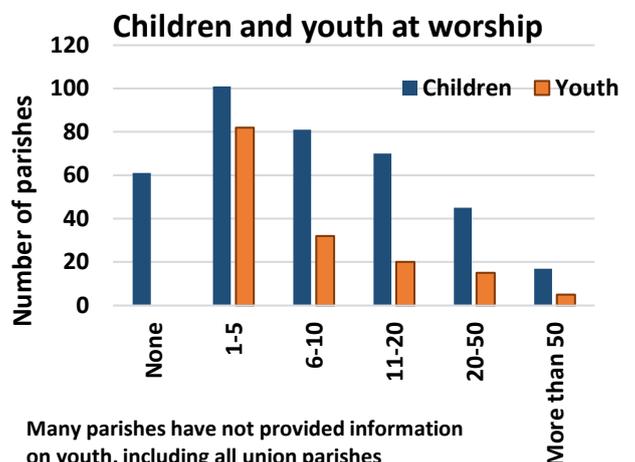
- ❖ Nationally, the Church Life survey found that for every 10 long-standing members (10 years or more) there were on average 14 new members (5 years or less). But Presbyterian parishes had 9 newer members for each 10 longstanding members; and Uniting parishes had only 4; and Co-operating parishes had slightly over 5.

Our Children and Youth

Key findings:

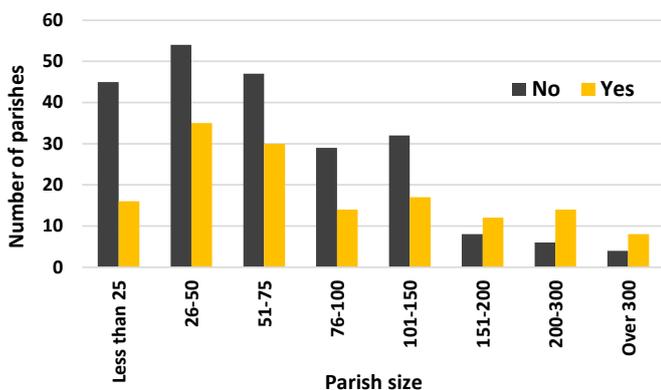
- Most parishes have some children and youth at worship, but many have only a few
- Not all small parishes are "greying" and some have a healthy proportion of children. On the other hand, some middle-sized and large parishes do not.
- Parishes of all sizes are leading people to a faith commitment.

- ❖ Most parishes have some children at worship, but many have only a few.



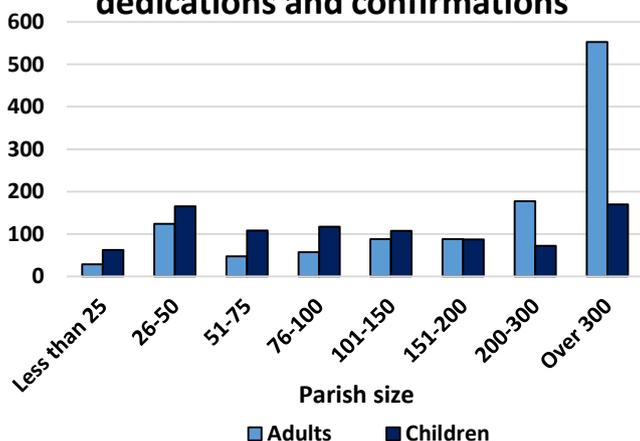
- ❖ In 2013 Presbyterian parishes (but not Union/cooperating parishes) were asked to count the number of youth (aged 13-17) at church. This shows that the churches only have a few young people, however, as many churches did not give these figures they should be taken as indicative only.
- ❖ There is often an assumption that only large parishes have young people, but children are also found in many small parishes. One statistical “rule of thumb” is that a healthy church has about 20% of its congregation under the age of 13. On this basis there are some healthy small congregations and some unhealthy large ones.

A healthy balance of children and youth?



- ❖ Parishes with over 150 at worship are more likely than not to have a healthy balance, but almost two-thirds of parishes with under 75, and a quarter of parishes under 25 meet the 20% criteria. These parishes could be thought of as “family” parishes with a long term future, rather than “greying” parishes that may not.
- ❖ Adults make their profession of faith in parishes of all sizes, but those with over 300 are much more likely to have significant numbers of adult confirmations, baptisms and dedications.

Number of baptisms, dedications and confirmations



- ❖ The number of adult confirmations/baptisms varies from year to year, but generally there are around

1,000 and about half are in our ethnic congregations and half in our standard ones.

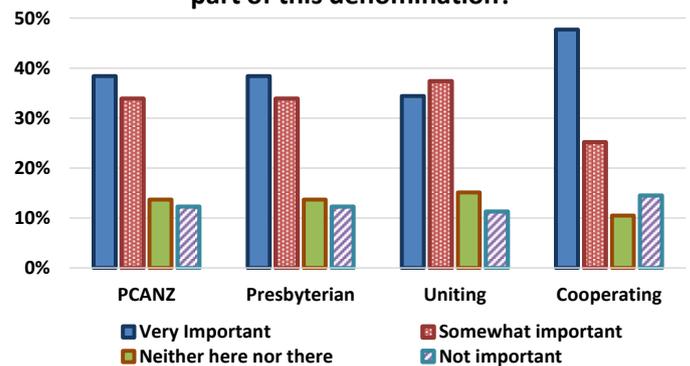
About us and our faith

Key findings:

- The Church Life survey showed we are committed to our faith and enjoy our church life
- Traditional, evangelical and charismatic traditions have the largest followings, though none of these is dominant.

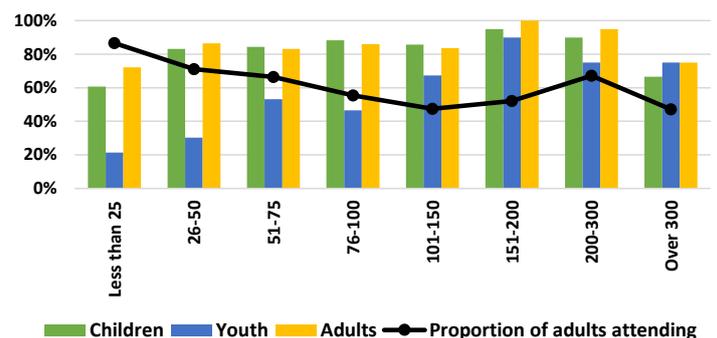
- ❖ In 2011 the Church Life survey gave the opportunity for 7,642 Presbyterians, and 1,671 people from Union/Cooperating parishes to give us their views.
- ❖ Most thought it was important to be part of the denomination. Only about 12% thought it was not important at all. This was the same whether we belonged to a Presbyterian or a union parish.

How important is it that this congregation is part of this denomination?



- ❖ The survey showed that we are very committed to our faith and enjoy our church life. Nearly two-thirds read the Bible either every day or a few times a week. This was about the same as Catholics, Anglicans and Brethren, but lower than Baptists.
- ❖ Almost half of all adults are involved in a Christian formation group, such as study group or a choir. Attendance is particularly high in our smallest parishes.

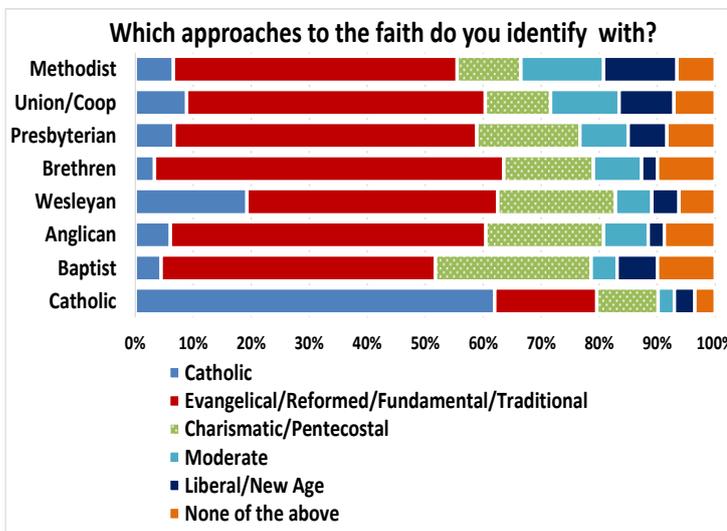
Small groups: the proportion of parishes with them, and proportion of adults attending



- ❖ Children are also likely to have a Christian formation group, but Youth are unlikely to have their own groups in small parishes, and even some of our larger parishes do not offer youth groups during the week.
- ❖ In all denominations, people over 45 are more likely to regularly read their Bible than young people, and particularly than people under 25.
- ❖ About two-thirds thought our parish has encouraged us to use our gifts and skills in our congregation. This was very similar to the findings for other denominations.
- ❖ Over 80% of us usually or nearly always find the presence of God evident in our services, and find the preaching and teaching helpful, and feel encouraged after a worship services.
- ❖ The table below shows what people chose when asked for the top three things they appreciated most.

The percentage naming this in their top 3	
Worship, music and singing	58
Sermons and teaching	40
Holy communion	28
Practical care for each other	23
Wider community outreach	22
Social activities	20
Ministry for children and youth	15

- ❖ The theological traditions that Presbyterians mostly identified with were traditional (23%), evangelical (18%), and charismatic (10%). Liberal was chosen by 6%. About 8% of people did not identify with any of these traditions, and these were disproportionately young people.



- ❖ All churches tend to attract highly qualified people. 32% of Presbyterians in the Church Life Survey had a degree or post-graduate qualification, compared with 14% in the labour force. This was slightly lower than for all churches, as denominations with younger congregations tend to have more people with university degrees
- ❖ Most adults were in their first marriage (58%) or widowed (15%). Less than 1% were in a de facto relationship, compared to 16% in the 2013 census, and this was not higher for younger people.

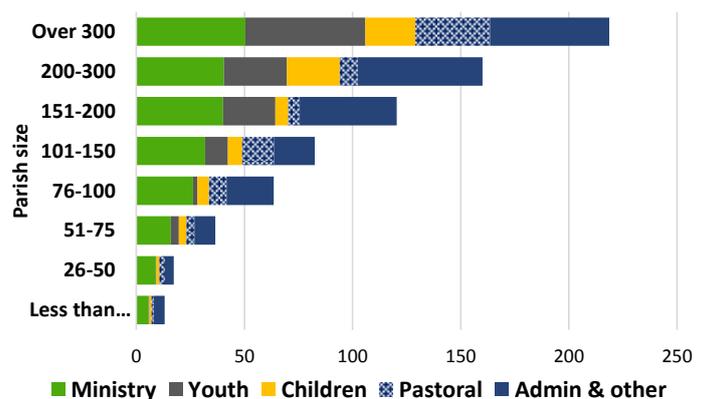
Leadership and resources

Key findings:

- Larger parishes are able to put more effort into youth, children and pastoral care. Most of the increased leadership is voluntary.
- Presbyterians are not particularly generous givers, though on average they give \$1,250 per adult attender

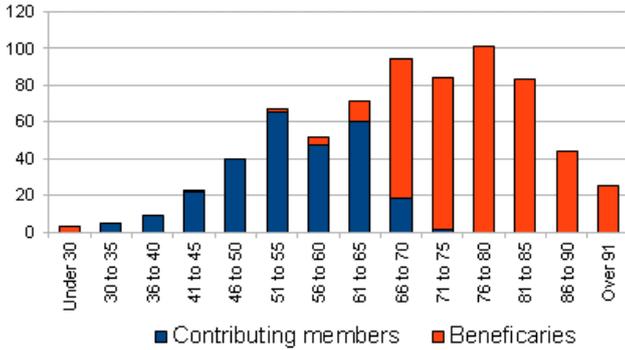
- ❖ Parishes have two resources that make a difference – people and financial resources
- ❖ While churches of all sizes have about number of people in leadership as a ratio of those attending worship, larger parishes have more hours particularly of voluntary leadership. This means they are able to undertake a wider range of activities. As parishes increase in size they put more of their time into youth, children and pastoral care.

Number of paid and voluntary workers



- ❖ While most of our ministers are older, there has been a significant increase in the number of younger ministers in recent years.

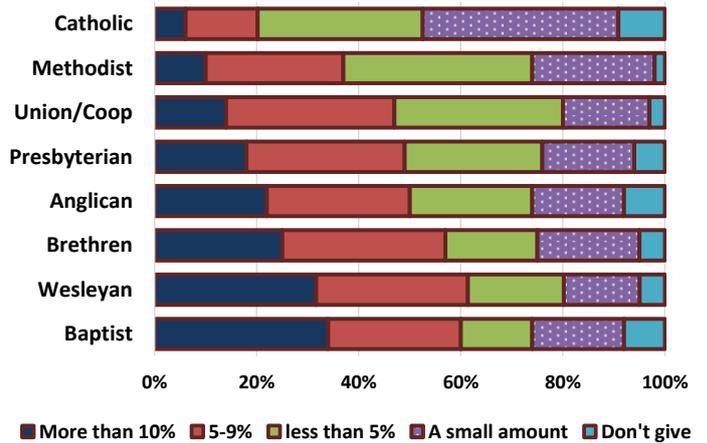
Active and Retired Ministers



Source: Beneficiary Fund annual report

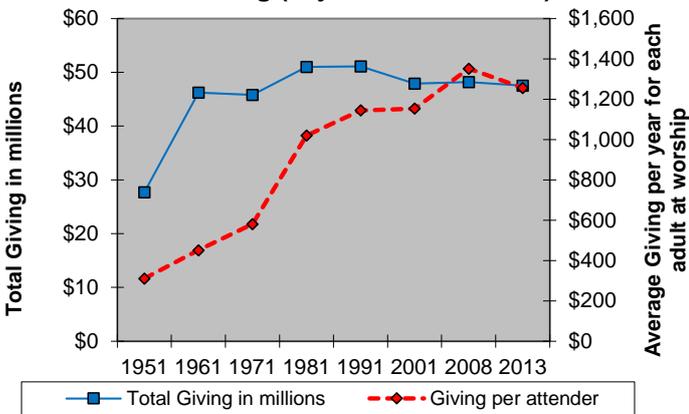
- ❖ On average parishes receive about \$1,250 per year in offerings for each adult attending worship. This amount does not vary significantly across parishes of different sizes. But the amount of the parish income that is from offerings does vary, with small parishes receiving far more of the income from other sources.
- ❖ Since 1951 real giving (after inflation) per adult at worship has risen four-fold. The increase in giving has to a large extent offset the loss of members so that, in total, the church has had about the same amount of funding for its mission.

Giving as a percentage of income

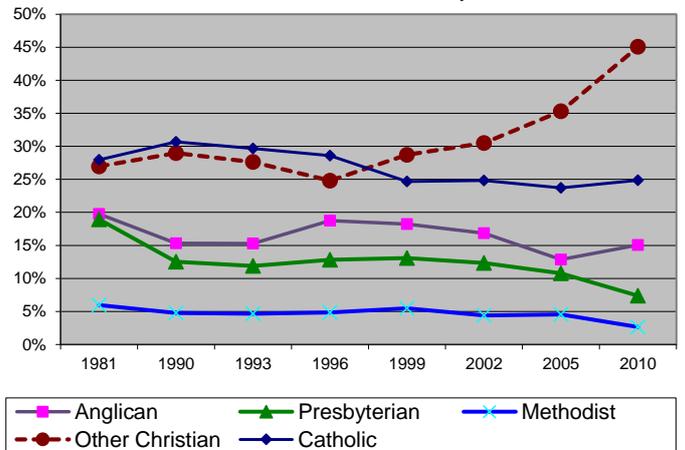


- ❖ It is very difficult to get good information on where people are going to church because increasingly church attendance is happening outside of the main denominations. While the numbers below are not exact, the evidence from surveys of the population suggest that now about half of the people who are in church on a Sunday are not in one of the historic denominations.

Real Giving (adjusted for inflation)



What Church are they going to? Evidence from surveys



- ❖ The Church Life survey asked what proportion of their income people gave. Compared to other denominations, there are relatively few Presbyterians who give 10% or more of their income, and a relatively high proportion less than 5%.

Source: Calculated from the New Zealand Electoral survey and the 2010 ISSP survey. These numbers are indicative only as the sample sizes are quite small

- ❖ The proportion of worshippers outside of the main denominations is not only because there are more of them. It is also because they go to church much more frequently.

Some information on the sources of these statistics.

In all cases parishes are grouped by the total number at worship (including youth and children). The most recent year's data was used for parishes that had not supplied statistics in 2013 statistics.

Unless otherwise indicated these statistics are taken either from the Presbyterian Church's June annual statistics and the combined report of the Presbyterian parishes that took part in the Church Life Survey in early 2011.

This report was prepared by Dr M N Galt, July 2014.

How to use your parish's June statistics to assist your leadership

Your June statistics, combined with the information in this short report, can be a guide to how your parish is going compared to other similar parishes. Ask someone to do the basic calculations below and then as a Session/Parish council consider what the numbers may tell you.

The preparation:

Get your latest June statistics – if you don't have them to hand you can download them from the national [Presbyterian church website](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz). Write the following key statistics in here

The number of adults at worship		The number of additions to the roll**	
The number of youth at worship**		The number removed from the roll**	
The number of children at worship		The total amount of offerings	
Add these together to get the total number at worship		The total amount spent on Ministers (including accommodation)	
The total number of people on the roll (both members and associates)		The total spending	
Finally, you will need the population living near your church. The easiest way to get this is to go to www.mashblock.co.nz and put the address of your worship centre. Then click on Area Unit at the top. It will then show a map and the number of people living in the area. You want the population that is naturally centred on your location and this will probably mean adding together a number of neighbouring area units. When you have the number put it here.			
** These are only available for Presbyterian parishes, not union or cooperating			

If your parish took part in the Church Life Survey, you will also find it has useful information.

How well are you meeting the needs of your members?

There are two key metrics which have been shown to indicate the strength of your member's commitment

1. Divide the number of people on the roll by the number of adults at worship. _____. This gives the average number of times a month they come to worship. **How does this compare with the graph on page 1? What might make them come more often?**
2. Divide the total offerings by the number of adults at worship. _____. Compare this with \$1,250. **If it is a lot lower, is this an indication of a lack of commitment? If it is a lot higher, is it because your circumstances are putting a strain on your members.**

The Church Life survey reports 3, 4 and 5 may give you a fuller picture of what your members think of your parish

How well is your parish placed to meet the needs of the future?

There are two key metrics for looking at how well your parish is going.

1. Divide the number of children attending worship by the total number at worship. _____. Parishes that grow generally have over 20%. Compare your results with those on page 3. **What conclusions do you draw?**
2. Subtract the number of removals from the roll from the number of additions _____. **How do you compare to the graph on page 2? What is the key issue?** You may want to also look at the kind of removals you have.
3. Divide the amount spent on Ministers by the total spending. _____. **Parishes that spend over 50% tend to not have enough for other leadership.** You may like to consider how you compare to the leadership distribution on page 4.

Report 2 of the church life survey lets you compare the ratio of new to old members to the figures quoted on page 2.

How well are you meeting your community's spiritual needs?

Multiply your population figure with the factor below, which is the approximate rate of attendance in each area. Compare this with your total Sunday attendance figure. Over the country as a whole the Presbyterian Church gets this proportion of the population to worship. _____ **Are you reaching your population? If not, which groups are missing from your fellowship?**

Factor: Northland and West Coast, 0.003; Otago and Southland, 0.015; Rest of NZ 0.007

Consider your neighbouring churches of all denominations. **Do you think any of them meeting your community's spiritual needs better? If so, what can you learn from them?**