



Whisper to Wake-Up Call

ANDY DU FEU

Moorlands College Principal, Andy du Feu, contends that we have an opportunity to tune in to what God is doing and see the kind of revival that previous generations have prayed so hard for.

Let me tell you something you probably already know: God has been at work in the UK, so much so that it's hard to escape conversations about the Quiet Revival.

On one hand, it feels so unfair that people are simply walking into churches and getting saved and baptised when for over a decade I grafted – from canvassing mobile home parks to delivering the Jesus film to 4,000 homes surrounding our church – without seeing a single person respond positively and unequivocally to the gospel.

On the other hand, well, people are literally walking off the street and into churches of all shapes and sizes. And that is good news! The Bible Society research is amongst several that underpin the belief that Christianity is experiencing a resurgence in the UK.

Using the pollsters YouGov, it took a snapshot of 13,000 people in 2018 and again in 2024. The results are staggering:

	2018	2024
18-24s attending church at least monthly	4%	16%
Specifically males from 18-24	4%	21%
18-24s who believe in a higher power/god/gods	28%	45%

The growth is less substantial amongst 35 - 44 year-olds, and churchgoing is in decline in the two age ranges between 45 and 64. A 5% jump to 19% amongst those 65+ completes the picture. This all translates to a younger church, with 14% of the church aged 18-34 in 2018 ballooning to around 33% in 2024.

While the Bible Society research did not include under 18s, the Church of England (C of E) found that less than 100,000 children from 0-16 attended church in 2018, with 44% of them concentrated in 6.4% of churches (CofE, Youth and Children Growth Research, Jan-Apr 2022), and Scripture Union launched their 95-campaign based on the stats that showed 5% of children went to church, calling congregations to reach out to the 95% who don't. That will need updating!

The national census 2021 made for interesting reading. For the previous two, I must confess that I had registered as a Jedi Knight, in silent protest that so many people identify culturally as Christians. For the first time, the number of those in England and Wales describing themselves as such dropped below half – 46.2% down from 59.3% in 2011. While cultural Christianity is on the decline, genuine church



attendance is up, alongside a renewed confidence in the church, this despite the high-profile scandals and denominational turmoil.

Between 1981 and 2018, Britons' confidence in churches and religious organisations fell from 49% to 31%, but by 2022 had risen again to 42% in part because while councils made deep cuts to services, the church led the way with initiatives like food banks, warm spaces, and debt counselling. The annual social value of the UK church stands north of £55bn (National Churches Trust, The House of Good, 2021). To put that in context, that's twice the £22bn financial 'black hole' allegedly left by the previous government.

THE WANE OF NEW ATHEISM

In the 90s and noughties, the UK rode the wave of New Atheism, with Christianity captured through the cringe of Ned Flanders and the irreverent Vicar of Dibley. The then Prime Minister's spin doctor infamously remarked, 'We don't do God', and celebrities championed the bus adverts declaring, 'There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life'. I cannot have been alone in writing to Humanists UK to thank them for the free

advertising given church attendance was in freefall at the time (Brierley, *The Tide is Running Out*, 2000). That wave is still going, only, it seems increasingly isolated. Indeed, around one in four of those aged between 45 and 60 described themselves as atheist (OnePoll, 2025) and monthly church attendance has declined from 6% in 2018 to 5% in 2024 of those between 45 and 54 (Bible Society, *The Quiet Revival*, 2025) – people who would have been in their 20s and 30s when the UK was experiencing peak New Atheism.

The tide has turned, demonstrated superbly in Justin Brierley's book, *The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God* (2023). A survey of 10,000 people found only 13% of those under 25 identified as atheists, and 62% of 18 to 24-year-olds said they are 'very' or 'fairly' spiritual (Gasson, *Belief in Britain*, 2025). The cynicism that permeated universities has softened, with statistics revealing that 37% of students identifying as 'no religion' acknowledging they owned a copy of the Bible, while 13% of the same group claimed they prayed weekly (Fusion, *What do today's students think about the Bible?* 2025).

Speaking of Bibles, UK sales went from netting £2.69m in 2019 to £5.02m in 2024, an 87% increase in just five years, with a skew towards youth and study bibles. To demonstrate how incredible this is, the 11 years to 2019 saw an increase of just over £277,000, or just 11% (Nielsen, BookScan data, 2024).

This turn is reflected in the BBC's favourable treatment of the beach baptisms in Bournemouth last summer, which were part of the collaborative ministry of several churches. Perhaps we need to keep drawing on the wave metaphor!

New atheism is getting old and isn't aging well.

CAN I SAVE YOUR CHURCH SOME MONEY?

The report shows that it is young men leading the way. The trend towards youth is not exclusive to Christianity, with the average age of those self-identifying as Muslims being 27 compared to 51 for Christians (ONS, 2021), but it should have an impact on how we do mission.

For the last thirty years much of our church budgets have followed the models of mega-churches like Willow Creek and Saddleback, where we make the 'church experience' as accessible as possible, whether conferences or Sunday mornings. Let me save you the money you've set aside for your next seeker sensitive service – they have already been disciplined by Jordan Peterson. His psycho-spiritual teachings answer the questions of identity and significance that New Atheism spectacularly failed to.

The algorithms will have introduced them to biblical scholars and apologists such as Wes Huff. Some will get to R.C. Sproul before they get to your church door, and that changes everything. But Peterson will not lead them into a saving knowledge of Jesus. And that's the wave we need to pick up. One-by-one.

I heard the leader of the UK Chinese church share recently that they are seeing many respond to the gospel, but it isn't led from the platform, but through countless individual conversations. We can anticipate far greater openness to the good news about Jesus and therefore be more confident in taking risks.

While Peterson may have provided the segway for many young men (Brierley, 2023) the Quiet Revival claims are substantiated across other demographics, often anecdotally. At my church summer camp, an 18-year-old with no previous connection to the Christian faith shared how just months before she had felt a strong leading to get to know the Bible. A colleague was at a women's conference recently, and texted me, 'I tell you something, God's Spirit is definitely on the move in middle-aged women in the Anglican church.' A Baptist pastor confided recently that, 'We haven't done anything different. But new families and faces just keep walking in off the street.'

WHEN THE SPIRIT MOVES, ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES

For many years we sang songs of revival, declaring we could see God moving, 'a mighty river through the nations' and with a mixture of faith and hope, believing that, 'young and old will turn to Jesus' (Smith, *Did you feel the mountains tremble*, 1994). Only, that revival failed to materialise. If anything, faith was sidelined, church attendance reduced to a lifestyle choice and leaders parodied on TV. As New Atheism peaked, we sang the less confident yet still hopeful, 'I see a near revival, stirring as we pray and seek, we're on our knees' (Hillsong, *Hosanna*, 2007).

Maybe God has been answering our prayers through immigration, which has shifted the needle, fuelling religious belief across the board. No surprise that the fastest growing churches in the UK are the Chinese Church (Bible Society, *Chinese Christianity in Britain*, 2023), and the Redeemed Church (Faith Survey, UK Church Statistics, 2023). We are importing a vibrant faith that is reviving the church in the UK.

The research isn't all good news. Bible confidence among younger people can be knocked all too easily

(Bible Society, 2025). That sounds like a discipleship challenge. How are we growing the members of the body? More generally, despite small year on year increases, the C of E, like many mainline denominations, is smaller in virtually every metric than it was in 2018 (Statistics for Mission, 2024). This challenges us to reflect on what kind of church do we need to be? What structures are essential to thriving in our contexts and succeeding in our mission over the next few years?

‘Religious triumphalism would be premature’ writes Sixsmith (The Critic, 2 June 2025), but no one I know is treating it like that. Indeed, we may wish to frame this as a liminal moment for the church in the UK. What a shame if, 20 years from now, we look back and lament what might have been in the years running up to the

2,000th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have work to do.

ANDY DU FEU

Rev Andy du Feu is Principal of Moorlands College, and trustee of both Urban Promise UK, a brilliant youth ministry in London, and the Oswald Chambers Publishing Association. His grandparents were Methodist ministers from Jersey, at the time when Andy led a Congregational church in Oxfordshire.



PRAYER FOCUS

THE QUIET REVIVAL

Thank and praise God for the awakening which is happening amongst our youth; pray for this to spread from young person to young person and upward to older generations; for churches and individuals to take seriously the discipling of these young people, seeking God earnestly in how best to do this, relying totally on him for the right strategy and resources to make it happen (Matthew 11:29-30; Hebrews 13:20-21).

FOCUS ON THE CHURCH

Repentance: An acknowledgement across the Connexion of the move away from biblical holiness; the admission of sin and the need for repentance; confessing all denial of the Holy Spirit’s power; going our own way rather than seeking God’s vision for the church; for the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit to touch every congregation up and down the land with his purifying power (James 4:4-10; Proverbs 3:5-7).

Children and young people: Inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for all youth and children’s workers across the Connexion; clear biblical teaching; protection from erroneous teaching and false doctrine; for the work of Scripture Union and all who reach out to schools (Proverbs 22:6; Mark 10:13-16).

FOCUS ON THE NATION

Political Landscape: A recognition of the dangers posed by a complete ban on conversion therapy and the ‘no loopholes risk’; protection of children and teenagers from sexual distortions; the rights of Christian parents to teach biblical truth; freedom for the gospel to be preached across our land; for God to reign supreme over all legislation (1 John 2:15-17; Romans 1:18-20).

Social Reform: Creative solutions to deal with the crisis in mental health services; the prison system and all who work in it – especially chaplains & Lord James Timpson, minister in charge of prisons; integrity and uprightness in the criminal justice system and of all serving in the police force (Romans 15:1-2; Philippians 2:3-4).

FOCUS ON WORLD ISSUES

War torn areas of the world: All fleeing conflict to find refuge; refugee camps; adequate resources for relief and aid agencies to tackle suffering, famine and disease, especially Christian organisations; safe access to areas of greatest devastation; those affected to find their hope through the redemptive love of Jesus (Proverbs 14:31-32; Psalm 9:9-10).

Planet in Crisis: Give thanks for initiatives tackling our exploitation of the planet; the planting of new areas of rainforest; the great green wall across Africa, bringing life back to degraded landscapes; conservation areas on both land and sea; projects supported by A Rocha; pray for other such initiatives (Psalm 33:6-9; Psalm 19:1-4).