

The Pandemic and Church growth: missional opportunities and challenges

Methodology

- 3,562 adults (18+) in England were surveyed online 29th January – 7th February 2021
- Of those, 1880 were Christian and 1,366 gave no religion
- Those of other faiths were excluded in the following analysis

Attendance online during lockdown

- 86% of pre-covid regulars attended online church but 9% didn't attend online church at all, and 4% did so a few times.
- 21% of pre-covid irregular attendees attended online church regularly during lockdown, but the majority (62%) didn't
- 4% of Christians/no religion who previously had never attended church did attend online church regularly during lockdown

Intentions of those who engaged regularly online

Intended to attend:

- 55% Regularly in person and online
- 12% Regularly in person and Irregularly online
- 11% Regularly in person

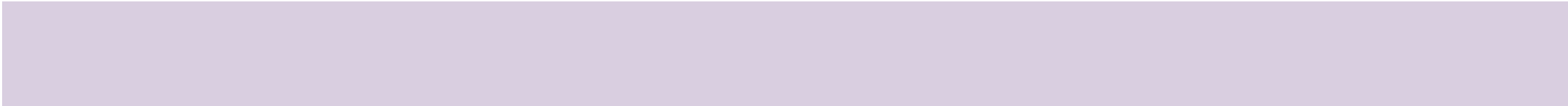
Joiners

Joiners: those who didn't previously attend church regularly, but during lockdown did attend online church regularly, and intend to join regularly in person and/or online

- 52% are aged under 35
- Mostly plan to attend both online and in person

Those who are leaving

- 10% of pre-covid regulars are intending to leave or worship irregularly
- This is now a **critical time for Churches to engage with the people who have drifted away** during lockdown
- When asked why – there was no one answer. Many have simply drifted away during this time, a small percentage said that they had lost their faith.



What this means for churches now?

The importance of continuing online services.

But how do we do the online and onsite services well together?

Liz Morgan - Step-by-step guide to online and onsite services

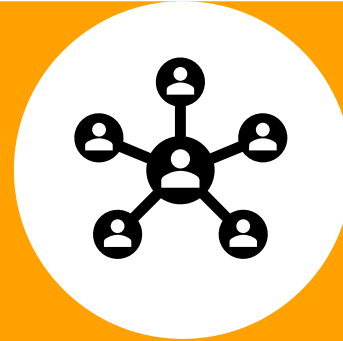
What this means for churches now

Be active with all three styles of engagement preference



Experiential

- Extrovert, singing, onsite worship, Eucharist, festivals, events, sensory prayer
- **Suffered most** – impossible to replicate online



Relational

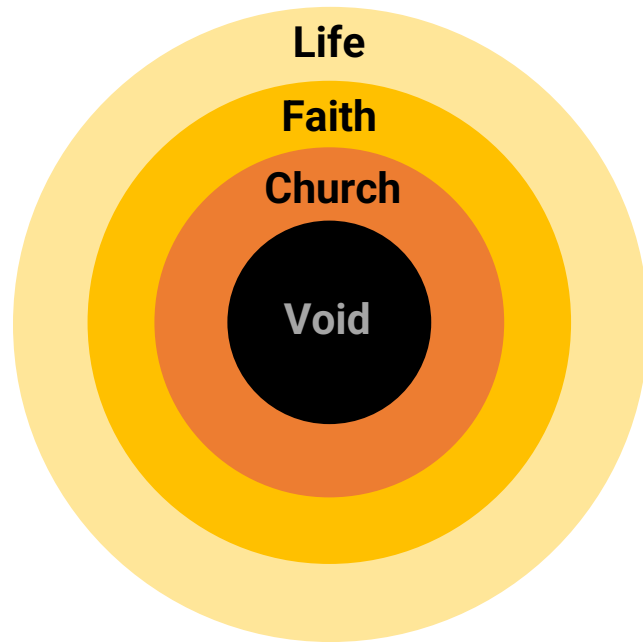
- Female bias, relationships, community, small groups, praying together, outreach
- **Mixed** – good stories of deepening relationships



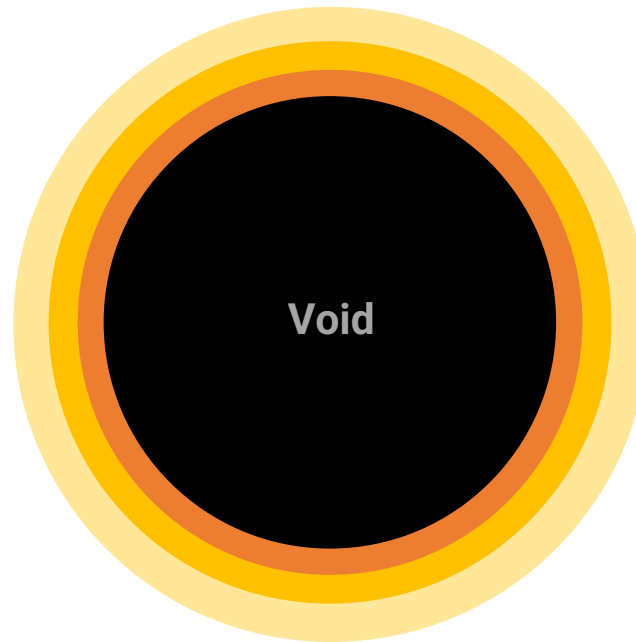
Intellectual

- Introvert, male bias, self-motivated, isolated, study, private prayer, digital savvy
- **Thrived** – time, isolation and online resources

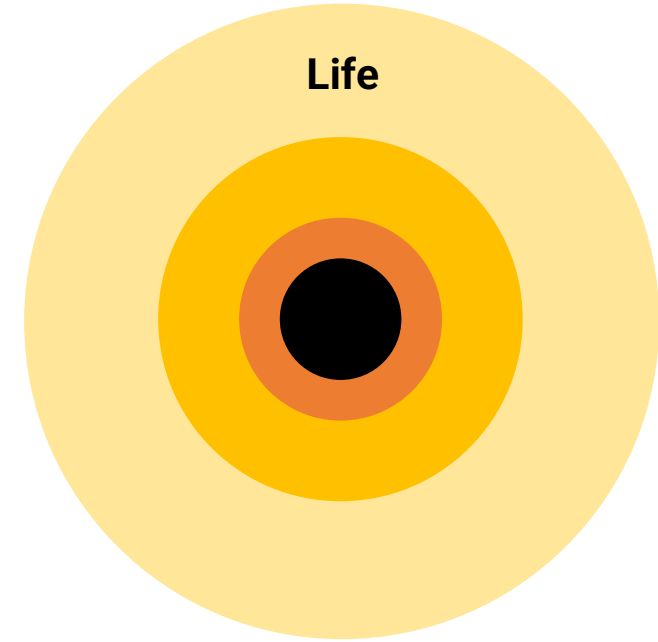
The potential impact of removing onsite worship



Example person 1



Example person 2



Example person 3

What this means for churches now?

Follow up those who have left or drifted away

Previous research has shown for **92%** of church leavers no one followed-up or asked why

This is now a critical time for Churches to engage with the people who have drifted away during lockdown (Sept 2020)

Helps people to feel loved/valued and helps to keep their faith alive

What this means for churches now?

Be invitational - Invite them to your online and onsite services

There are many barriers to visiting a church (on site) and these have been an issue for a long time

Online service remove these barriers, particularly if there is an option to engage anonymously

Be prayerful

Can you commit to praying for your church, your neighbours, your community, your loved ones to come to know the love of Christ for themselves.

When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't. ”
– **William Temple**, Archbishop of Canterbury, Church of England