

to the training of new members. Nearly 31,000 new members have been made in the last three years. We see signs of more churches being interested in the new Church Growth Movement and its various forms. There is a renewed interest in house fellowships and Bible study, and many churches are choosing and using modern hymns that relate to their current religious experience.

There is a steady demand for the leaflets and booklets offered by the Church Membership Committee, and the efforts of recent years to improve the caring work of the local churches are bearing fruit. Christians, and Methodists particularly, should be congenitally hopeful, and a more confident atmosphere about the future, regardless of church unity motions and their outcome, appears to be developing.

It may sound cynical to refer to the sobering effect of rising unemployment on a nation that was becoming increasingly secularised in its affluence and self-indulgence, but if people are brought by the national situation to look again at their deeper needs in life, God may be preparing in Methodism a leaner but more faithful number of Churches and people to meet those needs.

In some areas there is already significant growth. We need to ask why this is so. When Conference members go home we suggest they seek out the growth points in their Districts. They should listen to the stories of what is going on that is effective and life-giving.

H. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP TRIENNIAL STATISTICAL REPORT 1977-1980

Numbers Count

Assessing the health of the Church every three years by counting its members and analysing the figures is like judging the health of a man by weighing and measuring him. A man's true health has in it a spiritual quality that cannot be judged in this way. The true health of the Church cannot be properly assessed by triennial statistics of its membership. Yet this is where we must start. We do need assuring that the Church is still there, and that it will continue to be there in the years to come.

In the figures of the last triennium we find reason for both assurance and alarm. It is assuring to discover that the membership decline of recent years is slowing down considerably. A loss of 7.6% in 1968-71 was reduced to 7.2% in 1971-74, to 7.1% in 1974-77, and to 5.5% in 1977-80. In 1980 alone a loss of 1.8% was the lowest loss since 1965. It is also encouraging that for the first time for a good many years there were more new and restored members in 1980 than losses by death. But there can be no overall growth until we make far more new members than we lose each year by death, lapsing, and transfers.

There are two main causes for alarm. Of our 7,990 local churches 5,501 of them made no new members at all in 1980. Even more alarming is the dramatic decline in the numbers both of our Sunday Schools and their scholars. The Nationwide Initiative in Evangelism recently produced a survey called 'Prospects for the Eighties' based on a census of the English Churches in the years 1975-79. Of Methodism it reports that our 'rate of decline in child attendance is greater than that of any other church. The great majority of children and young people who participate in the life of the Methodist churches at some stage do not become members.'

Signs of Growth

If counting does take place in heaven it is not by computers or census figures. Till we get to heaven it may well be impossible to do the sort of spiritual quality count that shows the Church's real state of health. But there are some hopeful indications here on earth. We have evidence of increasing care and attention being paid in many churches

DEATHS AND LAPSED MEMBERS IN DISTRICTS, 1978-1980

| Southern Districts | Deaths | | | Lapsed Members | | |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 |
| 1. London NE | 388 | 373 | 358 | 250 | 343 | 355 |
| 2. London NW | 387 | 384 | 407 | 470 | 288 | 334 |
| 3. London SW | 456 | 470 | 495 | 402 | 392 | 416 |
| 4. London SE | 355 | 357 | 341 | 397 | 358 | 309 |
| 5. Birmingham | 393 | 397 | 422 | 516 | 280 | 424 |
| 7. Bristol | 457 | 490 | 455 | 317 | 337 | 360 |
| 8. Cardiff/Swansea | 310 | 312 | 328 | 265 | 300 | 231 |
| 12. Cornwall | 392 | 407 | 364 | 176 | 252 | 222 |
| 14. East Anglia | 344 | 341 | 360 | 232 | 287 | 183 |
| 23. Oxford/Leicester | 380 | 404 | 390 | 309 | 230 | 309 |
| 24. Plymouth/Exeter | 488 | 500 | 490 | 423 | 263 | 282 |
| 26. Southampton | 580 | 532 | 529 | 353 | 365 | 338 |
| 28. Wolverhampton | 456 | 445 | 474 | 394 | 451 | 338 |
| Southern TOTAL | 5,386 | 5,412 | 5,413 | 4,504 | 4,146 | 4,101 |
| Northern Districts | | | | | | |
| 6. Bolton/Rochdale | 281 | 319 | 319 | 203 | 241 | 217 |
| 9. Cumbria | 257 | 237 | 233 | 110 | 108 | 150 |
| 11. Chester/Stoke | 585 | 595 | 516 | 535 | 424 | 617 |
| 13. Darlington | 461 | 433 | 466 | 268 | 239 | 243 |
| 16. Leeds | 407 | 476 | 400 | 200 | 231 | 320 |
| 17. Lincoln | 377 | 396 | 368 | 173 | 256 | 238 |
| 18. Liverpool | 388 | 398 | 401 | 340 | 241 | 392 |
| 19. Manchester | 536 | 514 | 474 | 657 | 374 | 459 |
| 20. Newcastle | 548 | 634 | 604 | 473 | 412 | 375 |
| 21. North Lincs | 473 | 420 | 447 | 351 | 213 | 304 |
| 22. Nottingham/Derby | 474 | 516 | 439 | 449 | 495 | 421 |
| 25. Sheffield | 507 | 462 | 425 | 436 | 369 | 316 |
| 27. West Yorks | 402 | 458 | 451 | 320 | 388 | 359 |
| 29. York/Hull | 421 | 441 | 499 | 304 | 235 | 330 |
| Northern TOTAL | 6,117 | 6,299 | 6,042 | 4,819 | 4,226 | 4,741 |
| 30. CYMRU | 315 | 239 | 257 | 141 | 100 | 137 |
| 31. SCOTLAND | 227 | 185 | 198 | 174 | 120 | 191 |
| 32. SHETLAND | 20 | 10 | 18 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 10. CHANNEL ISLES | 65 | 71 | 53 | 97 | 29 | 35 |
| 15. ISLE OF MAN | 50 | 74 | 44 | 38 | 89 | 76 |
| TOTAL | 12,180 | 12,290 | 12,025 | 9,776 | 8,711 | 9,282 |

ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP, OCTOBER 1980

| Southern Districts | Morning | After-noon | Evening | Principal Service | Total Attendance | As % of Members | Member-ship |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | | | | | | | |
| 1. London NE | 10,918 | 291 | 5,153 | 11,469 | 16,362 | 92.7 | 17,646 |
| 2. London NW | 12,085 | 421 | 5,550 | 13,074 | 18,056 | 93.6 | 19,286 |
| 3. London SW | 13,374 | 106 | 5,909 | 14,074 | 19,389 | 89.9 | 21,571 |
| 4. London SE | 9,775 | 530 | 3,942 | 10,557 | 14,247 | 91.2 | 15,627 |
| 5. Birmingham | 10,464 | 323 | 5,745 | 12,020 | 16,532 | 86.8 | 19,037 |
| 7. Bristol | 10,971 | 688 | 6,926 | 12,871 | 18,585 | 101.7 | 18,269 |
| 8. Cardiff/Swansea | 5,045 | 395 | 4,678 | 6,946 | 10,118 | 84.7 | 11,951 |
| 12. Cornwall | 8,975 | 790 | 5,850 | 11,014 | 15,615 | 107.4 | 14,543 |
| 14. East Anglia | 8,423 | 1,545 | 4,023 | 10,334 | 13,991 | 107.8 | 12,978 |
| 23. Oxford/Leicester | 10,214 | 699 | 6,212 | 12,018 | 17,125 | 96.1 | 17,814 |
| 24. Plymouth/Exeter | 12,087 | 1,586 | 6,111 | 14,275 | 19,784 | 105.3 | 18,783 |
| 26. Southampton | 13,279 | 591 | 6,028 | 14,491 | 19,898 | 98.6 | 20,189 |
| 28. Wolverhampton | 10,870 | 1,002 | 9,179 | 14,309 | 21,051 | 103.7 | 20,296 |
| Southern TOTAL | 136,480 | 8,967 | 75,306 | 157,452 | 220,753 | 96.8 | 227,990 |
| Northern Districts | | | | | | | |
| 6. Bolton/Rochdale | 7,025 | 798 | 3,139 | 7,638 | 10,962 | 91.3 | 12,012 |
| 9. Cumbria | 3,668 | 809 | 2,700 | 5,575 | 7,177 | 84.9 | 8,456 |
| 11. Chester/Stoke | 11,224 | 1,106 | 8,860 | 14,635 | 21,190 | 98.4 | 21,529 |
| 13. Darlington | 7,154 | 927 | 5,977 | 9,758 | 14,058 | 88.1 | 15,960 |
| 16. Leeds | 10,093 | 655 | 4,886 | 11,225 | 15,634 | 92.0 | 16,990 |
| 17. Lincoln | 6,637 | 771 | 4,962 | 8,551 | 12,370 | 93.4 | 13,247 |
| 18. Liverpool | 9,269 | 310 | 4,409 | 9,776 | 13,988 | 83.0 | 16,846 |
| 19. Manchester | 12,104 | 706 | 5,881 | 13,227 | 18,691 | 90.3 | 20,692 |
| 20. Newcastle | 9,020 | 204 | 8,940 | 12,366 | 18,164 | 83.5 | 21,756 |
| 21. North Lincs | 10,557 | 502 | 4,524 | 11,182 | 15,583 | 96.0 | 16,232 |
| 22. Nottingham/Derby | 8,835 | 501 | 8,472 | 12,086 | 17,808 | 96.5 | 18,453 |
| 25. Sheffield | 9,125 | 953 | 8,510 | 12,954 | 18,588 | 102.7 | 18,110 |
| 27. West Yorks | 9,648 | 945 | 4,547 | 10,628 | 15,140 | 91.5 | 16,552 |
| 29. York/Hull | 9,985 | 826 | 6,011 | 12,458 | 16,822 | 93.8 | 17,933 |
| Northern TOTAL | 124,344 | 10,013 | 81,818 | 152,059 | 216,175 | 92.1 | 234,768 |
| 30. CYMRU | 1,894 | 893 | 2,201 | 3,358 | 4,988 | 61.0 | 8,171 |
| 31. SCOTLAND | 3,548 | 64 | 834 | 3,630 | 4,446 | 58.8 | 7,562 |
| 32. SHETLANDS | 231 | 96 | 166 | 422 | 493 | 81.5 | 605 |
| 10. CHANNEL ISLANDS | 1,663 | 44 | 1,061 | 1,866 | 2,768 | 90.4 | 3,062 |
| 15. ISLE OF MAN | 990 | 86 | 630 | 1,304 | 1,706 | 84.3 | 2,024 |
| TOTAL | 269,150 | 20,163 | 162,016 | 320,091 | 451,329 | 93.2 | 484,182 |

SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND YOUTH GROUPS

| Southern Districts: | No. of Churches | Sunday Schools | Youth Groups | S. S. Attendance | | | Young People | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| | | | | 1977 | 1980 | 1977% | 1980 | |
| 1. London NE | 240 | 194 | 152 | 8,178 | 6,530 | 4,995 | 3,935 | |
| 2. London NW | 261 | 214 | 133 | 8,919 | 7,707 | 4,315 | 3,320 | |
| 3. London SW | 208 | 185 | 145 | 7,789 | 6,965 | 5,388 | 4,842 | |
| 4. London SE | 220 | 160 | 110 | 6,176 | 4,918 | 3,961 | 3,941 | |
| 5. Birmingham | 253 | 188 | 120 | 8,541 | 6,899 | 4,971 | 3,725 | |
| 7. Bristol | 351 | 236 | 145 | 8,629 | 7,127 | 4,690 | 4,620 | |
| 8. Cardiff/Swansea | 237 | 177 | 84 | 5,860 | 4,959 | 2,580 | 1,802 | |
| 12. Cornwall | 398 | 290 | 159 | 6,772 | 5,993 | 2,140 | 2,102 | |
| 14. East Anglia | 402 | 242 | 111 | 5,860 | 5,357 | 1,878 | 1,637 | |
| 23. Oxford/Leicester | 330 | 234 | 127 | 8,181 | 7,085 | 3,943 | 3,403 | |
| 24. Plymouth/Exeter | 402 | 274 | 150 | 6,403 | 5,890 | 3,481 | 3,481 | |
| 26. Southampton | 349 | 233 | 153 | 7,268 | 6,432 | 3,556 | 3,351 | |
| 28. Wolverhampton | 348 | 244 | 171 | 9,480 | 8,544 | 4,024 | 3,527 | |
| Southern TOTAL | 3,999 | 2,871 | 1,760 | 98,056 | 84,406 | 49,926 | 43,686 | |
| Northern Districts: | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Bolton/Rochdale | 134 | 124 | 85 | 4,423 | 4,108 | 2,467 | 2,325 | |
| 9. Cumbria | 207 | 127 | 80 | 2,970 | 2,391 | 1,075 | 1,053 | |
| 11. Chester/Stoke | 354 | 286 | 142 | 9,384 | 8,270 | 2,742 | 2,908 | |
| 13. Darlington | 289 | 201 | 122 | 6,888 | 5,719 | 3,049 | 3,187 | |
| 16. Leeds | 204 | 170 | 104 | 7,008 | 5,767 | 3,412 | 3,213 | |
| 17. Lincoln | 345 | 227 | 79 | 6,558 | 5,607 | 2,204 | 1,460 | |
| 18. Liverpool | 149 | 136 | 116 | 6,529 | 5,972 | 4,196 | 4,057 | |
| 19. Manchester | 221 | 193 | 143 | 8,926 | 7,851 | 4,652 | 4,586 | |
| 20. Newcastle | 262 | 198 | 127 | 9,031 | 7,854 | 4,661 | 4,597 | |
| 21. North Lincs | 166 | 151 | 89 | 5,663 | 4,932 | 3,057 | 2,644 | |
| 22. Nottingham/Derby | 360 | 273 | 167 | 10,382 | 8,502 | 3,836 | 3,472 | |
| 25. Sheffield | 325 | 255 | 123 | 8,981 | 7,503 | 3,737 | 3,036 | |
| 27. West Yorks | 222 | 195 | 126 | 7,507 | 5,909 | 3,648 | 3,009 | |
| 29. York/Hull | 372 | 232 | 129 | 7,367 | 6,710 | 2,297 | 2,190 | |
| Northern TOTAL | 3,610 | 2,768 | 1,632 | 101,617 | 87,095 | 45,033 | 41,737 | |
| 30. CYMRU | 222 | 71 | 87 | 1,506 | 1,036 | 610 | 571 | |
| 31. SCOTLAND | 55 | 48 | 27 | 1,618 | 1,259 | 777 | 712 | |
| 32. SHETLAND | 22 | 11 | 10 | 89 | 165 | 30 | 68 | |
| 10. CHANNEL ISLES | 40 | 34 | 23 | 1,044 | 1,059 | 1,026 | 769 | |
| 15. ISLE OF MAN | 42 | 31 | 15 | 1,012 | 774 | 207 | 174 | |
| TOTAL: | 7,990 | 5,834 | 3,554 | 204,942 | 175,794 | 97,609 | 87,517 | |

MEMBERSHIP, MINISTERS (& DEACONESSES) IN PASTORAL CHARGE AND LOCAL PREACHERS.

| Southern Districts | Minister (Deaconesses) | Members per Minister/Deaconess | Churches per Minister/Deaconess | Members per Church | Local Preachers | LP's on Trial |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. London NE | 97 | 3 | 178 | 2.4 | 74 | 61 |
| 2. London NW | 92 | 2 | 207 | 2.8 | 74 | 83 |
| 3. London SW | 105 | 2 | 204 | 2.0 | 104 | 69 |
| 4. London SE | 82 | 1 | 191 | 2.7 | 71 | 66 |
| 5. Birmingham | 82 | 2 | 229 | 3.0 | 75 | 56 |
| 7. Bristol | 86 | 2 | 210 | 4.0 | 52 | 59 |
| 8. Cardiff/Swansea | 54 | 0 | 225 | 4.5 | 50 | 50 |
| 12. Cornwall | 61 | 0 | 242 | 6.6 | 37 | 52 |
| 14. East Anglia | 65 | 1 | 200 | 6.2 | 32 | 44 |
| 23. Oxford/Leicester | 77 | 0 | 234 | 4.3 | 54 | 70 |
| 24. Plymouth/Exeter | 77 | 1 | 244 | 5.2 | 47 | 64 |
| 26. Southampton | 89 | 1 | 227 | 3.9 | 58 | 64 |
| 28. Wolverhampton | 79 | 6 | 242 | 4.1 | 58 | 64 |
| Southern TOTAL | 1,046 | 21 | 214 | 3.7 | 57 | 7,640 |
| Northern Districts | | | | | | |
| 6. Bolton/Rochdale | 49 | 3 | 236 | 2.6 | 90 | 25 |
| 9. Cumbria | 38 | 0 | 229 | 5.6 | 41 | 17 |
| 11. Chester/Stoke | 83 | 0 | 263 | 4.3 | 61 | 76 |
| 13. Darlington | 66 | 1 | 242 | 4.4 | 55 | 37 |
| 16. Leeds | 67 | 1 | 254 | 3.0 | 83 | 60 |
| 17. Lincoln | 58 | 0 | 232 | 6.0 | 38 | 33 |
| 18. Liverpool | 65 | 6 | 241 | 2.1 | 113 | 30 |
| 19. Manchester | 83 | 3 | 243 | 2.6 | 94 | 70 |
| 20. Newcastle | 84 | 1 | 259 | 3.1 | 83 | 46 |
| 21. North Lincs | 67 | 0 | 246 | 2.5 | 98 | 30 |
| 22. Nottingham/Derby | 81 | 4 | 220 | 4.3 | 51 | 76 |
| 25. Sheffield | 76 | 5 | 226 | 4.1 | 56 | 61 |
| 27. West Yorks | 72 | 3 | 224 | 3.0 | 75 | 52 |
| 29. York/Hull | 74 | 3 | 236 | 4.9 | 48 | 52 |
| Northern TOTAL | 963 | 30 | 236 | 3.6 | 65 | 6,843 |
| 30. CYMRU | 28 | 0 | 303 | 8.2 | 37 | 6 |
| 31. SCOTLAND | 37 | 1 | 204 | 1.5 | 137 | 21 |
| 32. SHETLAND | 4 | 1 | 151 | 5.5 | 28 | 2 |
| 10. CHANNEL ISLES | 14 | 0 | 236 | 3.1 | 77 | 7 |
| 15. ISLE OF MAN | 10 | 0 | 225 | 4.7 | 48 | 1 |
| TOTAL: | 2,102 | 53 | 225 | 3.7 | 61 | 14,847 |

RESOLUTION

H.1. The Conference adopts the report on Church Membership.