GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

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Category: Church: World

The Pew Foundation have just published a very thorough report on the size and distribution of the World's Christian population. The full report, which I've not had time to work through weighs in at 17Mb and comes complete with graphs, charts and all sorts of other exciting things. I'm looking forward to getting to grips with it. For most people, the executive summary will be all they need to turn to, though it won't have many surprises for regular readers of Kouya Chronicle (wellÂ informed bunch, that you are).

The headline points include the shift in the geographical centre of the world church:

> *Christianity has grown enormously in sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, where there were relatively few Christians at the beginning of the 20th century. The share of the population that is Christian in sub-Saharan Africa climbed from 9% in 1910 to 63% in 2010, while in the Asia-Pacific region it rose from 3% to 7%. Christianity today â€“ unlike a century ago â€“ is truly a global faith. (See world maps weighted by Christian population in 1910 and 2010.)*

And the growth in numbers of the church over the past hundred years:

> *The number of Christians around the world has nearly quadrupled in the last 100 years, from about 600 million in 1910 to more than 2 billion in 2010. But the worldâ€™s overall population also has risen rapidly, from an estimated 1.8 billion in 1910 to 6.9 billion in 2010. As a result, Christians make up about the same portion of the worldâ€™s population today (32%) as they did a century ago (35%).*

This latter point is very important, because it shows that although the Church is growing rapidly, it is only just keeping pace with the growth in the world population. There is no place for either complacency or triumphalism in this data.

One issue which I have not seen in the report is the issue of influence. Though the majority of Christians are found in the two thirds world, most power and influence still resides in the Western Church. Our habits and attitudes have yet to catch up to the statistics. If you would like some further thought on these questions, I heartily recommend the talks by Martin Lee and Peter Oyugi at the recent Global Connections' Conference, you can also take a look at an essay which I wrote on the subject a few years ago..

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