

CHURCH IN ACTION

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF CHURCH-BASED SOCIAL ACTION

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INTRODUCTION

- Setting the scene
- Method
- Headline findings
- A closer look...
- What does all this mean?
- What next?



SETTING THE SCENE

- **Enigmatic context:** declining church attendance, increasing recognition of churches' social and community contribution.
- **Partnership working:** cross-sectoral, and cross-worldview collaboration for the common good.
- **Informal activity:** understanding the emotional, practical and spiritual labour that churches bring to communities.
- **Relational networks:** and their importance for community resilience, integration, and flourishing.

SETTING THE SCENE

- **Agency and dignity:** what does it mean to reflect these in the way churches engage...and the way we describe their engagement.
- **Mission/evangelism and social action:** how do they relate?
- **Prophetic challenge:** how does the local connect with the national?



METHOD

- Online survey covers a range of topics including:
 - clergy's perceptions of the strengths and challenges in communities.
 - activities churches runs or support for the benefit of wider community
 - informal support churches provide in response to social issues
 - how social action sits alongside other priorities in the church.
- Completed by Church of England incumbent status clergy
- Distributed by Church of England Research and Statistics Team

METHOD

- 1,094 responses in September and October 2017 (22% response rate; 16% sample of population).
- Sample represents a broad cross-section of Church of England parishes including by:
 - Region
 - Size of church
 - Urban and rural locations
 - Level of deprivation



HEADLINE FINDINGS



SOCIAL ISSUES

CUF⁺  THE CHURCH
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76%

of church leaders reported loneliness as a major or significant problem in their communities



CUF⁺  THE CHURCH
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60%

of clergy are reporting mental health as a major or significant problem in their local area.



RESPONDING TO SOCIAL ISSUES

CUF⁺  THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

94%

of churches are doing work to combat loneliness



CUF⁺  THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

70%

of churches are running 3 or more organised activities for the benefit of their local community.



PARTNERSHIP AND PRIORITIES

CUF⁺  THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

21%

Partnership working between churches has increased by 21 percentage points since 2014



CUF⁺  THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

97%

of church leaders agree that engaging with the poor and marginalised is vital for a healthy church



PROPHETIC CHALLENGE & CHURCH GROWTH

CUF⁺ THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Churches in areas of high deprivation, and in urban areas, are the most actively involved in campaigning for social justice.



CUF⁺ THE CHURCH
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64%

of church leaders agree that community engagement has helped draw new people into church



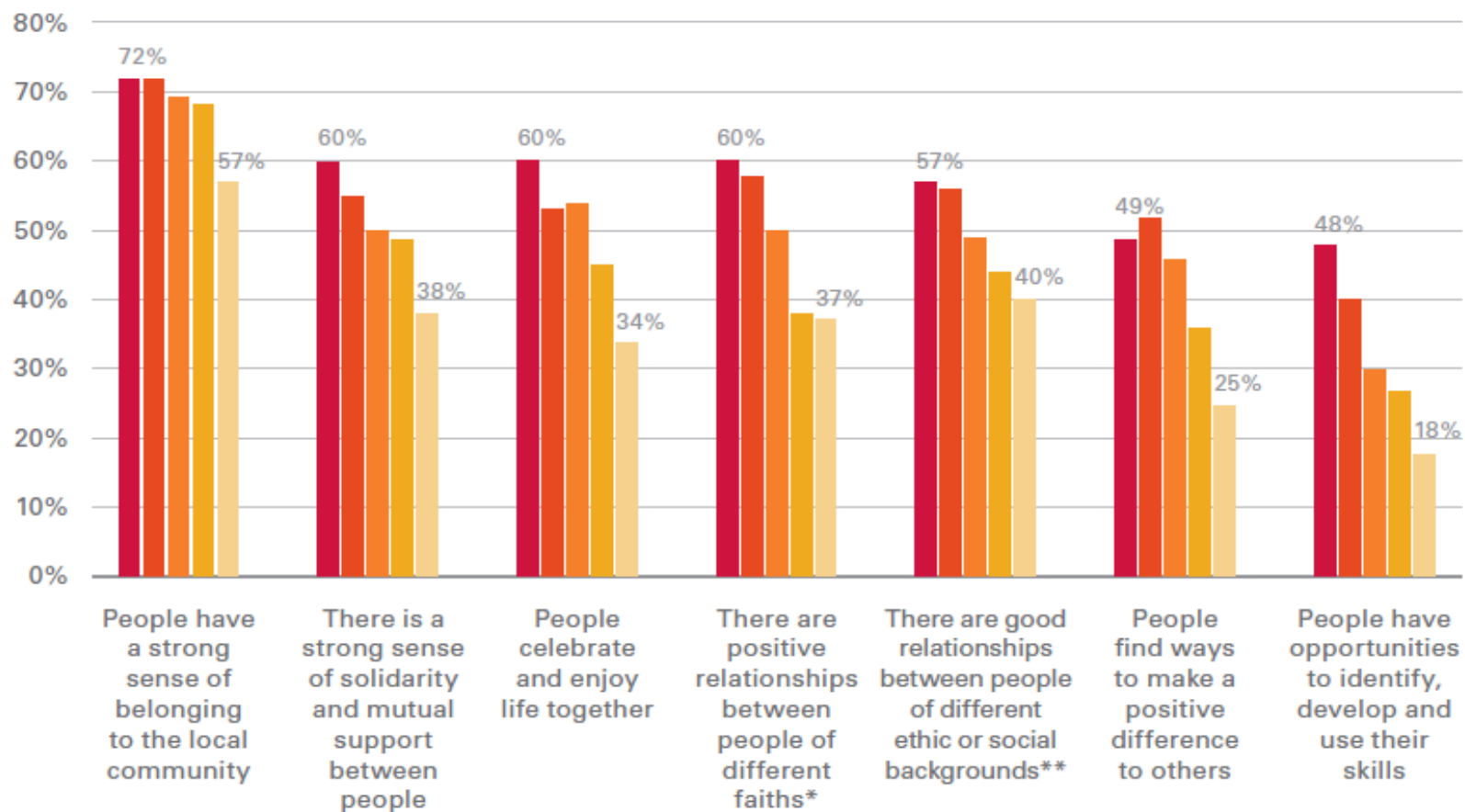
CUF⁺

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A CLOSER LOOK...



COMMUNITY LIFE



SOCIAL ISSUES & ACTION

- Data are for issues identified by clergy as significant/major problems in parish.
- Concentration & combination of social issues in most deprived areas.
- Increases since 2011 in:
 - Mental health
 - Loneliness
 - Homelessness.
- Reduction since 2011 in:
 - Unemployment.



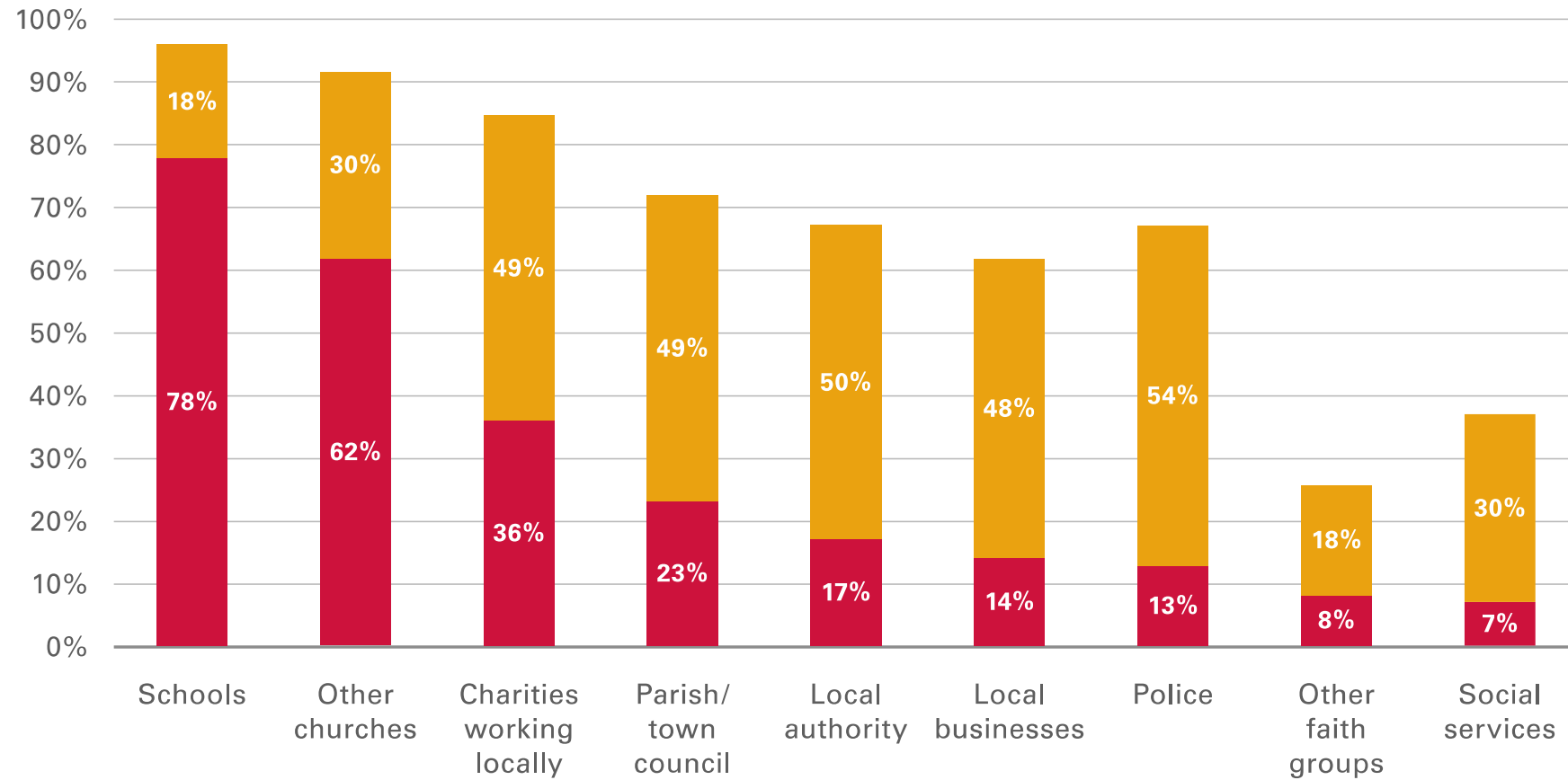
	Least deprived areas	Below average deprivation	Around average	Above average deprivation	Most deprived areas
Modern slavery/human trafficking	0%	2%	2%	8%	23%
Poor housing	2%	4%	15%	37%	70%
Homelessness	4%	9%	16%	34%	62%
Unemployment	4%	9%	21%	44%	81%
Low education/skills	5%	13%	41%	62%	90%
Crime/anti-social behaviour	6%	9%	18%	39%	79%
Low income	8%	22%	48%	70%	94%
Domestic violence/abuse	8%	14%	22%	41%	74%
Food poverty	10%	13%	26%	49%	83%
Drug or alcohol abuse	16%	25%	39%	62%	91%
Debt	26%	32%	47%	71%	92%
Poor physical health	33%	30%	44%	61%	85%
Family/relationship breakdown	38%	42%	45%	68%	88%
Mental health problems	45%	44%	56%	74%	91%
Isolation/loneliness	75%	68%	75%	77%	89%

SOCIAL ISSUES AND ACTION

- Churches in the most deprived areas are typically more active in their communities.
- Larger churches are more likely to offer organised activities, but the differences by size of church are much less evident when informal responses are taken into account.

	Runs this (alone or in partnership)	Provides venue or building	Provides volunteers	Provides financial/ in kind donations	Provides prayer/ pastoral support	Any of the above
Community events (e.g. fetes, parties, quizzes)	80%	39%	29%	16%	15%	94%
Food bank	19%	8%	32%	69%	27%	93%
Lunch club, coffee morning, or similar hospitality for older people	69%	27%	30%	14%	22%	86%
Parent/carers and toddler group/ playgroup	59%	30%	24%	13%	20%	78%
Pastoral provision (e.g. Street Pastors, counselling/support, befriending)	21%	10%	34%	13%	32%	70%
Youth work (for wider community)	30%	19%	21%	14%	21%	57%
Community café	32%	15%	20%	11%	17%	53%
Activities for people with dementia	18%	13%	20%	8%	22%	53%
Holiday/breakfast/after school clubs for children	30%	14%	17%	10%	16%	52%
Budgeting/debt advice/money skills provision	8%	6%	13%	12%	26%	47%
Other homelessness provision	4%	3%	13%	24%	21%	47%
Fitness classes or sports activities	9%	35%	5%	3%	5%	45%
Night shelter	6%	5%	16%	19%	16%	38%

PARTNERSHIP



■ Working in partnership ■ Consulting or keeping in touch



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CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY

- Most church leaders (88%) agree that ‘campaigning for social justice is an important part of the role of local churches’
- Yet, only 33% of churches are frequently involved in the types of activity usually associated with campaigning (a further 50% are occasionally involved).
- The most widespread activities are:
 - participating in local forums
 - lobbying MPs and local representatives
 - joining in national campaigns
 - advocating on behalf of people in poverty

HOLISTIC MISSION?



“ 97% of church leaders agree that engaging with the poor and marginalised is vital for a healthy church ”

- 54% of church leaders agree that **tackling poverty** is a fundamental part of their church's mission, rising to 70% in the most deprived areas.
- 80% of church leaders agree that their work in the community helps church members to **grow in their faith**.
- 64% said that community engagement has helped to **draw people into the church**.
- 72% said that **social justice** issues featured regularly in sermons and **teaching**.

HOLISTIC MISSION?

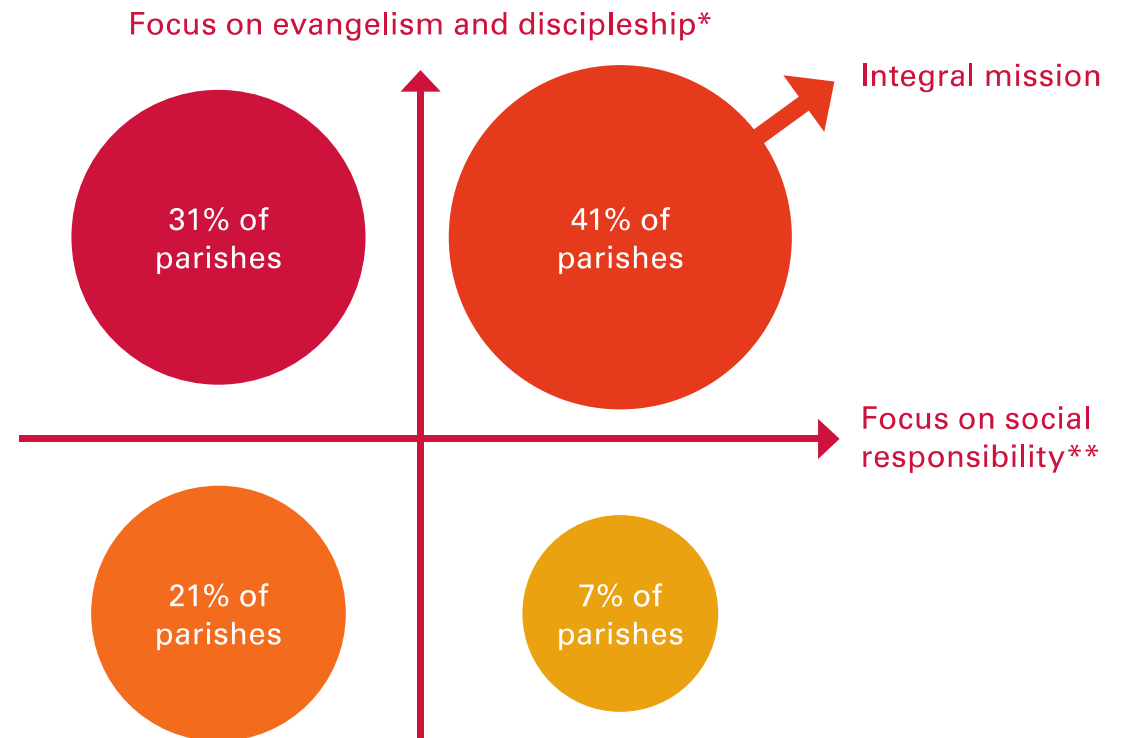
	Low activity churches* (0-2 organised activities)	Medium activity churches* (3-5 organised activities)	High activity churches* (6+ organised activities)
Engaging with the poor and marginalised is a vital activity for a healthy church	94% **	98% **	99% **
→ Community work helps church members to grow in their faith	60%	84%	95%
Social justice issues feature regularly in our sermons and teaching	66%	72%	81%
Our church provides opportunities for marginalised people to hear about Jesus	52%	66%	87%
→ Community engagement has helped draw people into the church	48%	68%	78%
Church members have a good awareness of social issues locally	55%	62%	77%
We would like to do more in our community, but need support	63%	61%	51%
Tackling poverty is a fundamental part of our church's mission	44%	53%	68%

INTEGRAL MISSION?

- 64% agreed that community engagement has helped **draw new people into church**
- Two-thirds of church leaders say that their church provides opportunities for people who are marginalised to **hear about Jesus**.



Figure 1: Priorities in mission



*Score of 50+ (on a scale of 0-100) for proclaiming the Good News and nurturing new believers. **Score of 50+ for responding to human need and for transforming unjust structures or safeguarding creation.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?



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KEY THEMES

- Encouragement about the extent of churches' engagement in communities (as well as concerns about growing demand), and growth in partnership working.
- Evidence of the integral nature of community engagement and response to social issues as part of what it means to follow Jesus, together.
- Evidence that such engagement contributes to church growth and discipleship, as well as being an expression of them.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Are there new ways in which churches in more affluent areas could support the work of those in more deprived communities?
- Are we separating 'justice' from 'Jesus' by focusing on service and relationship rather than **prophetic challenge**?
- As churches increasingly work in partnership with other groups for the common good, how do we act both **collaboratively and distinctively**?
- Do we fully **appreciate** what we have? Relational networks and connected communities in a context characterized by isolation.

WHAT NEXT?

- **Church in Action 2020:** bigger and better?
- **GRA:CE Project:** 3 year research project, exploring the relationship between Social Action, Church Growth and Discipleship, in partnership with Theos and Church of England Research and Statistics.
- **Together Network:** resourcing and equipping churches for social engagement, as integral to mission, and as an opportunity for collaboration for the common good within and beyond the church.



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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!



Download the full report at:

www.cuf.org.uk/church-in-action-2017

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