SURVEYS OF BELIEF IN THE UK

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Category: Church: UK

Today's Oberser reports with hardly disguised glee that Church attendance in the UK is going to decline by 90% over the next few decades.

> *According to Dr Peter Brierley, former executive director of Christian Research, by 2030 just under 419,000 people will attend an Anglican Sunday service. By 2040 the number will be down to 217,200, falling to 153,800 five years later. By 2050, if the trend prediction is correct, only 87,800 will be attending. (read more)*

It is pointed out in the article that this survey is only looking at 'traditional' Anglican churches and ignores a lot of the newer expressions of church life that are sprining up around the country. My suspicion is that there will continue to be a decline in church going and that the majority of committed church goes will be found in large city-centre churches. However, I also believe that many believers will find their faith community outside of what is traditionally thought of as church. House churches, table churches, nu-monastic gatherings: there are all sorts of ways in which Christians are getting together for mission and worship that don't quite fit the church stereotype. Most of these will never be counted as church attenders.

There are huge challenges implied in all this for organisations like my own which are trying to encourage Churches to be involved in God's mission to the wider world. How do we get onto the programme with the big (often very self sufficient) churches and how do you engage with a group of Christians who don't even call themselves a church?

On a similar note, there was another survey this week that suggested that the majority of people in Britain don't believe that the Christmas story is historically true. Now that doesn't actually come as much of a surprise. What is worrying though, is that a quarter of those who describe themselves as Christian don't believe that Jesus was both man and God. I realise that in these pluralistic days we have to respect people of differing views - but I find it very hard to understand how someone can call themselves a Chritian when they don't hold to the most basic tenet of the faith (1 John 4:2).

There is an interesting discussion of this survey by an academic from Cambridge here.