



A Statistical Overview of Parish Life

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

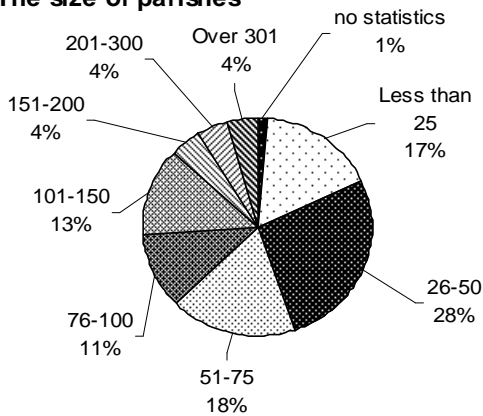
Congregation size and worship

Key findings:

- Most people worship with at least 100 others
- Larger parishes have more worship events
- As parish size increases, so does the proportion of the roll attending services

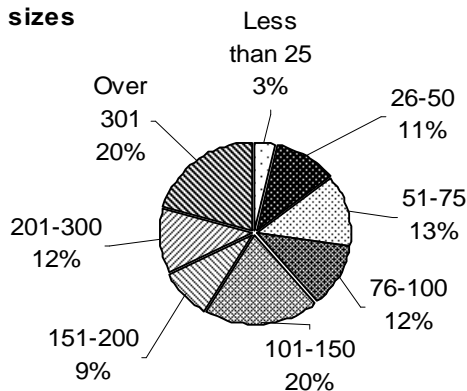
- On an average Sunday in June 2008, 29,372 adults and 6,302 children attended our 416 parishes. About 10% of the population is at church on any one Sunday (and 20% attend at least once a month). This suggests about 9% of worshippers are at Presbyterian churches.
- Most Presbyterian parishes are small. Over 60 % of parishes have fewer than 75 at worship.

The size of parishes



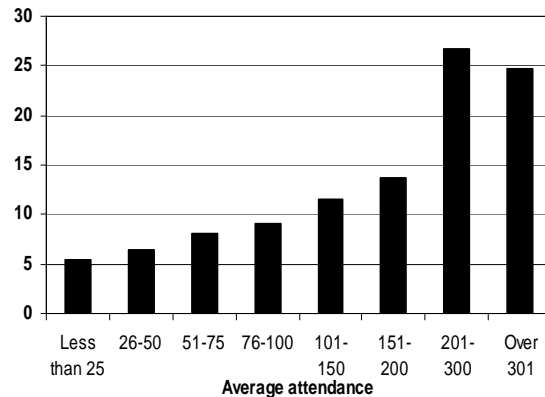
- Most people worship at the larger parishes. 60% of worshippers are at services with over 100 people, and over one third worship in congregations with over 200 people. Nearly one in five members worship in congregations with over 300 members.

The proportion of members attending churches of different sizes



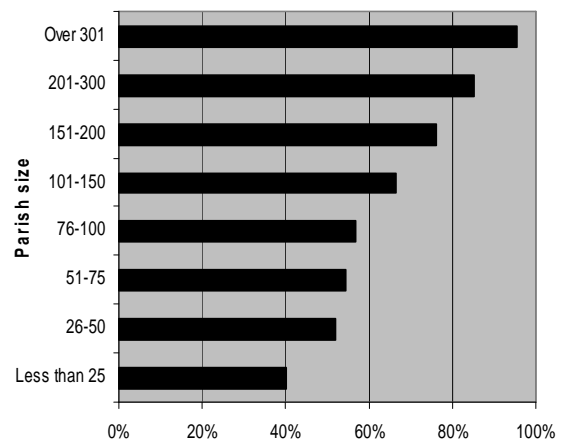
- Larger parishes have more worship events – in most size categories there is one worship event each month for every 10 worshippers.

Number of worship events each month



- Larger churches have a higher proportion of their roll at worship on Sunday, and smallest churches have only 40% of their roll at worship.

Attendance compared to Roll



- Union parishes are on average smaller than Presbyterian ones. Union parishes averaged 66 worshippers at services while Presbyterian parishes averaged 94. While 28% of parishes are union churches, only 12% of those at worship are at union services.

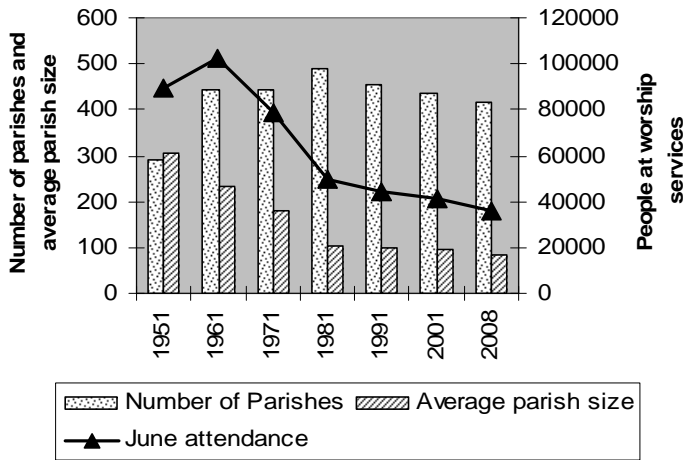
How have parishes changed?

Key findings:

- Parish numbers have not declined as much as have numbers of parishioners
- Large churches are less likely to decline
- Small churches find it hard to grow

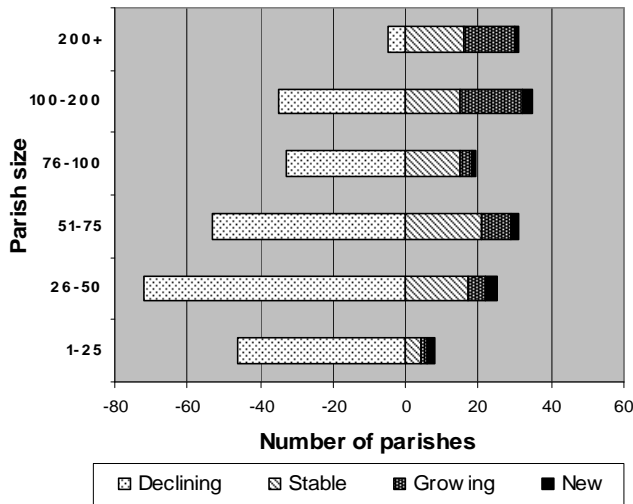
➤ In 2008, the average parish had 86 people at worship. In 1951, it had 308. While the number at worship has declined, the number of parishes has hardly changed.

Fewer people in the same number of parishes means smaller parishes



➤ Between 1995 and 2007, parishes of all sizes grew and parishes of all sizes declined. However, parishes with fewer than 75 at worship were the most vulnerable to decline. (Growth and decline are movements of more than 20%).

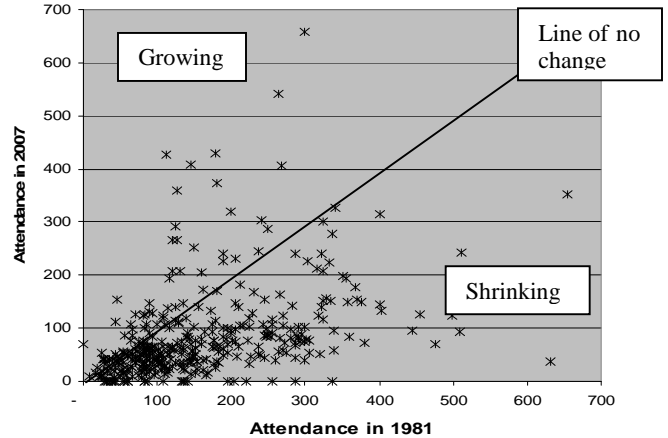
Growth and Decline



➤ Churches of all sizes grew, but a higher proportion of larger churches have experienced growth. New churches come in all sizes.

➤ Over the last twenty-five years, some of the largest churches have become quite small, and some of the middle size churches have become the largest. However, churches with under 100 people at services have found it hard to grow dramatically.

Change in size 1981 to 2007



People facts

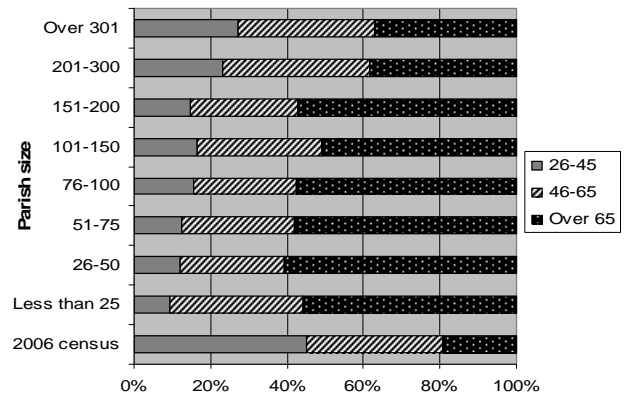
Key findings:

- Only congregations over 200 have significantly more young adults
- There is about one child for every five adults
- 46% of parishes have no youth programme

Adults

➤ All congregations have more members over 65 years old, and fewer between 25 and 45, than the country as a whole. Only congregations with over 200 at worship have a significantly younger profile.

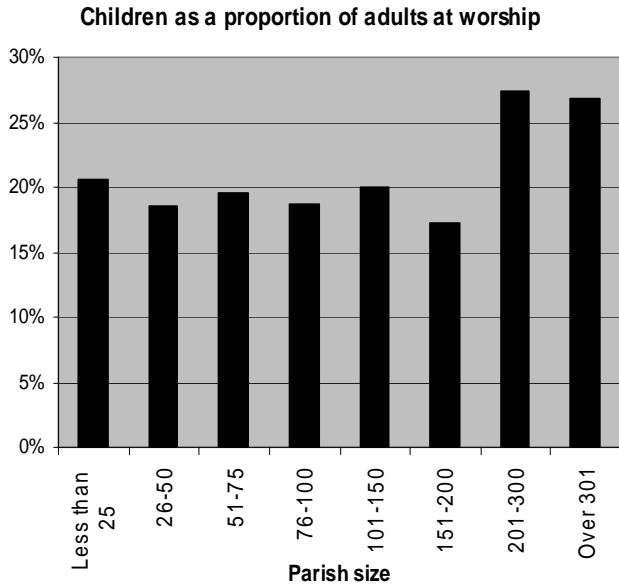
Proportion of adults in each age group



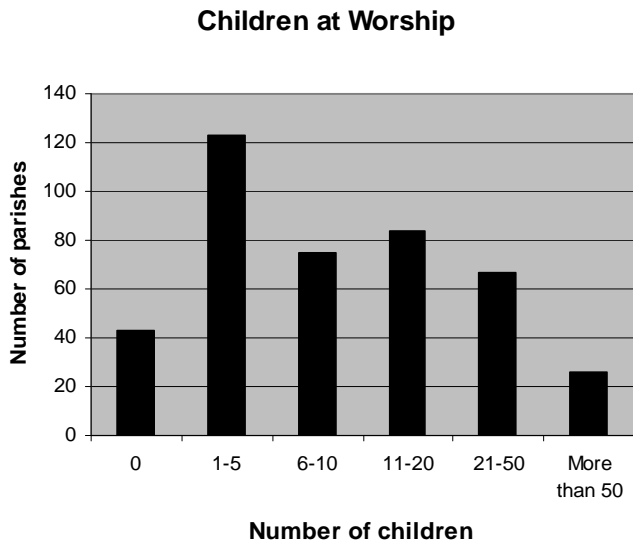
➤ While it varies from year to year, since 2000 about 1100 adults have been either baptised or confirmed each year. The trend since 2000 has been for this number to increase, and in 2008 there were 1495. These were split about equally between ethnic and non-ethnic congregations.

Children

- On average, one child under 13 for every five adults attends worship. Churches with between 150 and 200 adults at services have fewest children while those over 200 have most.



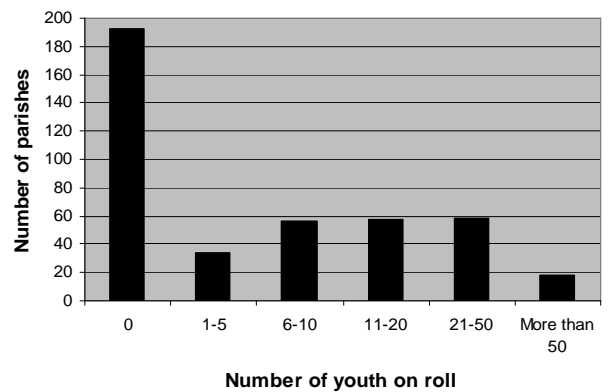
- Fifty churches recorded no children at worship. Most had less than 10, which may be too few for an effective children's programme. There were more than 50 children at 26 parishes.



Young people aged 13-17

- 46% of parishes do not have any young people in youth programmes. Most youth groups have between 6 and 50 young people. Only 4% of parishes have large youth programmes with more than 50 on the roll.

Youth on the roll of youth programmes



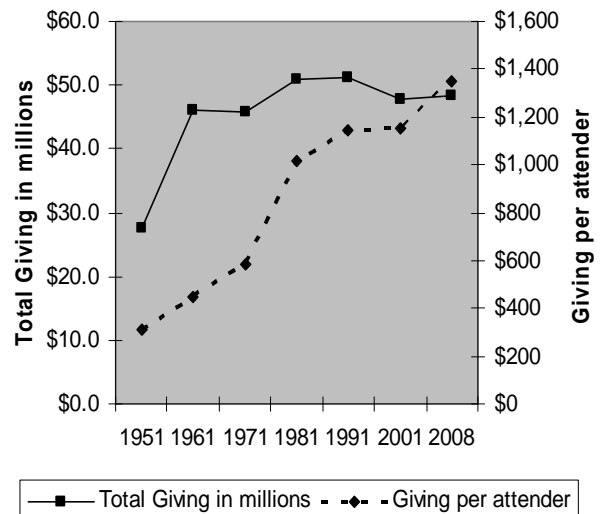
Giving

Key findings:

- Since 1950 giving has increased four-fold after taking into account inflation
- Large parishes are more dependent on offerings

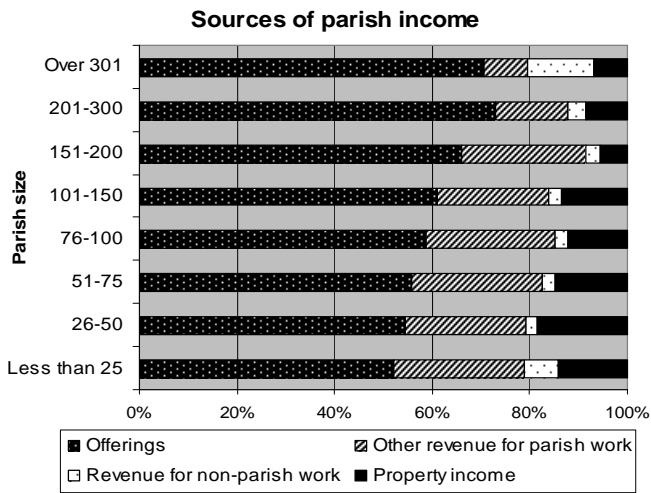
- Since 1951, giving per worshipper has increased more than four-fold (adjusting for inflation). Until 2000, the increased giving offset the loss due to declining attendance.

Giving adjusted for inflation

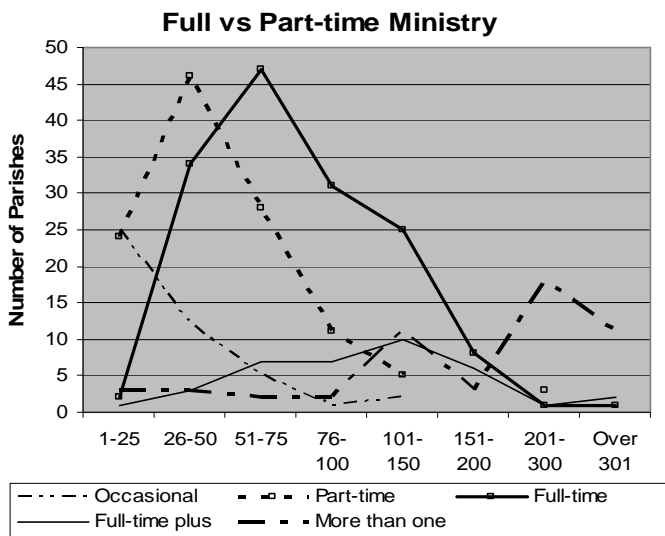


- In 2008, the average parish had \$141,000 in total revenue. While total income varied significantly by parish size, total revenue was a little less than \$2000 per adult worshipper.

- Large parishes are primarily dependent upon congregational giving and income from their parish activities. Smaller parishes raise more of their funds through revenue for non-parish work and income from investments.



- The largest expense for parishes was payment for ministry. On average this was 38% of all expenses.
- The amount each parish spent on ministry can be used as a guide to the type of ministry they had. This suggests that the smallest parishes have only occasional or part-time minister. A full-time minister is not common before a parish has over 50 worshippers, and team ministry is only dominant once parishes have over 200 worshippers.



Sources: This report is based on the annual statistics provided by the 416 parishes, and upon a linked data set of statistics from 458 parishes from 1981 to 2007 (which includes parishes which closed in that time.)
Prepared by Dr M N Galt April 2009.

Leadership

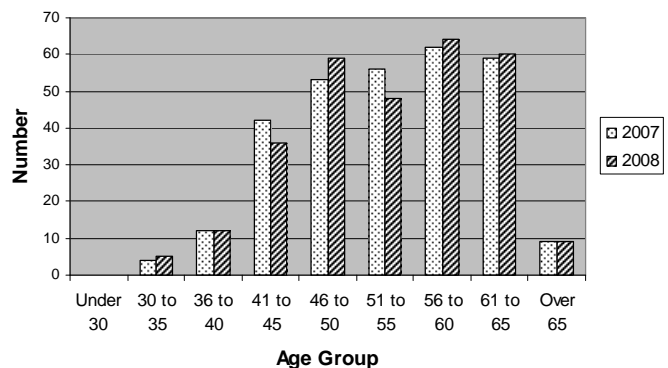
Key findings:

- About 40% of ministers will retire in the next ten years
- The leadership burden is significantly higher in parishes with fewer than 75 at worship

- As at June 2008, there were 291 ordained ministers. Not all of these were active in parish ministry, and some were in part-time ministry.
- The age profile of Presbyterian ministers shows that over the next four years approximately 60 ministers will reach the normal retirement age of 65, and in the next ten years approximately 40% of current ministers will retire.

Source: Beneficiary Fund annual report.

Age Profile of Contributing Members



- Parishes were asked to say how many leaders they had (either paid or unpaid) in different areas. The smallest parish had over 2.5 leadership positions for each person at worship, whereas the largest parishes had only 0.72. This suggests the time demand on parishioners reduces as parish size increases.

