



NCLS Occasional Paper 5

Social Influences upon Faith Development

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October 2004

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This research outlines what were significant activities and who were significant people in the development of faith among Anglican and Protestant attenders. Most attenders became Christians before they were 20 years old.

The kinds of activities and people varied significantly depending upon when they became Christian. If it was before 10 years of age, then Sunday School and parents are by far the most important influences. For those who become Christians between the ages of 10 and 20, parents are important, but other church structures, such as youth groups, are important. After the age of 20, then church ministers, adult small groups and other church workers are more important.

National Church Life Survey

The National Church Life Survey has been developed by ANGLICARE (Diocese of Sydney), Uniting Church in Australia NSW Board of Mission and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. The NCLS has been carried out on three occasions in Australia: 1991, 1996 and 2001. Nineteen denominations participated in the 2001 NCLS.

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Executive Summary

Background

The Bible Society is involved in supporting the development of the Christian faith both within the churches and the school system. In the light of such involvement, the Bible Society has commissioned this current report that looks at the issue of faith development. The report focuses on data for Anglican and Protestant denominations only, reflecting the interests of the sponsoring agency.

Summary of Main Findings

The findings in this report are based on responses received from a random sample of 4162 Australian Anglican and Protestant church attenders aged 15 years or more.

Impact of parents on faith development

Parents were reported to have been a significant influence for 55% of Anglican and Protestant attenders. Mothers were a significant influence in the faith development of 50% of attenders. Fathers were influential for a lesser number (33%).

It would appear that parents may be becoming less influential with each new generation: only 41% of attenders aged 30-49 years said that their parents were an important influence in their faith development, compared to 60% of those aged over 50 years. However, it is too early to tell whether this is a permanent trend or just one associated with the younger age group.

Parents are at their most influential when a person first becomes a Christian at an early age: 75% of those who became Christians before 10 years of age said that their parents had been influential in their faith development, declining to just 33% of those who became Christians after 20 years of age.

The major impact of parents seem to be twofold: their faith in God (68%) and in the way they lived out their faith (53%). Other aspects such as the ability of parents to explain the faith (19%) were much less important.

Impact of church workers, friends and other family

As a combined grouping, local church workers (60%) have had as great an impact as parents on faith development among Anglican and Protestant attenders. Of these, local ministers were the most influential individuals (33%). Of interest from the viewpoint of agencies that provide

support to children's and youth ministries has been the influence of Sunday school teachers (21%) and youth group leaders (16%).

As combined groupings, other family members (31%) and other ministries (28%) influenced similar proportions of attenders. Friends (19%) touched a lesser proportion, with very little influence prior to 10 years of age, reflecting the changes that occur as individuals move into different lifestages. Local church ministry and other kinds of ministry remain constant in their influence, unaffected by lifestage changes.

The outstanding way in which such people were influential was their faith in God (57%) or the way that they lived out the faith (45%). The ability of others to explain the faith (28%) or their encouragement to be a Christian (28%) suggests that the influence of other people can be different to that of parents.

Impact of church services

Church services emerge as the single most significant activity for faith development, selected by 42% of attenders as instrumental in their coming to faith. Church services appear to have remained fairly constant in their impact on people of differing age groups. This could be due in part to the trend towards the diversification of church services, with different services aiming to meet the needs of distinct groups, such as young people, families and older people. The results here suggest that such diversification has not harmed and may well have helped to maintain the relevance of church services in people finding faith across the generations.

Impact of children's and youth programs

Youth groups, Sunday schools/kids clubs and school Scripture are seen as strategic programs in the development of faith, and as playing an important role in partnership with church services and parents. The report highlights that:

- Most Anglican and Protestant attenders (73%) first became Christians prior to 20 years of age
- Youth groups (22%) and Sunday school/kids club (30%) are reported to have been influential on the faith development of a large minority of attenders
- Involvement in a youth group and Sunday school/kids club is associated with higher levels of satisfaction with church involvement while growing up
- Involvement in a youth group, Sunday school/kids club and school Scripture while growing up is weakly associated with a more committed church involvement in later life

- Involvement in a youth group is negatively but weakly associated with the experience of falling away from the faith among church attenders.

Analysis by age groupings suggests that Sunday school, school Scripture and Confirmation have less impact today on faith development than in the past. By comparison, youth groups now have a much greater impact, confirming their importance in any overall strategy to minister to children. Church youth groups have almost become as important as church services in bringing 15-29 year olds to faith.

Variations by denomination and state

Throughout this report the key findings have been examined for variations across nine major Anglican and Protestant denominations and also by Australian state. Results that vary by denomination include: (i) the age at which attenders first became Christian, (ii) the most significant people to show attenders about faith, (iii) church activities attended regularly while growing up, and (iv) which of these activities were most significant in attenders coming to faith. Such variations appear to be the result of different cultural norms within denominations.

There are fewer variations by Australian State. Some state variations are observed in the impact of parents in showing attenders what faith is about and levels of school Scripture attendance.

Variations by age group and sex

This report has established a number of age related differences for each of the variables examined. It appears that attenders aged 30-49 years have had a somewhat different experience of faith development than attenders aged over 50 years. Attenders aged 30-49 years appear to have been less influenced by their parents and more influenced by friends. They are less likely to have become Christians at a very young age, less likely to have had a positive experience of church while growing up and less likely to have had churchgoing friends while growing up. It appears as though the socialisation processes that were a feature of the faith development of older attenders were less influential among the 'baby boom' generation.

By comparison, the patterns found among 15-29 year olds often appear to revert to those found among attenders aged over 50 years. However it remains to be seen whether these patterns will change as this younger age group move into mid-life, as some of their number leave church life and are replaced by others who are new to church life.

The report has not been able to establish as many variations by the sex of respondents. Females appear a little more likely to become Christians at an earlier age and to have been influenced in doing so by their parents, particularly mothers, grandparents and Sunday school teachers. By comparison, local ministers and one's spouse appear to be a little more influential among males, which is consistent with males being more likely to become Christians at a later age than females.

1. Introduction

The 2001 Australian National Church Life Survey (NCLS) was completed by more than 450,000 church attenders aged 15 years or above across 19 denominations. The large scale of the survey means that there is scope to give different survey forms to different people without compromising the primary research. Consequently, small random sample surveys of church attenders were also carried out. These random sample surveys provided an important opportunity for Christian organisations and church agencies to pursue their own research agendas within the broader research being conducted by NCLS Research.

A church agency in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Anglican Youthworks, commissioned such research to be carried out among Sydney Anglican church attenders as part of the 2001 National Church Life Survey. The research explored the development of faith among adult church attenders in the Diocese. A report was produced from this research entitled *Social Influences upon Faith Development among Sydney Anglicans (2002)*.

The Bible Society at both state and national levels has been involved in supporting the development of the Christian faith in both churches and within the school system. The Bible Society has commissioned this latest report that builds on the previous report for Anglican Youthworks, by exploring the issues of faith development from a national perspective. Breakdowns by denomination and state are also provided, to highlight differences in the faith development of attenders from different backgrounds. The report focuses on data for Anglican and Protestant denominations only, reflecting the interests of the sponsoring agency.

This report is exploratory only. The main objectives of this report are to:

- Outline overall results regarding aspects of the development of faith among adult church attenders;
- Outline variations in these findings for other variables (eg age, sex, denominational affiliation);
- Identify links between childhood involvement in church activities and school scripture, and later adult church involvement;
- Suggest further areas of investigation within the data.

2. Characteristics of faith among Anglicans and Protestants

A starting point for this report is to consider what are some of the characteristics of faith among Anglican and Protestant attenders, as they emerge from the survey.

Denominational background

This report focuses on Anglican and Protestant church attenders, who comprise about a half of all church attenders in denominations that participate in the National Church Life Survey. The other half are involved in the Catholic Church.

Among these Anglican and Protestant church attenders, 25% are Anglican, followed by Uniting (17%), Pentecostal (17%), and Baptist (14%). Churches of Christ (6%), Lutheran (5%), Presbyterian (5%), Seventh-day Adventist (5%) and Salvation Army (4%) are the next largest denominations represented. All other remaining denominations in the survey accounted for less than 2% of attenders as a combined group.

Identification with theological streams

One key religious measure is the extent to which attenders identify with particular theological streams. Over a third of Anglican and Protestant attenders (38%) identify with the Evangelical or Reformed theological streams, primarily with the Evangelical stream. Just over a quarter identify with the Charismatic or Pentecostal streams (26%). A significant minority (14%) identify with Catholicism or Anglo-Catholicism.

Certain theological streams appear to be more prevalent among particular age groups within the church. More attenders over 50 years of age identify with evangelicalism (41%) than do 15-29 year olds (31%). By comparison 41% of attenders aged 15-29 years identify with Pentecostalism, declining to 17% of over 50 year olds. However relatively few 15-29 year olds (5%) identify with Catholicism or Anglo-Catholicism compared with those aged over 50 years (22%). This difference suggests that the influence of Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism in the Anglican and Protestant churches will wane in the coming years.

Young attenders aged 15-29 years are also much less likely to identify with any theological stream (23%). This could be a reflection of their lifestage, with some young attenders not yet being ready to identify with any theological stream. It could also reflect changes in the wider society where younger people eschew commitment to any one group or position, instead preferring to keep their options open or to draw from more than one theological stream.

Experience of conversion

The need for personal conversion has been a strong element in the life of the churches, as evidenced by support for evangelistic campaigns over the years, such as the Billy Graham Crusades. However, only a large minority of attenders (36%) claim to have experienced a definite moment of faith commitment or conversion at some point in their lives. The rest say that they have had faith all their lives (35%) or that faith developed through a more gradual process (25%). As would be expected, attenders identifying with Charismatic or Pentecostal (57%) and Evangelical or Reformed (46%) streams are more likely to have experienced a moment of conversion than attenders identifying with Catholic or Anglo-Catholic streams (20%).

Church attending parents

It is sometimes thought that people attend church largely because they were brought up to do so by their parents. There is no doubt that parents are influential on the church attendance patterns and religious beliefs of their children, with around two thirds (65%) of Anglican and Protestant attenders saying that one or both of their parents were also regular church attenders. However, while parents will have been quite influential on many children coming to faith, this is not the whole story of how Anglican and Protestant attenders became Christians. For many attenders, other people will have played a role, as will be seen later in this report.

Importance of faith

Regarding the importance of their faith, the vast majority of Anglican and Protestant attenders (84%) disagree with the statement that there are many more important things in life than the Christian faith. The widespread commitment to the faith is in keeping with community studies which show that church attenders generally are much more likely to affirm not only key Christian beliefs but also the importance of those beliefs in daily living (Bellamy et al, 2002, 49, 50).

About a third of attenders (33%) can recall one or more times when they turned away from the Christian faith. This percentage varies little for each of the major theological streams but is more prevalent among the young. Some 29% of attenders over 50 years old have turned away at least once, whereas 41% of 15-19 year olds have had the same experience.

Growth in faith

In terms of their sense of growth in their faith, close to half of attenders (48%) say their faith has grown much in the past 12 months. A further 42% say that they experienced some growth.

2.1 Age When First Became a Christian

A further variable of importance for this report is how old a person was when they first became a Christian. It could reasonably be assumed that certain people or church activities will be more significant than others in helping in faith development, depending upon the stage of life that a person became a Christian. As will be shown in the discussion below, this assumption is correct.

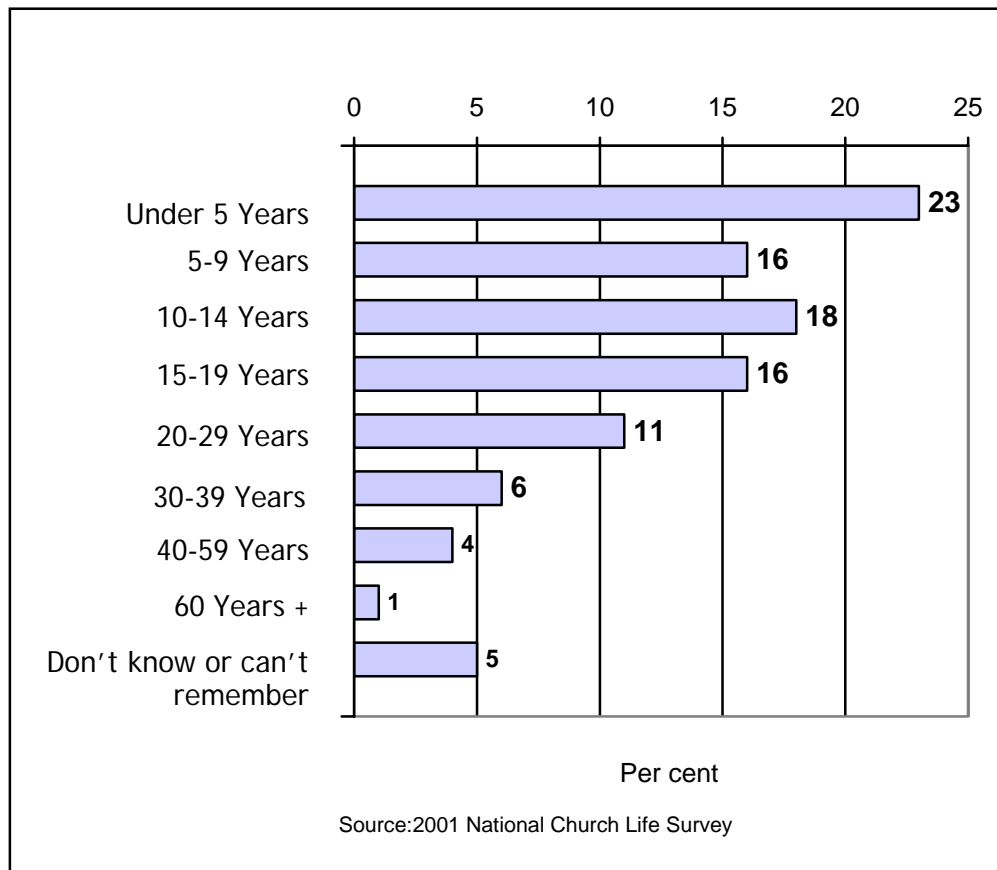
Responses to the question of how old a person was when they first became a Christian would be expected to be influenced by the respondent's definition of what a Christian is and their understanding of how a person becomes a Christian. It might be expected, for instance, that those with a more sacramentalist view of Christianity would see the moment as coinciding with their own christening. Those who place a greater emphasis on the need to make a personal profession of faith would be expected to see the moment in terms of their earliest professions of faith or even later when they made a more adult profession of faith.

Notwithstanding these definitional differences, Figure 1 shows that over 70% of Anglican and Protestant attenders say that they became Christians prior to 20 years of age. The key period is under 10 years of age, with 39% becoming Christians before 10 years of age and 34% becoming Christians between 10 and 19 years of age.

As would be expected, theological identification partly affects these figures: 58% of those who identify with an Anglo-Catholic or Catholic approach to faith said that they became a Christian prior to 10 years of age, while only 34% of attenders from an Evangelical or Reformed tradition and 29% of those from a Charismatic or Pentecostal background claimed to have become a Christian at this age.

For those who became Christians under 10 years of age, most (81%) were brought up in households where one or both parents attended church regularly. Their involvement in church would have been an activity instigated by their parents. By the time they reached high school, over a third (38%) had all or most of their close friends attending a church. Clearly an involvement in church was a significant part of their lives as they were growing up. By contrast, only 43% of those who became Christians after the age of 20 years had parents who attended church regularly, a proportion very similar to the general population (44%) (Bellamy et al, 2002, 28).

Figure 1: Age when first became a Christian



The fact that fewer people first became Christians after 20 years of age suggests that becoming a Christian beyond the teenage years is more difficult. People often set directions in their careers and establish spousal relationships in their 20's. As shown by Australian Community Survey data, relatively few non-attenders have church attending spouses (Bellamy et al, 2002, 37). Furthermore, adults would be expected to be more set in what they believe, yet more aware of different worldviews. A theory of religious development, called 'cultural broadening theory' may account for this. The theory holds that secondary and tertiary education produces liberalised social attitudes and a sense of moral and religious relativity, leading to lower levels of church attendance among young adults (Hoge, Johnson and Luidens, 1993, 243-244).

These results highlight the strategic importance of ministry to young people, both in terms of assisting children and teenagers already attending church activities to come to faith, and in reaching children and teenagers not involved in church life. People who can assist young people to come to grips with the faith potentially have a very important role in faith development overall - not only parents but also ministers, youth group leaders, Sunday school teachers and scripture teachers.

Variations by denomination and state

Some of the older mainstream denominations such as the Lutheran and Anglican Churches appear to have the highest percentages of faith commitment by attenders under 10 years of age. There are also high percentages among Salvation Army and Seventh-day Adventist attenders.

By contrast, Baptist, Churches of Christ and Presbyterian denominations have higher percentages of attenders becoming Christians in the 10-19 years age group. Pentecostal denominations have the largest proportions of attenders coming to faith after 20 years of age. This would reflect an emphasis on adult conversion commonly found in these denominations.

There are no substantial variations by State.

Figure 2: Age when first became a Christian (by Denomination)

	0-9 yrs (%)	10-19 yrs (%)	20 yrs+ (%)	Total (%)
Anglican	47	31	22	100
Baptist	25	46	29	100
Churches of Christ	22	50	28	100
Lutheran	78	11	12	100
Pentecostal	29	31	39	100
Presbyterian	30	39	31	100
Salvation Army	47	30	24	100
Seventh-day Adventist	55	27	18	100
Uniting	39	37	24	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey

Variations by age group and sex

Church attenders aged 30-49 years (30%) are less likely to have become Christians before 10 years of age than attenders aged over 50 years (41%) or those between 15 and 29 years of age (48%). This does not appear to be a function of the more common identification with Anglo-Catholicism among the over 50s. More 30-49 year olds became Christians in their late teens and their adult years than those aged over 50 years.

Church attenders are more likely to be female (60%) than male (40%), a relationship that is present to greater or lesser degree across other denominations. Females (41%) are also more likely than males (35%) to have become Christians before 10 years of age. Further analysis was undertaken to see whether this relationship is a function of the fact that females live longer than males, older attenders being more likely than middle-aged attenders to say that they

became a Christian before the age of 10. However, controlling for the effect of age does not appear to account for this relationship. This suggests that a greater willingness among females to commit to Christianity at an earlier age is a result of something more intrinsic.

Various theories have been put forward to explain the greater predisposition of women towards religion. Some writers observe that the differences could be biologically based, being an outcome of the tendency for females to be less aggressive and more fearful than males (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975). Others suggest that the differences are the result of the different ways that men and women are brought up. In most cultures the upbringing of girls emphasises inter-dependence, obedience and responsibility, while among boys independence and self-reliance are emphasised (Kaldor, 1987, p113). Still others point to the greater traditional role of women in child-rearing, encouraging mothers to be more involved in church life for the sake of their children (Lazerwitz, 1961).

3. Significant people in the development of faith

Faith by its very nature is an individual response. Yet this does not mean that faith is developed in isolation from others. Church and family have been important institutions within which religious faith develops. Some people provide signposts for the journey of faith, leading a person to a greater realisation about the nature of faith. Others play a facilitator's role, introducing a person to significant people or experiences.

The Biblical record is replete with examples of people being influenced towards faith in Christ by other people. Andrew introduces his brother Simon Peter to Jesus, and they become the first disciples of Jesus (John 1:40-42). Philip meets an Ethiopian on the road and shows him about the Christ through reading the Scriptures together (Acts 8: 26-40). Peter visits Cornelius at Caesarea and reveals to him the centrality of Jesus (Acts 10). Paul and Silas explain to the Philippian gaoler how he might be saved, leading to his conversion and that of his household (Acts 16: 29-34). The New Testament apostles preach on many occasions, leading some of the hearers to turn to Christ in faith. The Book of Acts records one such example where Peter preaches to a crowd and 3000 become followers of Jesus (Acts 2). It is said by the Apostle Paul that God works in partnership with the Church to bring others to faith (1 Cor 3:5-9).

Sociology also highlights the role of other people in the development of faith. An important theory that highlights the role of other people in developing and sustaining faith is the theory of plausibility structures (Berger 1967 and 1969). This theory holds that religious worldviews are sustained by interactions with significant others. 'Plausibility structures' are networks of people who hold a common worldview, which provide an environment within which such interactions can take place. Churches are examples of plausibility structures. An important implication of this theory is that the upkeep of these networks is necessary to maintain beliefs and to transfer belief to others. Without such networks, beliefs weaken.

Research among Australians has provided evidence that supports the notion that a church involvement is generally needed to maintain beliefs. The Australian Community Survey (ACS) found that beliefs weaken over time away from church. While 77% of church attenders affirm a range of conventional Christian beliefs such as a belief in Jesus' divinity and resurrection, this percentage declines to 55% some 1 to 4 years after leaving church life. This percentage continues to decline with time away from church so that only 15% of those who have been out of church life for more than 30 years still affirm a range of Christian beliefs (Bellamy et al, 2002, 49).

The 'social learning theory' of adolescent religious development states that religious development takes place when important others (mainly parents, but also peers and teachers) reinforce adolescent religious attitudes and behaviours (Hoge, Johnson and Luidens, 1993, 242). If the theory is correct then ministry to young people in all its forms becomes strategic for faith development and the growth of the churches.

Which people are the most influential on a person's religious development? The answer to this question depends partly on the stage of life in which religious faith begins to develop. For many people, religious faith first develops in childhood and the teenage years. When it comes to significant individuals, research suggests that there are three major influences on adolescent religious development - the family, peers or friends, and religious educators, such as through church programs (Erikson, 1992, 133; Hoge and Petrillo, 1978).

There are a host of significant individuals that can fall into the broad categories of 'family', 'friends' and 'religious educators'. Apart from parents, 'family' can include grandparents and other siblings. 'Religious educators' can include Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders, local ministers, evangelists or conference speakers. They could include school teachers and Scripture teachers at schools. A primary aim of the survey was to identify who, among a range of people, is recognised as being influential in the faith development of many attenders.

This is potentially quite an important question to answer, since it points to where the churches may need to put greater resources to foster faith development. It can help churches to see whether faith development is more the work of religious and other professionals or more the work of lay people. It can highlight whether faith development is more a result of how attenders are brought up by their parents or whether others have had a key role to play. Do the churches simply play a supporting role to parents in passing on the faith, or do churches play a more direct role in faith development?

3.1 Who Showed You What Faith was About?

Attenders completing the National Church Life Survey were asked who, of a list of people, showed them what faith was about. This is a broader question than asking when a person first became a Christian. It is not necessarily limited to people who may have initially brought a person to the faith, such as may have occurred around the time of conversion. Nevertheless the wording of the question implies the laying of foundations or significant development in understanding the nature of faith.

A long list of possibly significant people was given as responses to the question. These included:

- parents and other family members such as spouses, grandparents or siblings
- friends and neighbours
- people at a local church, including ministers, Sunday school teachers, and youth group leaders
- people beyond the local church, including conference speakers, school Scripture teachers, Christian authors and TV or radio evangelists.

Attendees were limited to a maximum of three responses - most respondents selected between two and three responses, suggesting that faith development is influenced by a range of people not just one person.

Figure 3 shows that as a combined grouping, parents have been a significant influence for 55% of Anglican and Protestant attendees. Mothers were a significant influence in the faith development of 50% of attendees. Fathers were influential for a lesser number (33%). Male attendees (46%) were less likely to have been influenced by their mothers than female attendees (52%), but there were no significant differences between the sexes when it came to the influence of fathers.

As a combined grouping, local church workers (60%) have had as wide an impact as parents on faith development among Anglican and Protestant attendees. Local ministers were the most influential individuals (33%). Of interest from the viewpoint of agencies that provide support to children's and youth ministries has been the influence of Sunday school teachers (21%) and youth group leaders (16%).

As combined groupings, other family members (31%) and other ministries (28%) touched similar proportions of attendees. Friends and neighbours were influential for a smaller proportion (19%). The importance of friends as catalysts in adults joining a church for the first time has been highlighted through previous analysis of NCLS data (Kaldor et al, 1994, 160-162). The results here highlight that while friends may provide an incentive to come to church, other individuals may play a role in the actual development of faith.

Figure 3: Most significant people to show you what faith is about

	Females (%)	Males (%)	All (%)
<u>Parents</u>			
Mother	52	46	50
Father	32	34	33
<i>Parents combined total:</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>55</i>
<u>Other family</u>			
Spouse	9	14	10
Grandparents	14	9	12
Other family members	11	9	11
<i>Other family combined total:</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>
<u>Friends and Neighbours</u>			
Neighbours	2	3	2
Peers or friends	17	17	17
<i>Friends and neighbours combined total:</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>19</i>
<u>Local Church Ministry</u>			
Local minister, pastor or priest	31	37	33
Sunday school teacher	23	17	21
Youth group leaders	16	16	16
Other church attenders	8	10	9
<i>Local church ministry combined total:</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>60</i>
<u>Other Ministry</u>			
Scripture teacher/school chaplain	8	7	8
School teacher	3	3	3
Chaplain (eg hospital)	1	1	1
Christian camp leader	6	4	5
Conference speaker	3	3	3
Evangelistic speaker	7	6	7
A mission group	2	2	2
TV/radio evangelist	2	2	2
A Christian author	5	3	4
<i>Other ministry combined total:</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>28</i>
Another person	7	7	7
No one in particular/don't know	2	4	3

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey
 Note: Responses do not add to 100% because respondents could select more than one answer

Variations by denomination and state

Within denominations, interesting variations are found in the identity of the most important people to show what faith is about. Not surprisingly, attenders from all denominations nominate parents and local church ministry as being the two most important influences. The only differences occur in the relative percentages attributable to each, with parents having the largest impact among attenders from Lutheran, Salvation Army and Seventh-day Adventist denominations. Pentecostal attenders impute a much greater influence to friends and

neighbours than attenders in other denominations (28%), while at the same time being the least likely to nominate parents as a significant influence (45%).

Figure 4: Most significant people to show you what faith is about (by Denomination)

	Parents (%)	Other family (%)	Friends or neighbours (%)	Local church ministry (%)	Other ministry (%)
Anglican	56	31*	16	62	30
Baptist	49	29	23	59	30
Churches of Christ	57	33	19	60	27
Lutheran	72	37	13	50	31
Pentecostal	45	30	28	55	24
Presbyterian	49	31	17	69	25
Salvation Army	65	27	12	61	19
Seventh-day Adventist	65	35	13	50	35
Uniting	58	31	15	65	28

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey
Note: Responses do not add to 100% because respondents could select more than one answer

Very similar results are found across Australian states, with attenders from all states choosing parents and local ministry as being the two most important influences. The only significant difference between Australian states was found in the impact of parents on the faith development of their children, with only 50% of attenders from NSW and the ACT nominating parents as the most important influence on their faith, ranging up to 64% of Tasmanians. This may be a reflection of the different denominational composition in each State.

Figure 5: Most significant people to show you what faith is about (by State)

	Parents (%)	Other family (%)	Friends or neighbours (%)	Local church ministry (%)	Other ministry (%)
NSW & ACT	50	31	21	60	31
Victoria	61	32	16	57	28
Queensland	54	32	20	60	26
South Australia	59	28	16	60	25
Western Australia	54	34	20	61	24
Tasmania	64	31	19	60	34

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey

Variations by age group and sex

Attenders aged over 50 years (60%) were more likely to have been influenced by their parents than attenders aged 30-49 years (41%). The reverse is true when it comes to the influence of friends; attenders aged 30-49 years were more likely to have been influenced by friends (27%) than attenders over 50 years (11%). Parents may have become less influential over time, a

change possibly associated with the 'generation gap' that was said to have developed between the 'baby boom' generation and their parents. However, it is too early to tell whether this change is a permanent one affecting younger age groups as well, or just one associated with the 'baby boomer' age group.

In terms of gender differences, mothers (52%), grandparents (14%) and Sunday school teachers (23%) tend to have been more influential upon females than males, while local ministers (37%) and one's spouse (14%) tend to have been more influential upon males than females. The influence of friends tends to be the same for males and females (17%).

Variation by age people became Christians

The influence of different groupings of individuals does vary significantly according to when a person first became a Christian. As expected, parents are at their most influential where a person first becomes a Christian at an early age. This is further confirmed by the statistics in Figure 6 which show that 75% of those who became Christians before 10 years of age said that their parents had been influential in their faith development, declining to just 33% of those who became Christians after 20 years of age.

Local church ministers appear to be influential irrespective of when a person becomes a Christian. Some 31% of those who became Christians prior to 10 years of age said that the minister had been influential in this, compared with 34% who became Christians between 10 and 19 years of age and 34% over 20 years of age. Sunday school teachers have been very influential among those becoming Christians before 10 years of age (41%) and between the age of 10 and 19 years (26%). Similarly youth group leaders have been influential for 25% of those who became Christians in their teenage years.

Friends and neighbours play a more important role the older a person is when they became a Christian. While friends have little role where people become Christians before the age of 10, some 21% of those who became Christians between 10 and 19 years of age cite the influence of friends, as do 25% of those who became Christians over 20 years of age.

Figure 6: Most significant people to show you what faith is about (by age first became a Christian)

	0-9 yrs (%)	10-19 yrs (%)	20+ yrs (%)	Overall (%)
Parents	75	49	33	55
Other family	32	25	38	31
Friends and neighbours	12	21	25	19
Local church ministry	58	68	52	60
Other ministry	26	32	27	28

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey
Note: Responses do not add to 100% because respondents could select more than one answer

The influence of other family members remains constant as a grouping, although the influence of particular family members differs depending upon when a person became a Christian. Grandparents become less influential and spouses more so, the later that people become Christians, reflecting the effect of lifestage changes. Friends have little influence prior to 10 years of age, again reflecting the changes that occur as individuals move through different lifestages.

3.2 How influential were your Parents?

In view of the perceived importance of parents to faith development, the survey included a question that asked how influential each parent was in a person coming to the Christian faith. Figure 7 shows that mothers have tended to be the more influential. Some 54% of Anglican and Protestant attenders said that their mother had a large positive influence and 43% said that their father had a large positive influence - percentages that are similar to those shown in Figure 3. A further 18% said that their mother had a small positive influence and 17% said that their father had a small positive influence.

One reason that mothers are more likely to have been strongly influential than fathers is that mothers are also more likely to have been church attenders than fathers. There is a strong correlation between the church attendance patterns of parents and their reported influence on a person coming to faith. Of those mothers or fathers who were strongly influential, 86% of mothers and 87% of fathers also attended church regularly.

Figure 7: Parents' influence on your becoming a Christian

	Mother (%)	Father (%)
Yes, large positive influence	54	43
Yes, small positive influence	18	17
Neither positive nor negative	12	19
Both positive and negative	4	5
No, a negative influence	5	9
Unsure	2	3
Not applicable	4	5
Total	100	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey

It is important to note that with the entry of women into the workforce in greater numbers, women working fulltime tend to adopt the same lower church attendance levels of their male counterparts (de Vaus, 1985). If the church attendance level of parents is an indicator of their degree of influence over their children, then the changing involvement of women in the workforce would be expected to signal a decrease in the influence of mothers on the church attendance patterns of their children.

As in the previous question on who were the most significant people to show a person what faith was about (see Figure 3), parents as a combined grouping have had a large positive influence on about half of the current Anglican and Protestant attenders surveyed. Clearly while parents are an influential group, they are only one group among a number of influential people on faith development. The Australian study on why people don't go to church (Bellamy et al, 2002, 25-33) highlights that the influence of parents appears to offer only a partial explanation of current patterns of church attendance patterns among Australian adults. While many of the children of church attending parents have remained in church life, many others have ceased to attend. Still others commenced church attendance even though their parents had not been regular attenders.

Parents have perhaps been less influential on faith development than would otherwise be expected. Their role in faith development should be strengthened, given their potential influence on their children, particularly in the early years of childhood. However it would be wrong to expect that faith development would just occur through the home - other people already have a wide role.

Variations by age group and sex

Mothers were more likely to have had a large positive influence on attenders aged over 50 years (57%) than on attenders aged 30-49 years (43%). Similarly fathers were more likely to have had a large positive influence on attenders aged over 50 years (45%) than on attenders aged 30-49 years (34%). Parents may have become less influential over time. However it is too early to tell whether this change is a permanent one or just one associated with the 30-49 year age group.

It should be noted that attenders aged 15-29 years are the most likely of any age group to report that they were strongly influenced by their mothers (63%) or their fathers (52%). However it needs to be recognised that the composition of this age cohort will undergo change in future years as some of these younger attenders leave church life and others among their peers join the church for the first time. This will have an impact on the reported influence of parents - again it is too early to tell whether the patterns seen here will be maintained or whether much lower levels of influence will be reported by this age cohort in the long term.

There is no difference in the reported influence of each parent according to the sex of the respondents. There were no statistically significant differences in the levels of influence that mothers or fathers have had over their sons compared with their daughters.

3.3 In What Ways were Parents and Others Influential?

The survey went beyond determining the extent to which people are influential on faith development to probe how this occurs. In a study of American teenagers, Hoge and Petrillo (1978) found that parents' religion was most predictive of church attendance among a range of family factors, Parents' religion included the mother's and father's patterns of church attendance, the reported importance of their faith, and whether the mother's and father's religion was the same. However there were other less important factors that were also predictive including the frequency with which parents discussed the faith with their children, the extent to which parents supervised their children's faith exploration and the degree of harmony between children and parents.

The NCLS gave respondents a range of possible ways in which parents and others could have been influential on faith development, including the example of their faith in God, their ability to explain the faith, and their direct encouragement to go to church or to become a Christian. Other possible ways were how they cared for others or the impact of their personality.

Figure 8: How did people show you what faith is about?

	Parents (%)	Other People (%)
Their personality or character was attractive	18	19
Their faith in God	68	57
The way they lived out the faith	53	45
How they cared for people	30	22
How they cared for me	30	26
Their ability to explain the faith	19	28
They encouraged me to be a Christian	24	28
They encouraged me to go to church	22	15
Other	1	2
Don't know/not applicable	1	4

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey
Note: Responses do not add to 100% because respondents could select more than one answer

How parents were influential

The major impacts of parents seem to be twofold: their faith in God (68%) and in the way they lived out their faith (53%). Other aspects such as the ability of parents to explain the faith (19%) were much less important. Such results may be important for church agencies seeking to support parents in their role. Do these agencies produce material to help parents to be effective in raising their children in the faith? If so, do these materials focus on discussions about the faith or do they seek to help parents more broadly such as in living out the faith with their children?

How other people were influential

Respondents who indicated that their parents were influential in their faith development were excluded from this analysis in order to gain some idea of ways in which other people were influential. Again the outstanding way in which people other than parents were influential was their faith in God (57%) or the way that they lived out the faith (45%). However, the ability of others to explain the faith (28%) suggests that the influence of other people can be different to that of parents.

3.4 Friendships While Growing Up

An analysis was carried out regarding the relationship between people's close friendships with church attenders when they were 12-15 years of age, and the significance of particular church activities in helping young people come to faith. Such statistical relationships would provide further evidence of the role of social factors in people coming to faith.

A question appeared in the survey asking attenders whether their close friends attended church services or church activities around the time that they were 12 to 15 years of age. Some 13% of

attenders say that all of their close friends attended church and 26% say that most attended, a combined total of 39%. Some 36% say that some of their close friends attended church and 21% say that none of their close friends attended church when they were 12-15 years of age. A further 5% did not know or couldn't remember.

A number of activities that had an influence on attenders coming to faith were positively correlated with having friends at church at age 12-15 years. Some 50% of attenders who found Sunday school to be influential had all or most of their close friends attending church activities compared with an average of 39% for the sample. Similarly some 46% of those who found school Scripture to be influential, 44% of those who found youth groups to be influential and 44% who found church services to be influential also reported having all or most of their close friends at church activities when they were aged 12-15 years.

In summary, there is an association between having friendships at 12-15 years of age and whether certain Christian activities were significant in people coming to faith. While this would be expected, further research would be required to determine how and to what extent such friendships were influential.

Variations by age group and sex

Attenders aged over 50 years (48%) are the most likely to say that all or most of their close friends attended church while they were growing up. By comparison only 28% of 30-49 year olds and 15-29 year olds say that all or most of their close friends attended church while they were growing up. The higher response among attenders aged over 50 years may reflect the generally higher levels of church attendance that were prevalent in the post-War period. It would have been more common for them to have church attending friends even if these friends attended churches different to their own.

Female attenders (40%) are more likely than male attenders (35%) to say that all or most of their close friends attended church when they were growing up.

4. The effect of church activities on faith development

The churches provide a wide range of programs to foster faith development among children and youth. It has been common for children to go to Sunday school and more recently to attend kids clubs. Among older attenders many attended Sunday school and, following Confirmation, would have continued in the adult congregation. Among younger attenders, many would have attended Sunday school and then a youth group, perhaps until their late teens or early twenties.

In addition to these church-based activities are religious education programs encountered through the school system. Some schools are run by churches, mainly the Catholic Church, but also Anglican, Uniting and many independent Christian schools. These offer religious education programs as well as a school culture influenced by religious values. Religious education is provided in the public school system by way of school Scripture classes. These are usually conducted by volunteers from the churches, but there are many schools where no Scripture is provided.

Figure 9: Church activities attended regularly while growing up

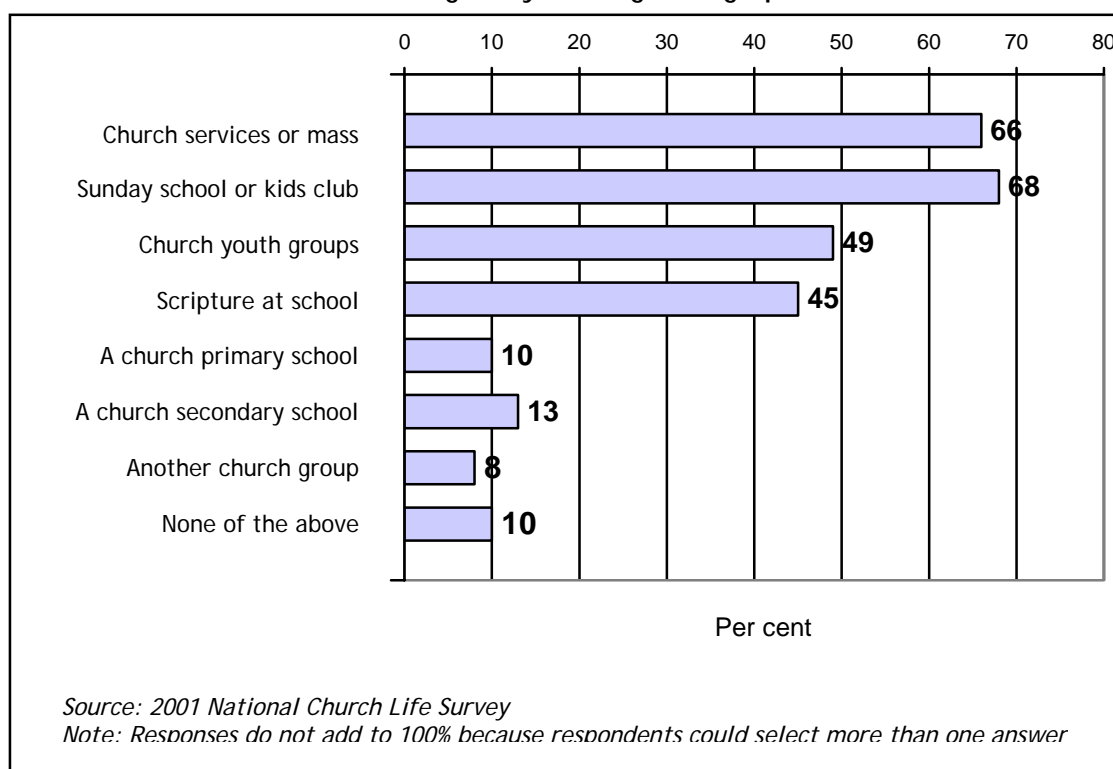


Figure 9 shows the proportion of Anglican and Protestant attenders who regularly attended these programs while growing up. Sunday school (68%) was the most commonly attended activity while growing up, followed closely by attendance at church services (66%). Scripture at school (45%) or

attendance at church youth groups (49%) have also been common experiences among Anglicans and Protestants.

Variations by denomination and state

There is not much variation in church attendance while growing up among attenders of different denominations, with a couple of exceptions. Pentecostal attenders report the lowest levels of church attendance while growing up (53%) while Lutheran and Seventh-day Adventist attenders report much higher levels of attendance (78 % and 84% respectively).

In relation to Sunday school attendance, there is little variation across denominations, with the exception of Pentecostal denominations. As with church attendance while growing up, the lower levels of Sunday school attendance among Pentecostals could reflect higher-than-average proportions of attenders from a non-church background in these denominations. Across all denominations, Sunday School was attended by a significantly greater proportion of respondents than was a youth group or school Scripture.

There is a large variation in attendance at school Scripture while growing up, with the lowest percentages found among Churches of Christ and Pentecostal attenders (37% and 38% respectively) and the highest among Salvation Army and Lutheran attenders (54% and 55% respectively).

There is little variation, however, when these four activities are examined on a state-by-state basis, with the exception of attendance at school Scripture. Attenders in Queensland record the highest percentage of Scripture attendance (51%) and South Australia the lowest (39%), with the other states in between.

Figure 10: Church activities attended regularly while growing up (by Denomination)

	Church services (%)	Sunday school (%)	Youth group (%)	School scripture (%)
Anglican	66	66	42	45
Baptist	68	72	55	45
Churches of Christ	65	69	53	37
Lutheran	78	72	61	55
Pentecostal	53	56	43	38
Presbyterian	66	65	44	46
Salvation Army	67	70	44	54
Seventh-day Adventist	84	73	48	43
Uniting	68	76	55	48
Other Protestant	76	70	64	36

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey
Note: Responses do not add to 100% because respondents could select more than one answer

Variations by age group and sex

Attendees aged 15-29 years were much more likely than other age groupings to have attended church youth groups (60%), a church secondary school (23%) or a church primary school (18%) while growing up. Attendees aged over 50 years were most likely to have attended Sunday school (72%). There are also variations by the sex of respondents, with females overall being more likely than males to have attended church based activities while growing up. Females (48%) are also more likely than males (40%) to have attended school Scripture.

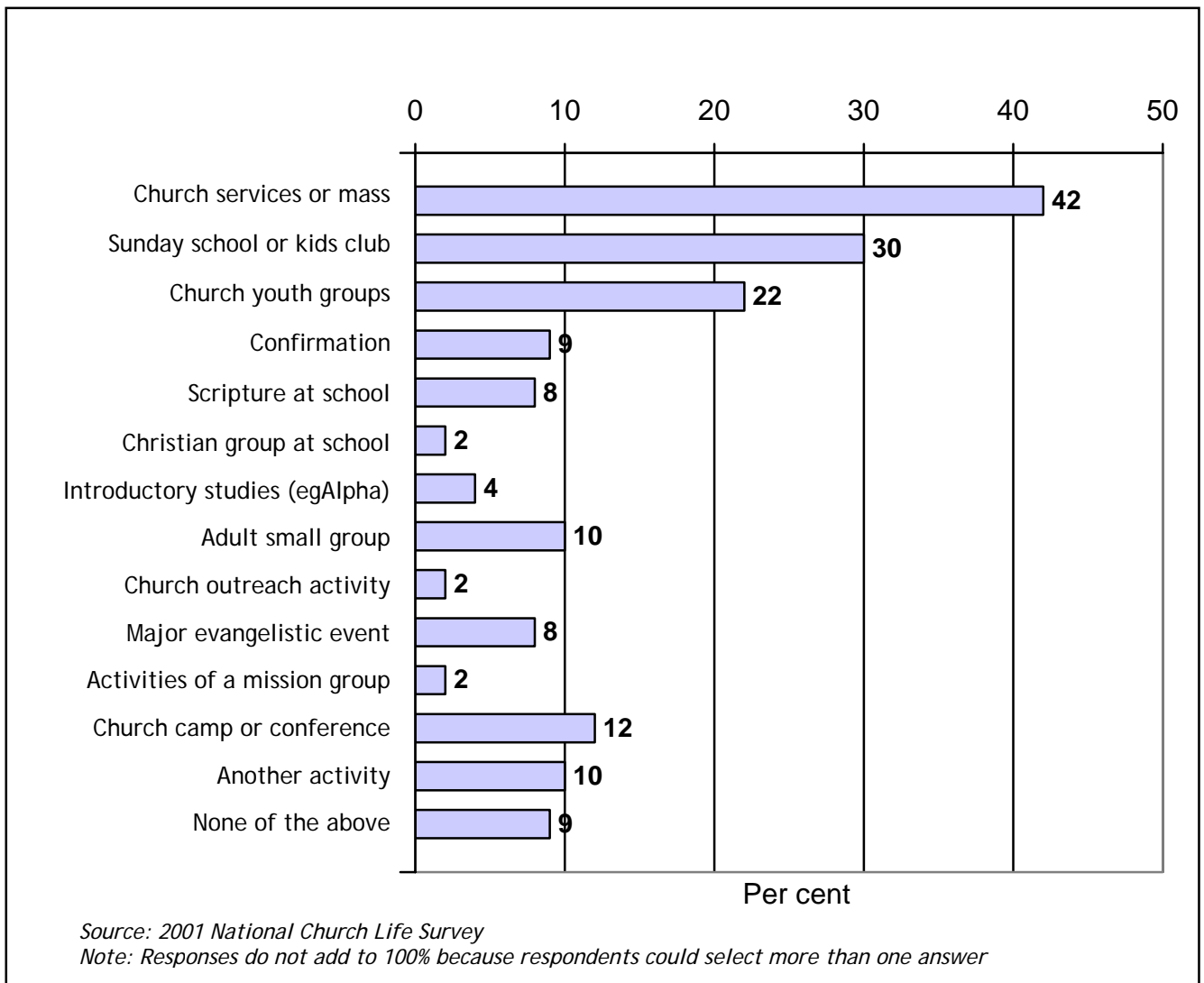
4.1 Impact on People Coming to Faith

A further question in the survey asked which if any of these activities had an impact on the respondent coming to faith. Apart from activities commonly experienced in childhood, there are many other activities designed for adults that can be added to a list of potentially influential activities and programs. For instance, a recent trend has been for churches to provide short-term groups offering programs such as 'Christianity Explained' and 'Alpha'. Small groups, church services, major evangelistic events, outreach activities and conferences can also be added to the list of influential activities. What has been the reported impact of these various programs and activities on faith development?

Figure 11 shows that church services emerge as the single most significant activity for bringing people to faith (42%). Sunday school (30%) and youth groups (22%) have also been significant for a large proportion of attendees. This further reinforces the strategic importance of ministry to children in faith development. Confirmation (9%), adult small groups (10%) and church camps (12%) have also been significant activities for quite a few Anglican and Protestant attendees.

However, despite the numbers who regularly attended Scripture at school (45%), far fewer (8%) claim that this had an impact in their coming to faith. This may reflect that being part of a community of faith, such as can occur through church-based activities such as church services, is more conducive to faith development than school-based activities such as Scripture classes. Nevertheless, the contribution made by school Scripture among Anglicans and Protestants and its role in providing a point of contact between church and community should be noted. More children now have contact with churches through school Scripture than through church-based activities such as Sunday school (Bellamy et al, 2002, p30-31). The challenge will be in finding ways of making school Scripture more effective in terms of faith development within existing constraints, and in inviting children into a community of faith.

Figure 11: Which activities were most significant in your coming to faith?



Variations by denomination and state

Generally across denominations, church attendance would appear to have been more influential than Sunday school, which in turn has been more influential than youth groups among a greater proportion of attenders. Attenders from Lutheran, Salvation Army, Anglican and Pentecostal denominations are less likely to feel that a youth group was important in their coming to faith. Pentecostals (18%) are the least likely to attribute importance to Sunday school for their faith commitment. Again, the relative lack of importance of programs targeting youth (such as Sunday School, youth group, school Scripture and Confirmation) among Pentecostals may reflect a higher proportion of attenders without a church background.

There is little variation across Australian States regarding the impact of varying activities on attenders coming to faith.

Figure 12: Which activities were most significant to you in coming to faith? (by denomination)

	Church services (%)	Sunday school (%)	Youth group (%)	Confirmation (%)	School scripture (%)
Anglican	43	27	17	15	10
Baptist	32	27	28	2	5
Churches of Christ	39	29	25	5	6
Lutheran	47	28	16	28	8
Pentecostal	38	18	18	3	5
Presbyterian	44	38	20	7	8
Salvation Army	41	33	16	6	8
Seventh-day Adventist	39	33	24	0	7
Uniting	39	36	23	8	9
Other Protestant	63	21	24	8	11

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey

Variation by age people became Christians

Church services (51%) and Sunday school (41%) are most significant for people who became Christians under 10 years of age, followed by youth groups (19%). Youth groups (36%) are significant for those who became Christians between 10 and 19 years of age, as are church services (37%) and Sunday school (30%), Church services (36%) are the most significant activities for people who became Christians after age 20, followed by adult small groups (17%). It can be seen that the structures in church life that are most helpful vary according to the stage of life at which a person becomes a Christian.

Variations by age group and sex

Figure 11, however, hides an apparent decrease in the impact of some activities over the years. When the results are divided into age bands, it becomes clear that certain activities are now, to greater or lesser degree, less important in younger people coming to faith than they once were. Figure 13 below suggests that Sunday school, school Scripture, and Confirmation appear to have less impact today than in the past. By comparison, youth groups have had a much greater impact among younger attenders, confirming their importance in any overall strategy to minister to children. Church youth groups are now almost as important as church services in bringing 15-29 year olds to faith.

Sunday school, school Scripture and Confirmation also have had a slightly greater reported impact among female attenders than male attenders. For instance 31% of females report that Sunday school had been significant for them, compared with 27% of males. This is partly due to the age differences already described, since females tend to outlive males and are thus over-represented in the older age groups. It is also partly to do with males being more likely to

become Christians later in life than females, beyond the stage of life when such activities could have been significant.

Church services appear to have remained fairly constant in their impact on people in different age groups. This could be due in part to the trend towards the diversification of church services, with different services aiming to meet the needs of distinct groups, such as young people, families and older people. The results here suggest that this diversification process has not harmed and may well have helped to maintain the relevance of church services in people finding faith across the generations.

Figure 13: Which activities were most significant in your coming to faith? (by age group)

	15-29 yrs (%)	30-49 yrs (%)	50+ yrs (%)	Overall (%)
Church services or mass	42	39	40	42
Sunday school or kids club*	19	23	34	30
Church youth group*	38	23	16	22
Confirmation*	4	5	12	9
Scripture at school*	7	4	10	8

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey
** Differences significant at p<0.05 level*

What are the possible explanations for these reported changes in the impact on faith development of different programs and activities among young attenders? One possibility is that fewer 15-49 year olds attended Sunday school, school Scripture or Confirmation classes when they were growing up than those aged over 50 years. While it is not possible here to confirm this explanation for Confirmation classes, it is clear that this explanation does not account for the lessening impact of school Scripture, since the percentage of those who attended Scripture (45%) has remained constant across the three age groups. Nor does it explain the apparent decrease in the impact of Sunday school, since a similar percentage of 15-29 year olds (64%), 30-49 year olds (64%) and those aged over 50 years (72%) report that they attended Sunday school while growing up.

However an increase in the proportion who attended youth groups while growing up may partly account for the increase in the impact of youth groups in people coming to faith. More than half of 15-29 year olds (60%) say that they attended youth groups while growing up - in fact, they may still be in attendance. By comparison only 45% of 30-49 year olds and 48% of those aged over 50 years attended youth groups while growing up.

Another possible explanation is that youth groups are invested with greater significance because they are encountered a little later in life. According to this explanation, Sunday school and school Scripture have the same impact they have always had, but the increasing number of people who have had a youth group involvement means that the experience of Sunday school and of Scripture is surpassed by the later experience of a youth group. However, among attenders who went to Sunday school only, about the same proportion found that it had a significant impact on their faith development as attenders who went to both Sunday school and youth group. It is therefore unlikely that the apparent decline in the impact of Sunday school is related to the later time at which youth groups are generally encountered in people's lives.

Another possible explanation that cannot be readily tested here is that youth groups offer an essentially different approach that is more appealing to younger people. Youth groups are often run by the youth themselves, bringing with it flexibility in and control over form and program. This is at a time in life when younger people are wishing to be more independent of their parents and are more influenced by their peers. Youth groups can become communities of faith or 'plausibility structures' in their own right, fulfilling important religious and social functions for young people. By comparison, Sunday schools, school Scripture and Confirmation classes are based on an educational model, though the analysis in section 3.4 suggests that they can enhance social networks.

While the survey has uncovered an apparent decline in the reported effectiveness of traditional ministries such as school Scripture, Sunday school and Confirmation, further research is required to confirm the causes of this trend.

4.2 Impact on Attitudes towards Church while Growing Up

Much effort occurs at the congregational level in providing Sunday school, kids club or youth group activities as an adjunct to or even as an alternative to involvement in church services. The question could be asked as to whether the provision of these activities contributes to a positive experience of church life while growing up.

For those attenders who regularly attended church services or other church activities while growing up, around 55% had an unambiguously positive experience of church. Another 28% had a mixed experience and 6% had an unambiguously negative experience.

Comparisons were carried out between attenders with different attendance patterns while growing up. Among those who regularly attended church services only, some 50% say that their

experience of church was unambiguously positive. However among those who attended both church and Sunday school or kids club, this percentage climbs to 70%. Among those who attended both church services and youth group, 71% had a positive experience. It appears from this data that these specialised activities for children and youth have had a measurable impact on the way that attenders regard their church upbringing.

Variations by denomination and state

Pentecostals (47%) are the least likely of the denominational groups to report having an unambiguously positive experience of church while growing up. By contrast, Salvationists (61%) and Seventh-day Adventists (71%) report the highest levels. The lower levels of positive experience found among Pentecostals is partly a function of higher levels of newcomers to church life found in their ranks. 'Newcomers' here include both first time attenders and returnees to church life. Where they did have a childhood involvement, newcomers are the least likely group among attenders to have had a positive experience of church while growing up. The lower levels of positive experience among Pentecostals could also be a function of dissatisfaction with mainstream church life found among many Pentecostals, which prompted their move to a different denomination in the first place. It has previously been noted in NCLS analysis that attenders who switch out of mainstream denominations are more likely than other switchers to have done so due to dissatisfaction with the style or programs of their church (Kaldor et al, 1994, pp248-250).

On a State level, there were no significant differences between attenders from different States.

Variations by age group and sex

There are also variations according to the age group of the respondents. Attenders aged 15-29 years were more likely to have had a positive experience of church when growing up (54%). Again it should be noted that this response might weaken into the future as the composition of this grouping changes. By comparison attenders aged over 50 years (60%) were more likely to have had a positive experience than attenders aged 30-49 years (47%).

Females (58%) are more likely than males (51%) to say that they had a positive experience of church when growing up.

Variation by age people became Christians

Crandall (1999, 69) suggests that early identification with the faith positively affects children's perceptions of church life. This can be seen among Anglican and Protestant attenders. Among

those attenders who regularly attended church while growing up, those who became Christians before the age of 10 years were most likely to have had an unambiguously positive experience of church while growing up (70%). This is compared with 55% of those who became Christians between the ages of 10 and 19 years and 35% after 20 years of age.

Having a positive attitude towards church when growing up appears to be partly a function of becoming a Christian at an early age and partly a function of the kind of activities that a person was involved with. Those attenders who became Christians before 10 years of age and attended both church and youth group whilst growing up had the highest levels of satisfaction: 76% claimed to have had a positive experience of church when growing up. Forty percent of these attenders report a very positive experience of church life compared to 16% of all other attenders. These early experiences of church were probably more relevant to those who already had a sense of commitment to the faith rather than those who attended regularly but did not become committed until later in life.

4.3 Impact on Christian Practice Today

Are there lasting impacts of a youth group or Sunday school involvement or school Scripture on the practice of the faith among attenders today, apart from any involvement they might have had in church services while growing up? Given that such activities for children and youth are reported to have been important in laying the foundation of faith in the lives of many attenders, it might be expected that such involvement may continue to have an impact perhaps years after leaving such groups.

The NCLS included a range of measures of a person's current practice of the faith, covering the three major areas of relationship with God, church involvement and involvement in the wider community. A small set of such variables has been examined here including:

- a willingness to engage in outreach, such as inviting people to church activities or a readiness to talk about the Christian faith with others;
- involvement in community action, social justice or lobby groups;
- having a leadership or ministry role in church life;
- placing great importance on faith;
- engaging in devotional practices such as prayer and Bible reading at least a few times per week.

The following analysis compares attenders with different church attendance backgrounds while growing up: adults who attended church services only while growing up have been compared with those who attended Sunday school, a youth group or school Scripture, in addition to any

involvement in church services. The analysis reveals any differences in Christian practice today between these two groups of attenders.

Youth groups

Figure 14 shows some positive associations between an involvement in a youth group while growing up and the practice of the faith today. However it should be noted that these associations are generally very weak. The strongest association has to do with the importance placed upon faith: adults who had attended youth groups while growing up are more likely to strongly disagree with the notion that there are more important things in life than faith. Other associations include having a leadership or ministry role in church life and a readiness to discuss faith with other people. However beyond these no other statistically significant associations were found with other aspects tested, such as involvement in social action activities or a willingness to invite others to church.

Figure 14: Current religious practices (by involvement in youth groups when growing up)

	Attended church services only (%)	Attended church and youth group (%)
Ready to discuss faith with others*	63	68
Willing to invite others to church	81	83
Involved in community action/justice/lobby groups	27	28
Have a leadership or ministry role in church life*	62	71
Strongly disagree that there are more important things in life than faith*	43	57
Practice devotions a few times a week or more	71	75

Although there are some associations between a previous youth group involvement and the practice of the faith today, we cannot immediately jump to the conclusion that the former is a cause of the latter. It is very possible that these patterns are simply a function of a third variable, such as age or theological identification. In other words, it is possible that the patterns in Figure 14 can be explained by other variables rather than being a latent effect of a youth group involvement.

This indeed appears to be the case in relation to a readiness to share faith with others, which is largely a function of age and theological orientation rather than a latent effect of a youth group involvement. Similarly, the greater involvement in adult leadership roles does not appear to hold true among evangelicals; evangelical attenders who only attended church services when growing up appear just as likely to take on leadership positions as those who also attended a youth group.

However the greater importance placed upon faith among those who attended youth groups does remain even where the effects of age and theological orientation are taken into account.

Sunday schools and kids clubs

Similar patterns are noted among people who had attended Sunday school while growing up, compared with those who had only attended church services. These associations are weaker still than those found for a youth group involvement.

Some 68% of those who attended Sunday school said that they had a leadership or ministry role at church compared with 62% of those who attended church services only. Again this relationship was not found among evangelicals. Some 53% of those who attended Sunday school strongly disagreed that there are more important things in life than faith compared with 44% of those who only attended church services while growing up. As with those who were involved with youth groups, this association remains even after taking into account the theological orientation and age group of attenders.

School Scripture

Again similar patterns were noticed among those adults who had attended school Scripture as children. For instance those who attended Scripture (56%) were again more likely than those who only attended church services (47%) to disagree that there are more important things in life than faith. However in the case of school Scripture, the involvement of many of these same respondents in youth groups also offers a partial explanation for these effects.

In summary, there is some evidence here of involvement in church activities in childhood having a latent effect on adult patterns of religious involvement- albeit to a very small extent. This is particularly so in relation to the importance that adults seem to place on their faith. Such a finding is tentatively made given the possibility of such weak relationships being the product of some other, yet-to-be-identified variables.

4.4 Impact on People Staying in the Faith

Does an involvement in Sunday school, youth group or school Scripture have any effect in strengthening faith for the future, even many years after an involvement with such activities has ceased? In addressing this issue, the analysis here is limited to current church attenders, who are not representative of all people who have ever been committed to the Christian faith or involved in church life at some time in their lives.

A question in the survey asked whether attenders had, at any stage of their lives, turned away from the Christian faith. About two-thirds of attenders (67%) said that there had never been such a time. A quarter (25%) said that there had been one such period in their lives, while another 8% said that there had been two or more such periods. Thus the NCLS data does identify a significant grouping of attenders who have had the experience of falling away from the faith for some period. It is possible to examine the church attendance backgrounds of this grouping compared with other attenders to see if there are any differences.

Variations by denomination and state

There are variations in the reported incidence of falling away, according to the denominational background of respondents. Pentecostals (42%) are most likely to have turned away at least once, while attenders at large mainstream denominations such as Lutheran (23%), Presbyterian (24%) and Uniting (27%) are the least likely to report a time when they turned away from faith. The reasons for these variations may have to do with higher proportions of newcomers to church life being found in Pentecostal denominations and a greater emphasis on adult conversion being found among Pentecostals.

At the State level, attenders from the smaller States (WA, Tasmania and Northern Territory) are more likely to report having turned away at least once in their lives (43%) than attenders in the larger states (32%).

Variations by age group and sex

There are no statistically significant variations in the prevalence of falling away by the sex of respondents. Male and female attenders are equally as likely to have been through such a period. Older attenders aged over 50 years (29%) are less likely to have ever fallen away from faith than young attenders aged 30-49 (36%) or 15-29 years (41%), despite having had more opportunity to do so (ie: a longer lifespan). These age differences do, to some extent, reflect denominational background since younger attenders are more likely to be found in Pentecostal denominations.

Impact of activities while growing up

Are there any lasting impacts of a youth group, Sunday school or school Scripture involvement in preventing people from falling away, perhaps years after leaving such groups?

In addressing this question, analysis has been carried out for three categories of attender:

- those attenders who had no regular church involvement when growing up
- those attenders who attended church services only when growing up
- those attenders who attended both church services and a church youth group and/or Sunday school.

No statistically significant relationships were detected according to whether respondents had no church background, were involved in church services only or attended Sunday school or school Scripture while growing up. A very weak but statistically significant relationship was detected for a youth group involvement: 31% of those who had been involved in a youth group had fallen away at least once, compared with 36% who had attended church services only while growing up and 34% of those who had no regular church involvement while growing up.

It should be noted that a relationship was detected between the influence of parents and whether attenders had ever turned away from the faith at some point. Those attenders who reported that they had never turned away from the faith were more likely to say that their mother had been a large positive influence on their coming to the Christian faith (53%) than attenders who had turned away at some stage (43%). Similarly, those who had never turned away were more likely to say that their father had been a significant influence on their coming to the Christian faith (35%) than those who had turned away at some stage (26%).

5. Conclusions

A range of conclusions can be drawn from the analysis in this report.

The impact of youth groups, Sunday schools and kids clubs

Youth groups and Sunday schools/kids clubs are strategic in the development of faith, and play an important role in partnership with church services and parents. The report highlights that:

- Most Anglican and Protestant attenders first became Christians prior to 20 years of age;
- Youth groups and Sunday school/kids club are reported to have been influential on the faith development of a large minority of attenders;
- Involvement in a youth group and Sunday school/kids club is associated with higher levels of satisfaction with church involvement while growing up;
- Involvement in a youth group and Sunday school/kids club while growing up is weakly associated with a more committed church involvement in later life;
- Involvement in a youth group is negatively but weakly associated with the experience of falling away from the faith.

However, despite the importance of Sunday school in the early years, there is evidence that the impact of Sunday school on faith development has been decreasing. Each new age cohort of attenders reports that Sunday school has had less impact on the development of their faith than for the previous age cohort. Why this is so requires further research, particularly as it does not seem to be a function of lower proportions of attenders having attended these activities while growing up.

On the other hand, the impact of youth groups on faith development is increasing. This appears to be related to the increased likelihood of a youth group involvement while growing up. However these increases may also be a result of the relative effectiveness of youth groups in developing faith among young attenders. In this respect they may now be better than activities based on a more educational model, such as Sunday schools, Confirmation classes or school Scripture.

Better understanding these trends is important since it has an impact on the effective allocation of resources to these different areas of ministry. It is clear that youth group ministry should be well supported in view of its impact. The allocation of resources to Sunday schools is not as clear. Despite their importance historically and their importance among people who become

Christian at a young age, there is also evidence of a decline in impact. What would need to be determined is whether the allocation of additional resources would halt this decline.

School Scripture

The evidence of this report is that school Scripture plays a lesser role in the development of faith than would be suggested by the numbers who have encountered school Scripture while growing up. This difference may be best understood in the light of the theory of 'plausibility structures'. According to this theory, the school environment would generally be inferior to a church in terms of faith development because it does not provide the same social interactions with networks of believers. It may be that improving links between Scripture classes with Christian groups that meet at the school and church-based groups such as Sunday school, would enhance the impact of school Scripture. If this were to occur, school Scripture may become a more effective contacting point between churches and the wider community.

As with Sunday school and Confirmation there is some evidence here that the impact of school Scripture has decreased. Attenders over 50 years are twice as likely as 30-49 year olds to say that school Scripture was influential in their faith development.

Social influences upon development of faith

The report has shown that the people and activities that have had the most widespread reported influence depends upon when a person became a Christian. As Figure 15 shows, for those Anglican and Protestant attenders who first became Christians before 10 years of age, parents, church services and Sunday school were particularly influential in helping them come to faith. For people who became Christians between 10 and 19 years of age, parents and local church activities, such as church services and youth groups, were the most influential. After age 20, local church ministry was the most influential, particularly local ministers and church services.

Figure 15: Rank ordering of key influences on faith development (by age first became a Christian)

0-9 yrs	10-19 yrs	20 + yrs
Parents (75%)	Parents (49%)	Church services (36%)
Church services (51%)	Church services (37%)	Local minister (34%)
Sunday school (41%)	Youth groups (36%)	Parents (33%)
Local minister (31%)	Local minister (34%)	Friends and neighbours (25%)
Sunday school teacher (24%)	Sunday school (30%)	Adult small groups (17%)
	Sunday sch. teacher (26%)	
	Youth group leader (25%)	
	Friends and neighbours (21%)	

As a combined grouping, local church workers (ministers, Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders and others) have had the most widespread reported impact on faith development. Among individuals, parents have been a key influence, even when people first become Christians in their adult years. They are particularly influential when people first become Christians under 10 years of age. There is some evidence, however, that the influence of parents may have declined, with the influence of friends increasing. This could be an outcome of the 'generation gap' that was said to have developed between the 'baby boomer' generation and their parents. It could also be that friends become a primary reference point for people at an earlier stage of life than in the past. This would also be consistent with the apparent increase in the proliferation and influence of youth groups.

The report has highlighted some different ways that people have been influential. Parents are particularly influential through their faith in God and in the way they live out the faith. By contrast other people are more likely to be influential in other ways as well, including in their ability to explain the faith.

There is good reason to seek to enhance the ability of parents to be effective in the development of their children's faith. There is evidence here that parents have had an impact on the faith development of over half of Anglican and Protestant attenders. Yet analysis of the Australian Community Survey (ACS) has highlighted that the influence of parents generally on church attendance patterns among Australians appears to be less than would be expected (Bellamy et al, 2002).

There have been debates as to what is most effective in helping children to find faith. Much effort has gone into the creation of resources to help children grow in understanding of religion, such as special children's Bibles. Some have been critical of these attempts, asserting that children will always misunderstand the Bible and grow up with a distorted view of it (Goldman, 1970). Others have advocated a non-directive approach to children's exploration of the Bible (Gobbel and Gobbel, 1986). There have been discussions about the merits of using stories to convey the Bible message to children versus the imparting of information from the Bible (Bridger, 1988). Yet church attending parents are probably oblivious to much of this debate. What resources do Christian agencies offer to parents to assist them in the important task of helping children to find faith that takes these debates into account?

The NCLS publication *Why People Don't Go to Church* (Bellamy et al, 2002) has highlighted that society has been changing to one where there are many options, including in the area of religion

and spirituality. Do our approaches to raising children in the faith educate children about these choices and their implications?

Impact of church-based activities on adult faith

The report shows that involvement in a youth group, Sunday school or kids club appears to be associated with higher levels of involvement in church leadership and ministry, and the importance placed upon faith. However it should be noted that these relationships are weak and may ultimately be the result of other unidentified variables.

Variations by denomination and state

Throughout this report variations have been examined across nine major Anglican and Protestant denominations and also by Australian State. Results that vary across denomination include:

- the age at which attenders first became Christians
- the most significant people to show attenders what faith is about
- which church activities are attended regularly while growing up
- which of these activities are most significant in attenders coming to faith.

Identified denominational variations appear to result from the different cultural norms of particular denominations and the background of attenders.

Fewer State variations have been observed. These include variations in the impact of parents in showing attenders what faith is about and levels of school Scripture attendance. These variations may reflect the differing denominational profile in each of the states.

Variations by age group and sex

The report has established a number of age related differences for each of the variables examined. While some of these reflect life stage effects, other differences suggest that there have been generational changes, particularly in the relative impacts of church activities in the faith development of Anglican and Protestant attenders.

It appears that attenders aged 30-49 years have had a somewhat different experience of faith development than attenders aged over 50 years. Attenders aged 30-49 years appear to have been less influenced by their parents and more influenced by friends. They are less likely to have become Christians at a very young age, less likely to have had a positive experience of church while growing up and less likely to have had churchgoing friends while growing up. It

appears as though the socialisation processes that were a feature of the faith development of older attenders were less influential among the 'baby boom' generation.

By comparison, however, the patterns found among 15-29 year olds often appear to revert to those found among attenders aged over 50 years, with the exception of a much greater youth group involvement among young adults. It remains to be seen whether these patterns will change as this younger age group move into mid-life, as some of their number leave church life and are replaced by others who are new to church life.

The report has not been able to establish as many variations by the sex of respondents. Some of the variations appear to be a function of the fact that females living longer than males, meaning that the differences by sex are really a reflection of age differences. It is noted that females appear more likely to become Christians at an earlier age and to have been influenced in doing so by their parents, particularly mothers, grandparents and Sunday school teachers. By comparison, local ministers appear to be a little more influential among males, which is consistent with males being more likely to become Christians at a later age than females. Females are also a little more likely to report a positive experience of church while growing up and to have had close friends who were church attenders. There is some evidence here of females more readily adapting to church life and coming to grips with the Christian faith at an earlier age than males. This may have implications for those planning church activities for children and young people.

5.1 Future Research Directions

A number of further research directions emerge from this study. Some of these involve further analysis of the existing database, while others involve conducting new research.

Further research on the NCLS data

1. Comparative analysis could be carried out using data for churches internationally to see whether the findings of this report hold true in other countries. Since this questionnaire was also used in part or in full in other countries, the research could also be extended to England, the USA and New Zealand.

2. Linkages between background factors and aspects of current involvement, to identify determinants of adult patterns of church involvement (eg. involvement in small groups, in leadership, in outreach and growth in faith). Questions about a person's background and history of involvement, such as when they became a Christian, their parents' church attendance, experience of conversion, and experience of falling away may throw light on current patterns of involvement.

3. Analysis of the impact of other activities while growing up, such as Christian schooling, small groups, Christian camps and major evangelistic events. Some limited exploration could be carried out in a similar way to the analysis carried out on Sunday schools, youth groups and school Scripture in this report.

4. Additional research regarding children and youth through the NCLS. In this respect it should be noted that the NCLS contained questions asking parents about the attendance of their children. Some denominations also took part in a special survey of 10-14 year old attenders. Analysis of this data could provide insights into the retention of children and young adults in church life.

Further research beyond NCLS data

5. The report has established that Sunday school, school Scripture and Confirmation appear to be having less impact than in the past, while youth groups appear to be having more of an impact on faith development. The report has also canvassed some of the likely reasons for these trends. Further research could be carried out to further establish the reasons behind these trends. Such research could involve focus groups or interviews carried out among participants in youth groups.

6. Research in schools to explore the role of religious education in state schools and how to improve connections between the churches and school communities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: About the survey

The research presented in this report has been carried out by NCLS Research, an organisation jointly sponsored by ANGLICARE (Diocese of Sydney), Uniting Church in Australia NSW Board of Mission, and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

NCLS Research seeks to assist churches to be more effective in mission in a changing and diverse society. It also seeks to encourage discussion in the wider society about values, meaning and spirituality.

Since its inception in 1990, NCLS Research has carried out several major research projects, including the 1991, 1996 and 2001 National Church Life Surveys. In 2001, over 450,000 church attenders aged 15 years or above completed a survey form. The survey involved some 6500 congregations from 19 denominations.

Different versions of the attender survey were distributed to make the most of this opportunity. Each survey contained a common core of questions, the remaining questions exploring particular issues in greater depth. In Anglican and Protestant congregations, most attenders (around 85%) received a primary survey form, the remaining 15% receiving one of 20 other survey forms. Random samples of over 2000 church attenders completed each of these survey forms.

The questions that are the subject of this report appeared in Survey C, and are shown in Appendix 2. In total there were 4162 Anglican or Protestant respondents in the sample. The sample is larger than for other surveys due to intentional over-sampling of Anglicans in the Diocese of Sydney.

The sample has been weighted by denomination and, in the case of Anglicans, for the Sydney diocese as well, in order to account for differing participation rates between denominations. Consequently the denominational distribution of attenders within the Survey C data matches that of the full NCLS sample.

The weighted sample characteristics generally conform with that of the full NCLS database with two exceptions. The Survey C sample contained slightly higher proportions of females (64%

compared with 60% nationally) and higher proportions identifying with a specific theological orientation.

Comparison of characteristics of Anglican and Protestant respondents to Survey C and Anglican and in the full NCLS Database

	Survey C	NCLS database
<u>No. of cases:</u>	4162	313782
	(%)	(%)
Survey C		NCLS database
<u>Sex:</u>		
Female	64	60
Male	36	40
<u>Age groupings:</u>		
15-19 years	6	7
20-29 years	11	11
30-39 years	13	13
40-49 years	16	17
50-59 years	18	17
60-69 years	15	15
70-79 years	14	14
80+ years	7	7
	(%)	(%)
Highest level of education:		
Primary school	6	6
Secondary school	45	46
Trade certificate	10	10
Diploma or associate diploma	14	15
Degree from a university or equivalent	15	14
Postgraduate degree/diploma	9	9
Marital status:		
Never married	19	19
Married first time	59	58
Remarried after divorce	7	6
Remarried after death of spouse	2	2
Separated/divorced/de-facto	6	7
Widowed	8	9
Theological identification:		
Catholic/Anglo-Catholic	15	14
Evangelical/Reformed	39	38
Charismatic/Pentecostal	27	26
Traditionalist	18	17
Moderate	11	10
Another description	12	10
Do not identify with such descriptions	12	17
<i>NB Up to two options could be selected, so percentages may not add to 100%</i>		

Appendix 2: Survey questions that appear in this report

4. Do you regularly take part in any activities of this congregation/parish that reach out to the wider community (eg. visitation, evangelism, outreach, community service, social justice, welfare)? Mark ALL that apply

- Yes, in outreach or evangelistic activities
- Yes, in community service, social justice or welfare activities of this congregation/parish
- No, we don't have such activities
- No, I am not regularly involved

7. Do you *currently* perform any of these leadership or ministry roles here? (Mark all that apply)

- Teaching or preaching at church services
- Music ministry (eg. choir, organist, band)
- Lead, plan or assist in church services (eg. liturgical assistant, server, announcements)
- Oversight of the congregation/parish (eg. parish council)
- Member of a committee or task force
- Pastoral care role (eg. visitation of the sick, the elderly)
- Small group leadership among adults (eg. Bible study groups, prayer groups)
- Adult social group leadership
- Children's ministry role (under 12's)
- Youth ministry role/youth group leadership
- Religious education teacher/scripture teacher in schools
- Preparing adults for membership, marriage or sacraments
- Another role not mentioned above
- No such leadership or ministry role

10. Over the last year, do you believe you have grown in your Christian faith?

- No real growth
- Some growth
- Much growth, mainly through this congregation/parish
- Much growth, mainly through other groups or congregations/parishes
- Much growth, mainly through my own private activity

11. How often do you spend time in private devotional activities (eg. prayer, meditation, reading the Bible alone)?

- Every day/most days Occasionally
- A few times a week Hardly ever
- Once a week Never

12. Some people feel they came to faith gradually. For others, it began at a definite moment of commitment. Have you ever experienced such a moment of decisive faith commitment or Christian conversion?

- No, I've had faith for as long as I can remember
- No, I came to faith through a gradual process
- Yes, at one specific moment in the last 5 years
- Yes, at one specific moment more than 5 years ago
- Yes, a number of specific moments of commitment or recommitment
- Don't know/not applicable

14. Do you identify with any of the following approaches to matters of faith? (Mark up to TWO options)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic or Anglo-Catholic | <input type="checkbox"/> Traditionalist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelical | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reformed | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charismatic | <input type="checkbox"/> New Age |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pentecostal | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not identify with such descriptions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundamentalist | |

15. In what year were you born? Please complete the year.

1	9		
---	---	--	--

16. Are you:

- Female
 Male

17. What is the *highest* educational qualification you have completed?

- Primary school
 Some secondary school
 Completed secondary school
 Trade certificate
 Diploma or associate diploma
 Bachelor degree from a university or equivalent institution
 Post graduate degree or diploma

18. Which term best describes your present marital status?

- Never married
 In first marriage
 Remarried after divorce
 Remarried after death of spouse
 In a defacto relationship
 Separated but not divorced
 Divorced and not remarried
 Widowed

23. Are you involved in any community service, social action or welfare groups *not* connected to this congregation/parish?

(Mark all that apply)

- Yes, community service, care or welfare groups
 Yes, social action, justice or lobby groups (eg. environmental, human rights or local issues)
 No, I'm not involved with such groups

25. Which of the following best describes your readiness to talk to others about your faith?

- I do not have faith, so the question is not applicable
 I do not like to talk about my faith; my life and actions are sufficient
 I find it hard to talk about my faith in ordinary language
 I mostly feel at ease talking about my faith and do so if it comes up
 I feel at ease talking about my faith and look for opportunities to do so

38. How old were you when you *first* became a Christian?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 5 years of age | <input type="checkbox"/> 30-39 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-9 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 40-59 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-14 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 60 years or over |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15-19 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/ can't remember |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-29 years old | |

39. Before you were 12 years old, how often did your parents (or guardians) attend church?

- Both parents attended regularly
- Only my mother attended regularly
- Only my father attended regularly
- One or both parents attended occasionally
- Neither parent attended
- Don't know

40. Did your parents (or guardians) have a positive influence on your coming to the Christian faith? (Please mark one circle in each column)

	Mother	Father
Yes, a large positive influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, a small positive influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither positive nor negative.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Both positive and negative.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, a negative influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unsure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not applicable to me.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

41. If either parent was a positive influence, how was that? (Mark up to TWO responses)

- His/her personality or character was attractive
- His/her faith in God
- The way he/she lived out the faith
- How he/she cared for other people
- How he/she cared for me
- His/her ability to explain the faith
- He/she encouraged me to be a Christian
- He/she encouraged me to go to church activities
- Other
- Don't know/not applicable to me

42. When you were around 12 to 15 years old, did your close friends attend church services or church activities?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, all of them | <input type="checkbox"/> No, none of them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, most of them | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/can't remember |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, some of them | |

43. The most significant people to show me what faith was about were: (Mark up to THREE responses)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Father | teacher/school chaplain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> School teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents | <input type="checkbox"/> Chaplain (eg. hospital) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other family members | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian camp leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbours | <input type="checkbox"/> A conference speaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peers or friends | <input type="checkbox"/> An evangelistic speaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minister/pastor/priest
of a local church | <input type="checkbox"/> People connected with
a mission group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday school/ Sabbath
school teachers | <input type="checkbox"/> TV/radio evangelist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth group leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> A Christian author |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other church attenders | <input type="checkbox"/> Another person |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> No one in particular/don't know |

44. What was it about these people that showed you what faith was about? (Mark up to THREE responses)

- Their personality or character was attractive
- Their faith in God
- The way they lived out the faith
- How they cared for other people
- How they cared for me
- Their ability to explain the faith
- They encouraged me to be a Christian
- They encouraged me to go to church activities
- Other
- Don't know/not applicable to me

45. Overall, how would you describe your experience of church services or church activities prior to 12 years of age?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very positive | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Positive | <input type="checkbox"/> Very negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable/unsure |

46. Did you regularly attend, at least monthly, any of the following while growing up? (Please mark all that apply)

- Church services/ Mass at a local church
- Sunday school/ Sabbath school or kids club
- Church youth groups
- Religious education (Scripture) at school
- A church primary school
- A church secondary school
- Another church group not mentioned above
- None of the above

47. Which of the following activities, if any, would you say were most significant in helping you come to faith? (Mark up to TWO responses)

- Church services/ Mass
- Sunday school/ Sabbath school or kids club
- Religious education (Scripture) at school
- Confirmation classes/Confirmation ceremony
- A church youth group
- A voluntary Christian group at school

- A series of introductory studies about the faith (eg. 'Christianity Explained', 'Alpha')
- An adult prayer, discussion or Bible study group
- A church outreach activity (eg. drop-in centre, visitation)
- A major evangelistic event (eg. Billy Graham Crusade)
- The activities of a mission group or organisation
- Church camp, conference or spiritual retreat
- Another activity not mentioned above
- None of the above

48. Has there ever been a period in your life when you turned away from the Christian faith?

- No
- Yes, one such period
- Yes, two or more such periods

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

49. I feel there are many, more important things in my life than my Christian faith

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral or unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

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