

# a growing interest in CHRISTIANITY ?

Several recent studies have pointed to an increased interest in faith generally and Christianity specifically, even charting a surprising rise in regular churchgoing. Here's a summary of what they're saying – alongside a snapshot of reflection on the findings

**B**ible Society's *Quiet Revival* report and its finding of increased church attendance has provided one of 2025's biggest discussion points for the UK church. It stated 2 million more people are attending services compared with six years ago, after finding around 12 per cent of the population of England and Wales were in church monthly in 2024, compared with 8 per cent in 2018.

The findings were released in April and have been met with joy, surprise, and scepticism. They've featured in both national and Christian press, in conversations on social media, and were even the subject of the investigative Radio 4 programme *More or Less* (2 July). In light of this expected scrutiny, Bible Society produced a page responding to frequently asked questions on the trustworthiness of the data, how it relates to denominational statistics and other surveys, and more.<sup>1</sup>

"These are extraordinary figures – a broad-based, unspectacular

but solid increase in churchgoing in England and Wales," says Mark Woods, a Baptist minister and head of communications at Bible Society. "But they're supported by an extraordinarily large sample size and by the research teams not only of Bible Society but of YouGov, one of the most respected polling organisations in the UK.

"They're also supported by evidence that it's hard to dismiss as 'just' anecdotal – stories of life and growth, of people coming to faith, public figures identifying themselves as Christians, and – no small thing, for those likely to be reading this – the largest number of baptisms reported by Baptist churches in ten years."<sup>2</sup>

There are caveats, of course. Some have questioned whether revival is the appropriate term.<sup>3</sup> Many churches are still struggling and seeing decline rather than growth. The survey measures churchgoing, and some other behaviours like volunteering and Bible reading (though both with encouraging results). It doesn't

ask theological or political questions.

"Nevertheless", continues Mark, "my own view, for what it's worth, is that its findings should be unreservedly welcomed; I think generally speaking people are better off in church than not, and I'm glad so many are finding faith."

## 'A CHANGE IN THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE?'

Other research published this year makes for encouraging reading in light of Bible Society's findings.

In January, a survey of 10,000 people conducted by OnePoll found that Gen Zs are half as likely to be atheists as their parents or grandparents, and revealed that just 13 per cent of under-25s identified as atheists.

In March, several national newspapers reported that Bible sales increased by 87 per cent between 2019 and 2024.

In April, a Savanta study for the Christian student organisation Fusion surveyed more than 2,000 UK students about their attitude towards the Bible – and found 29 per cent of all students read the Bible every week, while 33 per cent of non-Christian students are interested in reading the Bible with a Christian friend if asked.

More surveys are highlighted on Bible Society's FAQ page<sup>1</sup>.

'If reviewed in isolation one of these studies could arguably be labelled as an outlier,' noted Phil Knox, evangelism and missiology senior specialist at the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>4</sup> 'But together, they serve as a useful indicator there has been a change in the spiritual climate.'

## THE SEARCH FOR MEANING...

The Quiet Revival states the rise in churchgoing is driven by Generation Z: in 2018, just 4 per cent of 18–24 year-olds said they attended church at least monthly. Today this has risen to 16 per cent, with young men increasing from 4 per cent to 21 per cent, and young women from 3 per cent to 12 per cent.

One of the most cited reasons for people turning to churches is the search for meaning. The speaker, writer and broadcaster Justin Brierley published a book and podcast in 2023 called *The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God*. He believes young people are giving the Christian faith a chance due to the 'meaning crisis'.

'The secular philosophy of be whatever you want to be, turbocharged by social media, has left many young people feeling cut adrift...' he wrote in

*The Times* in July.<sup>5</sup> 'Combined with political turmoil, economic uncertainty and global conflict, a lot of distracted and disillusioned people are looking for a better story... That's why a new generation is rediscovering the original biblical story.'

The Quiet Revival highlights this point too. 'With much of the population, in particular young people, struggling with mental health, loneliness and a loss of meaning in life, Church appears to be offering an answer.'

## ... OR RADICALISATION?

But could there be a less savoury element? An article in *The Guardian* reflecting on the Quiet Revival highlighted a similar trend in the US of more young men attending church. It suggested the radicalisation of young men through 'online spaces and podcasts that are overtly misogynistic but masquerade as platforms of Christian values' could be one reason for the increased interest.

'We should also look out for signs of possible online radicalisation and tendencies towards hateful speech in the guise of Jesus's influence,' the piece stated.<sup>6</sup>

## AUSTERITY IMPACT AND SOCIAL ACTION

*The Guardian* article also highlighted the consistent presence of churches amid the austerity years, which have seen community centres, public halls, libraries, theatres and museums decline in numbers.

'Young people looking for community may find that a local church or cathedral is the only place close to them with regular

opening hours and people ready to talk and listen. That these same churches and cathedrals very often organise group charity work is a clear plus.'

This latter point highlighted another aspect of the Quiet Revival findings: the rise in churchgoing is not simply 'a desire for community in a society', even if this is a factor drawing young adults to churches. 'We are not only seeing a rise in church attendance, but also a rise in wider beliefs and practices among churchgoers,' the Quiet Revival states.

For instance, churchgoers are 'far more socially engaged than non-churchgoers... more likely to volunteer, donate to foodbanks and give to charitable causes.'

## 'A CLEAR NEED FOR MORE DISCIPLESHIP AROUND SCRIPTURE'

Perhaps because those who are exploring faith do so without a long-inherited understanding of it, there is a parallel lack of confidence in their knowledge alongside this openness to Christianity.

'Approximately one-third of churchgoers say they lack confidence in navigating or understanding the Bible and speaking about it with others,' The Quiet Revival states.

'This poses a challenge to the Church but also an opportunity to tap into and learn from their energy and enthusiasm while enabling them to go deeper into Scripture... There is a clear need for more discipleship around Scripture.'

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Bible Society is clear this is a 'snapshot of a moment in time' and 'no one can know how long this moment will last. It could be the start of a longer change that continues to grow for many years or a short-lived burst which quickly dissolves – a blip in the long process of secularisation.'

But it believes its survey, and others cited, represent 'an interesting moment, full of opportunity. If it is to be sustained beyond a moment, Christians must take it seriously and act.'

As a result of its findings, Bible Society lays out three recommendations for church leaders (The Quiet Revival p22-23):

- Prioritise discipleship and growing Bible confidence
- Make space for intentional intergenerational conversation
- Build on interpersonal relationships

Mark encourages careful reading of the Quiet Revival for leadership teams of Baptist churches, encouraging them to work out what it says to their own contexts.

'There are insights in the report about young people and what they're looking for from church; gender; wellbeing; mentoring, and much more besides.

'Most of all, be encouraged,' he continues. 'Not all churches will grow; there's no magic formula. But the Church in England and Wales is now in a different season, and God is doing something quite unexpected.'



**Paul Hobson is an editor and writer with the Faith and Society Team**

### Footnotes

- 1 [bit.ly/qrfqs](https://bit.ly/qrfqs)
- 2 [baptist.org.uk/statistics](https://baptist.org.uk/statistics)
- 3 [baptist.org.uk/isitrevival](https://baptist.org.uk/isitrevival)
- 4 [baptist.org.uk/loudrevival](https://baptist.org.uk/loudrevival)
- 5 [bit.ly/genzrevival](https://bit.ly/genzrevival)
- 6 [bit.ly/qrradical](https://bit.ly/qrradical)