

- Attention to timing and worship style
- Messy church

Cathedral congregations tend to have an older demographic but are finding new ways to respond.

Three cathedrals in the survey have actively developed new strategies for engaging with children, young people and their families. This is alongside their involvement with many young people through cathedral choirs.

Wakefield appointed a new “community missionary” in 2012 whose responsibilities included establishing a programme of outreach and Christian nurture for young people and families.

Southwell has recently created a new post and appointed a new member of staff who will lead its education team and serve as the new chaplain to the large comprehensive school.

Gloucester Cathedral has re-introduced children’s work including the development of a weekly “messy cathedral” and a monthly pre-school service.

In a child worshipper survey, conducted in four cathedrals, children were asked what they liked about cathedrals. They said:

“Everything. Children’s Church and everyone is friendly. Christingle, Christmas, Harvest Festival. I was christened here and it was amazing.” (Age 6)

“We get communion and get to see other friends and have drinks and biscuits.” (Age 7)

“You get a chance to learn and discover new things and you can worship with others to be closer to God.” (Age 12)

2 THE EFFECT OF AMALGAMATIONS



CHURCHES ARE MORE LIKELY TO GROW WHEN THERE IS ONE LEADER FOR ONE COMMUNITY

The term “amalgamations” refers to where two or more churches are grouped together under an incumbent – however that structure is named. Most amalgamations are benefices but pluralities and any other informal process whereby churches are grouped together are also covered by the term “amalgamations”.

The findings show that single church units under one leader are more likely to grow than when churches are grouped together.

Analysing data across a range of congregation size categories shows that amalgamations of churches are more likely to decline. Moreover, the larger the number of churches in the amalgamation the more likely they are to decline. This is exacerbated when amalgamations have more churches.

For Team Ministries there is no evidence that there is more numerical growth than for amalgamations. Team ministries are less likely to grow than non-teams and perform markedly worse than churches with their own incumbent.

The research team used five different categories of church size, based on attendance in 2006: 0-14; 15-29; 30-49; 50-99, 100+ in order to make accurate comparisons between different amalgamations.

“ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ”

1 Corinthians 3:6

BETWEEN 2006 AND 2011:

- Small churches (0-14 and 15-29) exhibit the most positive growth trends
- The mean values for the amount of growth decline as the size of church increases above 30

There is a strong negative trend between the more churches amalgamated together and the likelihood of decline (across all categories of church size)

In the larger church size categories (50-99; 100+) single church units still have the highest attendance and performed considerably better in terms of percentage change year on year than amalgamations of any size. Although it should be noted that

larger churches from 50 to 300 tend to decline, but very large churches, 300+, have been growing, albeit there are not very many of them.

Amalgamations and team ministries constitute 8,400 of the Church of England's 12,500 parishes (2011 data).

In 2011 (most recent statistics), 71% of the Church of England's parishes were in multi-parish teams or benefices.

In 1960 the figure was only 17%.

Source: Facts and figures about the Church of England. Prepared by the Statistical Unit of the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, published 1962.

CASE STUDY

RADFORD PARISH OF ALL SOULS AND ST PETER

Diocese: Southwell and Nottingham

Context: Urban Parish Churches

Growth: 2006 = 15; 2011 = 80+



Carolyn and Mark Gilmore were appointed as the lay ministers of Radford parish in 2006, after a five-year vacancy had seen the average congregation fall to about 15. The parish has two church buildings, All Souls and St Peters, which are complementary to each other, a traditional church and a community building suitable for more social outreach type projects.

Carolyn and Mark work alongside the Children's and Families Worker, Rachel, who is the only other paid

employee of the parish. Her work is considered key to the future and continued growth of the church as she engages with those families on the fringe of church as well as those who have never encountered church before. The parish staff team are also actively involved with the local primary schools. The social cohesion between schools and the church is very encouraging with Muslim and Sikh children and families regularly visiting the church. There is also a growing Messy Church. Today the parish sees around 80 regular weekly attendees to its three forms of church; St Peter's, All Souls and their Messy Church.

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, **but God made it grow.**”

1 Corinthians 3:6

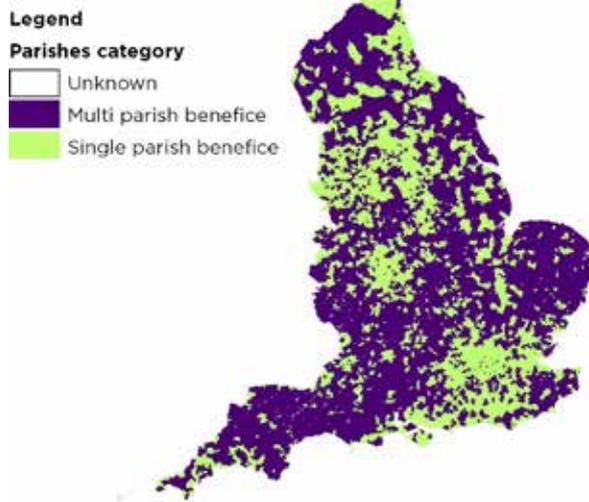


Fig.6: Map showing distribution of amalgamations.

“One vicar spoke of how she used to give much time to preparing people for baptism and confirmation saying ‘...for me one of the sadnesses is of going from having two parishes to having five and suddenly feeling I can’t do any of this anymore.’“

For clergy running these large amalgamations there is evidence to show that in many cases (with a few exceptions) their job becomes increasingly focussed on the burden of administration and buildings, and the task of sustaining Sunday worship; all of which can detract from other activities which have an association with growth.

Results from the Experiences of Ministry Survey 2011 showed that stipendiary ministers spend 8.7 hours per week on administration and organisation. Evidence from the Church Growth Research (2013) suggests that this figure has increased and especially where there is an amalgamation.

TEAMS: A COMPARISON

Team Ministries were studied alongside amalgamations, the difference being that teams group parishes under the care of a team rector plus one or more team vicars and other staff lay and ordained. There are currently 493 team ministries operating across the Church of England. Six dioceses have over one third of the active teams in the Church of

England but many dioceses have very few.

Some conclusions can be drawn as follows:

There is no evidence to suggest that team ministries show more numerical growth than non-team ministries.

Research on team ministries was less clear-cut than for amalgamations. But analysis of Sunday attendance, weekday attendance and electoral roll figures shows that teams are less likely to grow than non-teams. However, team ministries grew markedly less compared to churches consisting of an incumbent with a single church.

As for amalgamations we know that churches in team ministries can and do grow. A number of lay and ordained leaders from teams were positive about these structures, and there are examples where teams and amalgamations thrive. The figures suggest, however, that groupings like these tend usually to impact negatively on numerical growth.

The findings from studying both teams and amalgamations, lend weight to the conclusion that the larger the number of churches amalgamated, the more it declines.

VOCATION

The research team suggests that even with the fixed or declining pool of clergy, it is not inevitable that the ratio of parishes/churches per clergy person will have to rise.

One of the reasons for fewer ordinands is that many churches are not nurturing vocations. The fact that only one third put forward candidates for ordination in the past decade (up to 2011) is noteworthy.

THE RISE OF THE “LAY LAY” LEADER

There is, research suggests, a large pool of ministry untapped – those who might be ordained; lay leaders as well as the “lay lay” leaders; people running churches without formal ecclesial training or “church badge”. The team researching fresh expressions of Church also clearly identified this.

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