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Generation Y and the Church of England: Alternative Spiritualities and Ecumenical

Turns

by

Julia Russell

Canterbury Christ Church University

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MA by Research

2018

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Total Word Count: 33,017

Abstract:

This research focuses on the deteriorating relationship between Generation Y and the Church of England. The first chapter considers how inaccessible the Church of England is to young people today and the reasons for this, however, it includes examples of churches who are more successful in attracting Gen Y. As spiritual behaviours appear to be becoming more popular than religion, Chapter 2 explores why Gen Y are focusing primarily on spirituality, for example what spirituality has to offer that the Church of England does not. This highlights how the Church of England is failing to attract young people and indicates areas the church should be acting on in order to help Gen Y, such as engaging with mental health issues. The final chapter investigates ecumenism as a possible answer to attracting Gen Y to the church. However, while ecumenism could in the future promote Christianity as a peaceful religion working as one, this is already somewhat unconsciously taking place in a number of circumstances for example Christian Unions. Moreover, an ecumenical attitude may help attract some young people to the Church of England.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Ivan Krovacs for his support and guidance through the planning and writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank Professor Robert Beckford and Dr Maria Diemling for their additional valuable support particularly during the latter stages of my research.

Lastly, to my friends and family who have encouraged and inspired me to work hard throughout my university education.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Generation Y Context

In order to examine Generation Y in relation to religion and spirituality, it is essential to establish what we mean by generation. According to Mannheim (1952): “a generation is a group of people born around the same time who live through a particular set of social, cultural, economic and political circumstances during the formative years of early adulthood” (Collins-Mayo and Beaudoin, 2010 p.17). It is these circumstances that characterise the way they view the world and differentiates them from other generations.

The term Generation X was originally developed in a Christian pastoral context but has since been applied to other sociological contexts (Lynch, 2010, p.34). This has caught on and as a result the labels Generation Y and Z have been used to describe successive cohorts. Gen X was the first to be researched as a whole in terms of spirituality and religion due to the “unprecedented rapidity in the fall of Christian religiosity amongst the British population” (Brown, 2009, as cited in Collins Mayo and Beaudoin, 2010, p.19). Therefore, the legacy of Gen X research has been highly influential on subsequent generations. However, Lynch (2010) has argued that thinking in terms of cohorts may not be a good idea. A generation covers a wide range of ages, people of different backgrounds and consequently gender, class and ethnicity are much more likely to have “a significant bearing on the ways in which young people do, and do not, engage with religion” and these aspects may also affect other activities they partake in (Lynch, 2010, p.36). Therefore, it is possible to expand on broad generalisations to represent each cohort, but in fact churchgoers certainly from Gen Y are an anomaly, so to typify them

based on characteristics that the majority of this cohort possess is unbefitting as these characteristics may not apply to the ‘anomalies’ who go to church.

Gen X according to Collins-Mayo and Beaudoin (2010) was characterised by the counter culture movement, economic recession following the 1973 oil crisis, youth unemployment, nuclear war anxieties, growing awareness of environmental issues, an increase in divorce rates, and an increase in awareness and development of HIV/AIDS (Collins Mayo and Beaudoin, 2010, p.18). The church responded by incorporating into its communication methods and youth outreach: popular culture into worship liturgies, radio stations played Christian music, and Christian TV was available, in addition to Christian films, novels, comic book version of the Bible and so on (Collins-Mayo and Beaudoin, 2010, p.19). However, despite Gen Y engaging with various aspects of religion they do so “without actually being religiously obligated in any way”: which Beaudoin refers to as ‘Virtual Faith’ (Collins-Mayo and Beaudoin, 2010, p.20). According to Savage et al. (2006) “Young people use popular culture to mediate between real life and the ideal... Generation Y derive meaning from popular culture but not religious meaning” which suggests that the church can try to reach Gen Y through popular culture, they might appreciate the ‘artefact’ not necessarily the religious meaning (Collins-Mayo and Beaudoin, 2010, p.23).

The Significance of Generation Y

The term Generation Y refers to people born between the 1980 and the mid-1990s: the offspring of Generation X. They have been labelled as “Millennials”, the “Dot.Com generation” or even “KIPPERS (Kids in Parents Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings)” (McCrindle Research, 2006, p9). The latter is less commonly applied to this group of

people, and Generation Y remains the most used term. Supposedly lazy, but tech-savvy, as the invention and development of the internet and mobile phones have occurred in their lifetime, Gen Y consider themselves to be misunderstood and very much maligned (Lyons, 2016b). Of course, many generations have felt this way, but specifically Gen Y are accused of being: “lazy, self-involved, cosseted, politically apathetic narcissists, who aren’t able to function without a smartphone and who live in a state of perpetual adolescence, incapable of commitment” (Lyons, 2016b). The period covered by Gen Y, approximately 1980-2000 (various sources may differ slightly), would appear rather broad and it raises the question: do those who are now in their mid-thirties face the same sort of problems that those in their late teens do? It would seem that on an emotional level they do. Urban (2015), identifies Gen Y as being generally unhappy and anxious, the reason for this being a combination of: “high expectations, social media and lack of real opportunities” (Urban, 2015).

Gen Y hold an important place in modern society and are clearly facing a crisis of spirituality due to their lack of commitment to contemporary religious practice. Traditional Anglican views, particularly concerns of equality such as homosexuality, race and gender, are issues which Gen Y are particularly passionate about. Overall, Gen Y are much more accepting of diverse communities in comparison to their parents and grandparents. According to research from the Intergenerational Foundation, “young Britons are more liberal than any previous generation” in relation to social and economic issues, particularly achieving equality in the workplace between men and women, and advocating gay marriage (Kingman, 2013). As a result, they are less trusting of those in authority, “they are sceptical of attempts by government to regulate personal freedoms

or morality; they believe people are best left to make important decisions for themselves” (Kingman, 2013). This also applies to religion. If Gen Y wish to be more independent, it may discourage them from taking part in a religion that requires them to adhere to specific ethical commitments. Thus, the Church of England in particular may appear to inhibit a level personal freedom to an outsider, which some people are not willing to accept.

However, as a reputedly self-obsessed cohort deeply involved in posting about their own lives on social media, it is relatively simple to access Gen Y through this medium of communication. There may be disadvantages to using technology for a religious purpose, as the interaction which takes place on social media is very different to physically meeting people. Nevertheless, this is how some people feel more comfortable interacting, and this must be considered if the church wishes to connect with a variety of members of Gen Y.

The Church of England

As Christianity is England’s official religion, we must consider Gen Y’s relationship with the Church of England: the most popular denomination in the United Kingdom. Although church attendance has continued to decline for many years, I will be particularly focusing on why Gen Y are losing interest in the church. This chapter is principally influenced by the research of Collins-Mayo et al (2010): *The Faith of Generation Y* which reports on various statistics conveying how Gen Y are involved in the Church of England. It is crucial to think about experiences young people have of church throughout their lifetime, thus by exploring the education system, we can see the amount of exposure children have to numerous religions, and begin to understand either why people are less educated in

Christianity, or their reasons for opposing it. As a large proportion of young people attend university, it is logical to explore the roles of chaplains in universities, which have become less focused on Christianity and now exist to serve people of all religions in a more neutral manner, according to the research of Hunt (2013). Popular culture can help to bridge the gap between Gen Y and the Church of England. By examining the work of Lynch (2005), I will explore the potential of popular culture, and also consider opposition to modernisation by more conservative members of the church. I will be discussing subjects which are fundamental to young people, such as Mental Health and homosexuality, to understand failures by churches towards young people, in addition to identifying barriers which are preventing some young people from having a good relationship with the Church of England. As a result, I will single out some churches who are succeeding in attracting Gen Y, relating to the research of Martyn Percy (2000) and his 'Theology of Change for the Church'. The use of the term 'the church' throughout the following chapters principally refers to the Church of England, unless otherwise stated. I consider authenticity and sincerity to be at the heart of encouraging young people to be engaged with the Church of England: if they do not feel that it is authentic they will avoid it.

Spirituality

Due to the emphasis on Gen Y leaving the Church of England, especially in the media, it is curious to observe alternative spiritual behaviours that they are engaging with, independent from religions. This chapter will distinguish spirituality from religion, particularly differentiating it from Christianity, acknowledging various definitions of spirituality from Heelas, Woodhead and Seel (2015), De Souza (2003), Swinton (2001),

Bradford (1979), and Engebretson (2003), to create a working definition of spirituality for the purpose of this chapter. In order to establish why spirituality is becoming increasingly popular in the place of religion, it is essential to investigate the characteristics of youth spirituality and what young people wish to gain from spiritual beliefs or religion. This section primarily considers the research of Tacey (2004), in accordance with support from other researchers.

As it is a fundamental and current issue for young people, I will discuss mental health with regard to spirituality, comparing it to the relationship between the church and mental health. This section will establish a definition of positive mental health according to Ganga and Kutty (2013) and will explore young people's perspectives on spirituality and mental health (Sveidqvist et al., 2003). Furthermore, it is crucial to study the benefits of spirituality in the prevention of mental health issues or the care of those with existing problems, in order to determine the help young people require.

Ecumenism

Adhering to the definition of Cameron and Pattison (2005), I will explore the nature of the ecumenical movement, which relates to finding common ground between Christians. Ecumenism promises a peaceful unification of Christians, something which may appeal to Gen Y. However, ecumenism is not black and white; there are various levels of commitment, from a small scale of uniting local communities, to achieving global ecumenism, these are concepts explored by Hunsinger (2008) and Evans (1996). The document *Unitatis Redintegratio* is vital to ecumenism, as it contains Catholic principles of ecumenism, suggesting that they are the one true church and non-Catholics should alter their views accordingly. However, ecumenism is more than an attempt to

unify Christians into the Catholic church and in fact there are various ecumenical theologies, as explored by Evans (1996). Ecumenism emphasises the importance of community and co-operation: working together to be one church as Jesus desired. I will investigate methods of breaking boundaries between local and global denominations according to the research of Johnson and Wu (2015) and Evans (1996), particularly in creating an ecumenical language. The division of individual churches is also necessary to explore, regarding differences in Baptism and the Eucharist as examples of why churches have separated. There are many examples of how ecumenism exists in the world, for example Taizé, Alpha courses, and various summer conferences such as Greenbelt, thus, I will review their success amongst Gen Y. Although Gen Y may not be explicitly involved in ecumenism, there are examples to show that they are unconsciously part of the movement, through Christian Unions in schools, colleges and universities. The future of ecumenism is at the mercy of Gen Y, and as a generation keen for peace and equality, it would seem that ecumenism should appeal to those who are already Christians. It is also possible that the Church of England could attract Gen Y by ecumenical methods. Moreover, there are issues of preserving individuality which could be weakened by uniting into one church.

The following research ascertains that Gen Y are leaving the Church of England, moving away from religion, and either towards spirituality or other interests. It is in the hands of future generations to either protect or neglect the church. This piece of work aims to discover, why young people are leaving the Church of England, the benefits of spirituality as opposed to religion in the eyes of young people, and whether ecumenism is a possible

solution to maintaining and attracting interest from Gen Y to keep Christianity alive, as it has the potential unify Christians.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following research is the basis for learning about Gen Y: their relationship with the Church of England, spirituality and ecumenism. Savage et al. (2006), Collins-Mayo et al. (2010), and Mason et al. (2007) focus on aspects of spirituality and Gen Y, emphasising that the key to understanding young people is communication. Anyone can hold a positive or negative stereotype based on their own experiences with young people, however, these studies look specifically at their relationship with spirituality and religion in order to discover why Gen Y are sometimes repelled by religion (specifically Christianity) or spirituality, as well as acknowledging 'anomalies': people who do remain interested. Martyn Percy (2000) discusses 'A Theology of Change for the Church' which is not specifically aimed at the inclusion of Gen Y and future generations, nevertheless, his three theories for change relate specifically to the church going back to basics of why Christianity exists, which could appeal to some young people. The research of Hunt (2013), has been included as a large proportion of young people attend university. Exposure to Christianity occurs at many different ages, but with the decline of specifically Anglican chaplaincies in universities, this acquaintance with the Church of England is likely to diminish. Lastly, as ecumenism could be a possible solution to a decline in interest in Christianity regarding its denominational divides, Evans (1996): *Method in Ecumenical Theology*, introduces ecumenism. She also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of ecumenism determining how beneficial it is to Christians.

In order to consider Gen Y's relationship to the church it is essential to establish the position of the church and look towards Gen Y from the church's perspective. In his

chapter: ‘A Theology of Change for the Church’ from *Managing the Church*, Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church College, Oxford, proposes a possible theology of change which goes beyond management and maintenance of the church (Evans and Percy, 2000). Percy suggests 3 principles that: “underpin a theology for managing and facilitating change within the church” consequently, allowing the church to evolve rather than adhering to tradition. Percy recognises that “A theology of change must... recognize that the strategies fit within the local-diocesan axis, which are the theologically legitimate parameters for forming the present and the future...respecting the tension between local needs and a broader catholicity” (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.177). This recognises the importance of looking at local requirements before considering the wider issues of the church, although they are also essential for all churches to work together.

Firstly, Percy builds on the ideas of American religious scholar J.G. Melton, who related aspects of American religious life to ‘extended families’, further associating the church, as a “household of faith” to extended families (Evans and Percy, 2000). By correlating the church and family it allows people to break down the traditional hierarchy of the Church of England. In the current situation where maintenance of the church takes precedence over ministry, members of the church are more likely to gel as a group of equals, while still accommodating an authoritative figure. Being part of a family provides people with a sense of belonging, which may be lost with a strict structural church organisation, therefore, “maturity and individuation can flourish, identity can be developed”, simply by altering the structure of the church (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.179). Percy suggests that by following the model of Christ as the head of the church

and God as the Father, churches should reflect this divine family. Families are not perfect, and dispute over differences of opinion, but it is possible to “devise a structure that contains it” (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.180). For a generation, many of whom come from broken families, encouragement to be part of a family may be a sore point for some and a refuge for others. The job of a parent involves keeping their children safe, encouraging them, and providing them with boundaries in order to prevent them from misbehaving. This is much like the church, as God the *Father* exists as the parent who promises protection, and eternal life in order to encourage them to do good by living with a sense of moral guidance, boundaries, purpose and ethical aims. So, the idea of a ‘household of faith’ and working together as a family to love and support each other works very well indeed.

Secondly, developing the principle of family to discuss ties between churches, Percy suggests that the church is an ‘organism’ (Evans and Percy, 2000). This notion was formally made by Richard Hooker over 400 years ago, who suggested that the church is organic: “he saw their development as a matter of progressive growth and mutual interdependence”, therefore, accepting that members of the church need God and each other in order to grow in faith (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.183). The principle of the church as an organism allows us to think of the ‘household of faith’ as a developing body, evolving with new life emerging. However, it appears to be more typically focused on mutuality, participation and partnership, thus, disregarding a great emphasis on authority. The church needs to work together as equals with different functions and this is something that should appeal to Gen Y: having equality as opposed to adhering to authority. However, without a hierarchy of authority the Church of England as a whole

would not survive without various leaders and committees who make important decisions regarding finance, helping the community, evangelism and so on.

Finally, the third principle suggested by Percy is ‘The Church as a Community of Blessing’ (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.184). He suggests that the ‘blessing’ is often overlooked and seen as a formal act which occurs at the end of a service. It is also necessary to look beyond the “magical and superstitious associations”, which have taken over the traditional process of “mutual appreciation and delight” (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.184). Too often, the Church is seen as a burden which requires a great deal of management, nevertheless, by understanding the church as a ‘community of blessing’ the churches will be less constrained, offering “genuine opportunities for growth and new life” (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.186). If the church is too concerned with rules and management, the importance of the church is lost to an extent. It should be seen in a positive light not an organisation with distant associations to God. Returning to simplicity and focusing on why the church exists is something that young people might respect more than the emphasis on building up dwindling numbers and saving the buildings which have so long been the church’s home. As beautiful as many of the buildings are, earthly treasures should not be the prime concern of the church. Matthew 6:19-21 highlights the lack of importance of material possessions, surely this should apply to churches too? Some newer churches meet in buildings such as community centres and schools, proving that church buildings are not entirely necessary. Overall, this chapter includes various ideas for helping the church to become a more effective institution. These principles should be seriously considered by clergy particularly in relation to Gen Y as some of the reasons why they are less likely to attend church are because they do not feel comfortable

joining a church that insists on a hierarchy. The church working as an organism and a household of faith may appeal to some members of Gen Y, but of course there will always be people who are adversely opposed to the Church of England. However, by being true to their beliefs and focusing on the simplicity of ‘blessing’ people are able to show social responsibility, care for the poor and show concern for those whose lives remains socially on the margins, acting with love and mercy, earning greater respect from the community. This chapter relates to the work of Savage et al. (2006), who discuss how Gen Y engage with popular culture, because they both teach how the situation can be improved for churchgoers, focusing on Gen Y: the future of the Church of England. Relating these two examples of research, it may be possible to devise new ideas for how the church can be made a more welcoming place for the whole congregation, especially Gen Y.

Making Sense of Generation Y (Savage et al., 2006) takes a more practical research approach, studying Gen Y in order to produce ideas for clergy and those working with young people as to approaching and engaging them in the church. This book contains original research, exploring how Gen Y engage with popular culture and how it shapes their spirituality, aiming to: “discover to what extent young people make sense of themselves and their world through the popular arts” (Savage et al., 2006, p.3). Savage et al. (2006) begin by exploring definitions of generations from the ‘World War Generation’ to ‘Generation Y’ contextualising young people today in comparison to their ancestors. They conclude from these definitions that the evolution of technology has had the greatest impact on Gen Y and they are very much “a technological generation

that takes computers, emailing, text messaging and the internet for granted" (Savage et al., 2006, p.7). This is why Savage et al. (2006) place such a strong focus on technology, choosing mediums of popular culture to which Gen Y would respond. The researchers focused specifically on the "socially included" because they observed that previous research neglected them in favour of "more marginal, excluded and problematic young people" (Savage et al., 2006, p.8). By choosing a sample that consists of supposedly 'average' examples of Gen Y they were able to generalise to the wider population.

The researchers had difficulty initially pinning down definitions of religion and spirituality, understandably as religion and spirituality covers such a broad range of thoughts and beliefs. However, they turned to the explanations of David Hay: "Religion tends to be associated with what is publicly available, such as churches, mosques, Bibles, prayer books, religious officials, weddings and funerals...It seems that in many people's minds religion is firmly caught up in the cold brutalities of history" (Hay, as cited in Savage et al., 2006, pp.10-11). Spirituality was described more positively, which would explain why there is more focus from young people on spirituality as opposed to religion: "Spirituality is almost always seen as much warmer, associated with love, inspiration, wholeness, depth, mystery and personal devotions like prayer and meditation" (Savage et al., 2006, pp.10-11). Religion relates to the "popular mind", whereas spirituality tends to include more "private practices" which explains why there is more information on young people leaving the church as opposed to how they feel spiritually (Savage et al., 2006, p.11). The researchers also claim that church attendance rates are "continuation of a trend set by previous generations" yet, it is also their attitude towards the church which discourages them from attending, assuming "that church will be boring and

devoid of personal meaning" (Savage et al., 2006, p.14). Moreover, as young people have very uncertain ideas about church, this may mean that they feel freer to "experience what the church has to offer" rather than having too many preconceptions about the church dissuading them from attending (Savage et al., 2006, p.15). The last main consideration of Savage et al. (2006) was taking into account theologies about the interaction of religion and popular culture, these were: "Popular culture enhancing religion", "Popular culture as religion" and "Resourcing religion through popular culture", the latter tends to be the most common, nevertheless these were 3 important groups to reflect upon when gathering data from the participants (Savage et al., 2006, pp.23-28). Many people have been overlooked within these definitions, more than just so called 'anomalies', as it is often the negative aspects of religion that people remember, such as conflicts rooted in religion, religious extremists and so on. Spirituality also covers such a wide range of ideas that some people might believe in negative spirituality. As opposed to believing in one or many authority figures such as a god, who they gain from as a result of doing good, others may believe in a harmful individual or collective such as a devil-like figure who will punish them unless they behave in a certain way. This is an extreme example, but it illustrates that spirituality is not all 'warm and fuzzy'.

Savage et al.'s (2006) research consisted of twenty-five semi structured interviews with young people who belonged to Gen Y providing "rich qualitative data that would reflect the shared, social nature of world views" (Savage et al., 2006, p.32). This allowed the conversation to flow naturally, revealing more individual information than a structured interview, in addition to having some specific questions to remain focused and guide the

participants in a certain direction. Conversely, there are negative effects of a group interview, including that participants may be less comfortable revealing information about themselves in a group situation, and there is less time to build rapport with each individual participant. As a result, it may be possible that the information gained is not representative of the entire group because some of the candidates' views are less likely to be heard over the more socially outspoken.

The strength of this study is rooted in the range represented by its sample. Participants were recruited through youth clubs, universities and colleges they were in communication with. There were 124 people aged 15-25 who were sorted into 23 groups of between 2 and 9 people. 19 of the groups were of mixed gender, 60% were non-Christian and 40% were Christian (Savage et al., 2006). While the sample was relatively large, they were spread across eighteen sites across the country, therefore allowing for possible regional differences. There were also mixed and non-mixed groups to account for differences in gender views.

The interviews were split into three strands to allow for a range of information to be gathered: 'Story: TV Soaps and Films', 'Praxis: Music and Clubbing' and 'Symbol: Cultural icons and adverts' (Savage et al., 2006). Firstly, the participants were asked questions about their viewing habits of TV soaps and films. Secondly, with regards to music and clubbing, they listened to 5 different music tracks of varying styles, and were subsequently asked about their thoughts and feelings after 60 seconds of each track, followed by extra questions specific to clubbing. Finally, they were shown 15 different images of cultural icons and adverts and asked to explain their thoughts and feelings on

each, in addition to choosing an image they felt they could relate to and explain why.

The researchers also carried out observations in nightclubs.

The results of the study supported the previous research they set out in the first chapters of their book, “which suggests that young people’s stock of traditional religious knowledge and levels of religious engagements are very limited indeed” thus, solidifying the validity of their earlier study (Savage et al., 2006, p.37). At first glance, this study has only confirmed previous research, yet their data has also indicated that the participants “found meaning and significance in the reality of everyday life, which the popular arts helped them to understand and imbibe” (Savage et al., 2006, p.37). This is an important consideration, particularly for clergy and those working with young people, as there has been a clear response to popular culture which has the ability to complement and enhance religion and spirituality.

From their results, the researchers coined the phrase “‘Happy midi-narrative’ to describe the storyline of our young people’s world view” (Savage et al., 2006, p.37). This advises that young people are happy in small communities, such as a few family members and friends, therefore, operating on a more modest scale rather than looking for something beyond what they have, but this will clearly vary from person to person. Through the use of popular culture, participants were able to identify aspects of their real lives and the ideal, however, they perceived their actual world as being “largely benign, if sometimes a little dull” (Savage et al., 2006, p.40). Moreover, the ideal world was glimpsed through the popular arts since they provided the tools of imagination and a taste of experience” (Savage et al., 2006, p.40). Nonetheless, in relation to church

culture, the ideal is discussed through their own experiences, suggesting that there is a great difference between young people who go to church and those who do not.

Although this study has confirmed previous research, it has also produced a new perspective for those working with young people as it allows a greater insight into how Gen Y think and feel about certain aspects of life. It may be the case that Gen Y are not necessarily concerned by certain characteristics of religion, however, this study can help us to understand how popular culture has an impact on young people and allows potential for these ideas to be put into practice.

The work of Savage et al. (2006), relates directly to Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) as they both focus on sociological factors of spirituality in young people. Although Savage et al. (2006) emphasise the impact of popular culture on youth, Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) discuss more specifically the relationship between their participants and Christianity, including whether it has any impact on their lives.

In a study involving some of the same researchers as Savage et al. (2006), the researchers set out to explore sociological and theological factors affecting a generation where Christianity appears to be little more than a distant cultural memory. Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) firstly build on established sociological theory to put their research into context, by looking at the basic facts of young people's responses to Christianity. In terms of religious affiliation, according to the national census and other population surveys included in Collins-Mayo et al. (2010), Christianity is still the most popular religion in Britain, yet the rates of baptism and confirmation are certainly in decline. This highlights a possible issue with commitment to a religion, on the other hand, Collins-

Mayo et al. (2010) also identify this as a simple process of growing up and becoming indifferent to religion (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010). Both are important to consider when attempting to attract young people to the Church of England: by becoming interested in young people the C of E may retain the interest of young people.

The researchers investigated the idea of vicarious religion; “the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing” (Davie, 2007, as cited in Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.8). To put this into context, despite church attendance figures decreasing, people still turn to the church in times of crisis. Modernisation has altered the way young people think about tradition, social order has changed and communities have broken down. Whereas church was previously seen as “validating belief” this belief has been transferred “to individuals and the new ‘priests’ of science and bureaucracy” (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.12). It is a need for rationalisation which has led people to put their faith in science and technology instead of religion. The ‘Happy midi-narrative’ established by Savage et al. (2006) is reiterated as being a significant explanation of how young people live their lives: “In terms of faith the Happy midi-narrative is a secular worldview where the meaningful ideal is achieved through individual resourcefulness (making use of the popular arts and culture), family and friends not through religious fulfilment” (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.19). Moreover, the ‘Happy midi-narrative’ should not lead to the assumptions that “young people are hedonistic and amoral”, they are simply different to previous generations (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.19). This reiterates the importance of using popular culture to access young people.

Acknowledging that this country has had a long history of Christian youth work, including groups such as Sunday school, YMCA and Boys Brigade, the basis of this research is youth workers and those who attend various groups. Despite a decrease in church attendance, Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) have noticed an increase in youth workers, and the reason young people still attend groups is because they are seeking authenticity, this is a notion explored in Weber (2015) and Hunt (2013). The researchers used their own Christian youth contacts working on various projects in 31 different locations across the country. The first phase consisted of a total of 297 structured questionnaires and 107 semi-structured interviews. In the second phase, practitioner researchers explored “the impact of an intervention designed to raise Christian consciousness using a tool to establish young people’s perspectives on six topic areas- spirituality, purpose of life, prayer, belief in God, decision making and Christianity” 13 youth workers and 44 young people took part in this (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.31). The sample size of this study was considerably large, with a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, also allowing for a mixture of fully focused questions in the questionnaires and room for individuality in the semi-structured interviews. This just reiterates the importance of using popular culture to access young people. Although the samples were not random, and thus may not be completely representative of young people, they acknowledged this explaining that they “adopted a sampling strategy that would provide an extended case study and give... a useful critical context in which to address [our] research interests” (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.29). Even though this was the intention, when considering this study in relation to other research it is important to contemplate whether the results may not be typical of all young people.

The three key areas of interest were as follows, which are central to the discussion of the relationship between Gen Y and the church:

1. "What interest do young people have in Christianity?"
2. How do social influences inform young people's Christian consciousness, especially faith-based youth and community?"
3. Does belief in God or a Christian identity make any difference to how young people live their lives?" - (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.83).

In answer to the first question they discovered: "compared to previous generations, Generation Y young people are less likely to identify themselves as Christian, less likely to go to church, less likely to hold Christian beliefs" (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.84). As a starting point this study has confirmed previous research that Gen Y's commitment to religion, particularly Christianity, is in decline. However, they also compared frequent churchgoers to infrequent churchgoers. Frequent churchgoers' "engagement with Christianity tended to focus upon subjective experience and their own personal, friendship orientated, relationship with God and fellow Christians" whereas infrequent churchgoers "had an implicit understanding and approval of this insofar as on the odd occasions they needed religion it was the Christian tradition to which they usually turned" (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.84). Therefore, in a sense this is hopeful for the church, as many people automatically revert to Christianity as a safe place despite not living their lives according to this religion. This is where the idea of 'bedroom spirituality' relates: keeping prayer and spiritual activities to a private place, for those who are not comfortable expressing their faith, either all the time or in public, their bedroom provides a safe place for them to practice spirituality as they so wish.

Secondly, “youth work is vital for nurturing the faith of those who are already involved in church but is less well suited to raising Christian consciousness and stimulating Christian faith amongst those who are not” (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.88). Thus, suggesting that youth work should be targeting those who are already part of groups to encourage them to stay and explore their faith, but it is much harder to convince those not affiliated with the church to join.

Finally, young people are more concerned with ethics than religion which can be seen in the structure of RE curriculums. Young people prefer to be “in control of their own decision-making but they also wanted those choices to be informed” (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.88). Religion is seen as having rules which one must abide by, but non-specific ethics allow people to make moral decisions without being expected by God or a group of people to behave in a certain way. Overall, Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) found that “most young people have very little direct engagement with Christianity on a day to day basis...” if they want to experience it for themselves they have to seek it (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.89).

Overall, this research has shown that it is essential to communicate with young people to find out how they feel about Christianity, the Church of England, and religion in general. They will have been educated to various extents and have had completely different experiences of religion. Where young people have negative experiences or have little knowledge of the Church of England, if they wish to attract more young people, they will need to look at the reasons why these experiences took place to promote a healthy and happy image of the Church of England.

Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) have centred their research specifically on youth and their youth workers, but it is also important to contemplate the influence of Christianity on university students, who have varying access to Christianity. University is an opportunity to be away from home, and make decisions away from parents amongst a different group of people, so it is a critical time for some young people. Hence, discussing the influence of chaplains on university students is essential to understand Gen Y's situation.

Young people have the opportunity to interact with religion in different ways, after having mainly looked at research involving youth groups and popular culture, university is a key area to consider as not only do almost half of young people attend, 49% in 2013, university life tends to have a great impact on young people (Coughlan, 2013). This article goes into detail about multi-faith representation of chaplaincies in England and Wales, but what is most important to consider from this is the effect that this has on the Church of England. As young people of different faiths are being increasingly accepted by universities the heritage of this country may be lost in an effort to include others. Moreover, it is possible that Gen Y will be exposed less to Christianity, thus explaining why those who have no faith are less likely to know much about Christianity, as discussed by Collins-Mayo et al. (2010).

There has been much debate as to "the nature and rationale of university chaplaincy provisions in England and Wales" as chaplaincies are no longer exclusively Christian but cater for "a multi-faith student body" (Hunt, 2013, p.359). chaplaincies tend to be under the head of an Anglican chaplain although they now provide a range of services for people of various religious backgrounds.

Hunt identifies the main reasons for this change in the late 20th century from other's research as: "the internationalisation of higher education due to competition for international students paying full university fees", so students from different cultures will have different expectations and it is the university's duty to accommodate them (Boyce, 2005, as cited in Hunt, 2013, p.360). Secondly, "diversity derived from the wider cultural environment that has become simultaneously multi-faith, multi-ethnic and pluralistic" and finally "the development of ideas, policy and practice related to equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, all of which were perceived as contributing to a more egalitarian sphere of higher education" (Siddiqui, 2007, and Barnes, 2008, as cited in Hunt, 2013, p.360). Consequently, despite the foundations of the university and the country's official religion they have to put their students first, even if this means incorporating a multi-faith team. This does not always work as research has shown "traditional collegial universities made extensive provisions for Christians but displayed a less inclusive approach towards members of other faiths across the university sectors, while the needs of Muslim students were discovered to be particularly inadequately addressed" despite new policies aiming otherwise (Hunt, 2013, p.361).

The information was collated from a survey of websites about chaplaincies in eight different universities and information from the 'Chaplaincy in the Twenty-First Century Conference' thus showing various ideas from a range of sources. The greater focus on spirituality instead of religion in universities is evident also placing emphasis on 'holistic living' which includes the following dimensions: "intellectual, emotional, physical, vocational, environmental, recreational, social, and spiritual" which allow students to

look beyond religion and seek a greater understanding of themselves with a series of questions directed towards the students (Hunt, 2013, pp.363-364).

The modernisation of university chaplaincies may have its benefits, but unfortunately it also has a negative impact on the Church of England. Firstly, removing the chaplaincy as an Anglican base is not necessary as they have recognised, “universities as being essentially about culture, and religion constitutes an important aspect of that culture”. (Hunt, 2013, p.367) Consequently: “Universities are aiming to respond to the religious and spiritual needs of all” rather than just supporting Christian students (Hunt, 2013, p.367). Although some believe that religions share commonalities, Hunt (2013) acknowledges other research stating that: “Although religions may not have a common ‘core’, Zycinski discerns a mutual human characteristic in the desire to explain nature, to explore existential truths and to understand the characteristics of human beings or ‘homo religiosum’ that all universities should recognise and foster” (Hunt, 2013, p.367). Lastly it can be through engaging with other religions, or simply other denominations that “a dedication to inclusion, partnership and ecumenical participation may flow” (Hunt, 2013, p.367). Despite a potential end to traditionally Anglican chaplaincies in Universities in the future, there is no point attempting to maintain tradition simply for the sake of the Church of England. Universities must look for what their students need to help them feel more comfortable in what is often a completely foreign environment: living away from home for potentially the first time.

On the other hand, instead of having a strong base for all universities to follow, “The result is there is now no one universal, recommended organisational model of university chaplaincies in England and Wales”, meaning that although universities are in the same

position as each other, they are not able to entirely relate to one another, depending on the majority religion in each university (Hunt, 2013, p.366). However, this does not stop universities who do share commonalities from celebrating these aspects, organising events, forming links and so on. Forcing universities to fit into one bracket concerning belief and practice would not work, so allowing for religious and spiritual individualities provides them with a sense of belonging. Despite their actual religion, individual students may not feel as though a holistic method fits with their faith and, “it remains unproven whether such dimensions constitute a ‘fit’ with the subjective needs of students and if they subscribe to all of the various perceived dimensions of well-being/spirituality and, if so, to what degree” (Hunt, 2013, p.367). Finally, “as a result of the search for a common nucleus which complements such an agenda each tradition may lose its essential distinctiveness in a ‘dumbing down’ process” as religions “may become marginalised” in order to draw common ground (Hunt, 2013, p.367). Therefore, in the effort to find a common ground and step away from just Anglicanism, not everyone will necessarily be supported in the representation of different religions.

Additional research, looking into the spirituality of Gen Y was “the first Australian study to report on contemporary forms of spirituality in the Generation Y population” (Mason, Singleton and Webber, 2007, p.149). Over the course of 3 years the researchers conducted 91 extended interviews using a strategic sample in order to gain an idea of the diversity of spirituality in Gen Y as the first stage. Secondly, they directed a telephone survey with “1619 completed responses” including 347 from a control group aged 30-59 years, which indicates that they belonged to previous generations (Mason et al.,

2007). The final stage entailed re-interviews so the researchers could ask the participants in more depth about various issues they had previously discussed, and giving them an opportunity for clarification. This study had a very large sample, which allowed them to be more confident in their results and the multiple stages allowed the researchers to gain more information from a greater number of participants.

They used previous research (Singleton et al. 2004) to define spirituality in order to have a clear starting point and clarify spirituality as being based on:

- “An ‘alternative’ path, such as ‘New Age’ spirituality,
- A blend from both traditional and alternative sources, or
- An entirely secular outlook” (Mason et al., 2007, p.150)”.

Taking this into account, their research used three prominent types of spirituality to categorise Gen Y and which suited the data: “Traditional”, “Alternative” and “Humanist” (Mason et al. 2007, p.150). Traditional characterised 49% of participants, Alternative 17% and Humanist 31%, the last 3% were considered Theists as they did not fit into the proposed categories other than that they “believed in God” (Mason et al., 2007, p.151).

Within overall types of spirituality, the participants were then narrowed down further through religious identification, i.e. the religion they belonged to: 52.2% revealed that they had no religious identification, and the number of participants in each religious group were fairly evenly spread (Mason et al., 2007, p.153). Comparing the 2001 census to the results of the study, there is clearly a decrease in interest in Christianity and a move towards no religion whatsoever. The researchers have used some of the dimensions of spirituality they devised in their previous study for example: relationship to religion, expressions of spirituality and eclecticism (Singleton et al. 2004). Although

they will be biased towards using their own work as a good standard when devising studies, it has proved to be entirely useful in their research. This primarily concerns Australian young people, and although it may not directly relate to young people in Britain, it is a useful comparison to put into a wider context, in noticing similarities between Australia and Britain.

This research has identified that a better understanding of the spirituality of young people can benefit parents, and “those involved in the care of youth in such fields as education, health care and social welfare”, emphasising yet again that communication between generations is vital (Mason et al. 2007, p.161). Although Gen Y are “remarkably similar to their parents”, a smaller percentage are Christians compared to their parents at the age of the current Gen Y, suggesting that there has been moderate change in general attitudes towards Christianity, or perhaps the influence of their parents occurs at a much earlier age (Mason et al. 2007, p.161). By discovering what has caused this change in attitudes, this will help religious and spiritual leaders to understand young people’s needs. Another important consideration Mason et al. (2007) discovered is that although “Generation Y are often described as highly individualistic” a more appropriate term may be “individualised” as this is not necessarily the choice of young people to be independent and make their own decisions but this is simply “fate” due to the changes in society (Mason et al. 2007, p.161). Therefore, this study has identified various ideas to reflect upon when talking to Gen Y and could be considered by those in faith positions; those concerned with the lack of young people in churches, to learn why they leave the church or lose interest in spirituality.

In a trilogy of books written by Evans (1996), she addresses the ecumenical dialogue between churches. *Method in Ecumenical Theology*, the third in this trilogy, highlights problems faced by different denominations, and explores methods modern ecumenists use in order to achieve greater unity. Central to the argument of ecumenism is the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) which displayed great progress in the development of dialogues between churches, showing that “substantial agreements could be reached in areas that had seemed to be insurmountable barriers” (Murray, 1989, as cited in Evans, 1996, p.1). The flawed nature of the document *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the decree of the Second Vatican Council, must also be discussed in contrast to the solutions to divisions offered by Evans (1996). She also emphasises the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Lima) text of the World Council of Churches, a fellowship of churches seeking unity in one faith, as another text of great importance in considering the problems of ecumenical method. A comparison could be drawn from *The City of God* (Augustine of Hippo), where similar problems were faced in the fourth century, between non-Christians and Christians in questioning Roman barbarianism (Evans, 1996).

This book is notable to the process of ecumenism because “method is linked to purpose” hence, by a discussion of church aims, it is possible that method will come naturally according to what the church wants to achieve (Evans, 1996, p.7). Evans (1996) also suggests that collective, cooperative thinking is more important than actions: “The methodological issues with which this book is directly concerned have to do with learning to think and believe together rather than with the implications for what Christians can do together” (Evans, 1996, p.9).

The first chapter: *What is ecumenical theology?* emphasises the importance of unity, and argues that ecumenical theology is a discipline in its own right which needs to be developed (Evans, 1996). Ecumenical theology requires respecting others, putting aside any hostilities in order to be able to compare and correlate their denominational differences, which can occur through bilateral and multilateral dialogues (Evans, 1996).

Chapter 2: *Changing attitudes and stages in ecumenism* underlines some of the changes which have taken place in relation to ecumenism, highlighting Roman Catholic responses. Methods of role reversal allow people to see from other perspectives and understand reasons for differences in opinions. It emphasises that some people do not want to join together, keeping their own identities in faith, yet others do wish to grow together. Chapter 3: *Communication and dialogue* emphasises the importance of faith in the community, in addition to problems of interaction with tradition and equality which may restrain churches from moving forward and towards ecumenism. Only through an acknowledgement of the disagreement can dialogue take place, no matter how difficult these conversations may prove to be. In order for ecumenism to be entirely successful, as Chapter 4: *Ecumenical language* suggests, a common ground needs to be discovered, in particular finding a universal language. Conversely, there are issues in using an ancient or modern language for ecumenism, yet there is an overall inadequacy of theological language which must be addressed.

Although scripture is essential in discussing ecumenism, history can help to observe God's purposes in the world. Thus, history and tradition are important, especially in learning from past mistakes, what has and has not been previously successful. *Ecumenical reception* shows that receiving ecumenism is recognising it, however, there

is also a great reluctance from some people to accept ecumenism, either by not acknowledging it at all, or actively disagreeing with it.

Evans (1996) believes that the methods used to attempt ecumenism are not necessarily wrong, it is just that the task is so large it is difficult to achieve. Having great aims but lower expectations is key for ecumenism to work. Therefore, this book does not focus on 'new' methods in ecumenical theology, but it highlights past methods which need to be continued and carried out on a larger scale, which will help to build a more successful ecumenical community. This is beneficial to churches, as Evans is not encouraging them to consider new ideas, however, if these 'old' ideas have not been previously entirely successful, this could be an indication that they should be attempting new methods of ecumenism. Evans (1996) mentions little about ecumenism on a global scale, nevertheless, it is an excellent starting point to consider how to build ecumenical communities and understand why some people do and do not support the idea.

The research shows that Gen Y are becoming less interested in church and many have very little religious knowledge in general. Britain has become more multicultural so there is a greater need for a range of religions to be accepted as opposed to Christianity being the only focus, particularly in institutions such as universities (Hunt, 2013). Communication is key, as emphasised by Savage et al. (2006), Collins-Mayo et al. (2010), and Mason et al. (2007). Understanding the needs of young people is vital in attracting them, and the only way to do this is to talk to them rather than making generalised assumptions based on stereotypes. Percy's (2000) 'A Theology of Change for the Church' considers ways of helping the church to become a more effective institution, by going

back to basics and becoming more unified. This is how ecumenism relates: it encourages unity, and if divisions and disputes over beliefs are what deters young people from choosing to get involved in Christianity, ecumenism could be a solution to this problem. However, at the end of the day, if the Church of England considered what really matters to Gen Y, in addition to providing more religious based education, whilst still adhering to Christian beliefs, it is highly unlikely that everyone would be on board. Therefore, by following these key studies the Church of England will discover how to make the church a better place for Gen Y, and have the power to listen to future generations and have to option to thrive, or ignore these ideas and give in to the likelihood of the Church becoming irrelevant to modern society.

Chapter 3: Generation Y and the Church of England

Introduction

This chapter develops the reasons why Gen Y are leaving the Church of England, specifically why they are losing interest in the church and religion. Young people have a strong focus on ‘self’, which is evident in their approach to posting about their lives on social media, and this is reflected in their spiritual views. However, there are a minority who are still interested in the church who need to be acknowledged too, so it is important to recognise why they are still going to church in order for the Church of England to discover what they need to do in order to attract more young people. As most young people attend schools and many subsequently go on to university, this research will address the changes which have taken place in educational institutions with regard to Religious Education and chaplaincies, as well as other Christian based activities. I will also explain why the Church is failing to attract Gen Y from the point of view of young people, thus continuing to discuss young people’s needs relating to support for mental health issues and sexuality.

What is Generation Y's relationship with the Church of England?

Generation Y have lost interest in the Church:

An increasing number of people now believe that Gen Y are not just losing interest in Christianity but also religion in general. Ross and Beckford (2010), exploring previous research by Collins Mayo et al. (2010), in *The Faith of Generation Y*, state that “Religion is largely irrelevant to most young people, who rely instead on a “secular trinity” of themselves, their family and their friends to give meaning to their lives” (Ross and

Beckford, 2010). Savage et al. (2006), refer to this as immanent faith: “The emotional support of family and friends helped to confer on the young person a positive sense of self as somebody who is known and both acceptable and accepted, someone who belongs” (Savage et al., 2006 p.34). This indicates that young people are losing interest in God because, on the whole, they would rather seek support from their family and friends. Over time, as generations come to the realisation that it is easier to depend on each other than God, to whom they do not necessarily feel they can relate, getting out of the habit of going to church is leading to a continuous decline in commitment to the Christian faith. Gen Y tend to emphasise the importance of self, especially in autonomous decision making, as: “They did not like being told what to do” (Savage et al., 2006, p.37). Young people have varying ideas about morality, as opposed to specifically following the commandments of God of whom they have little knowledge. Amongst the young people questioned by Savage et al. (2006) “religious faith was seen as a private concern and did not form a routine part of everyday conversation”, therefore, the traditional view of church as a social gathering is not as highly regarded by Gen Y (Savage et al., 2006, p.38). Due to Gen Y having less conversations about Christianity, this will assuredly lead to further decline in interest in the Church, as young people are less likely to debate the question of the existence of God outside of an educational environment. In a society that places significant emphasis on scientific proof, religion is becoming less relevant, thus, young people’s priorities are unlike those of previous generations. However, there are still a minority who are interested in Christianity and this provides a glimmer of hope for the future of the Church of England. Research carried out by ‘ComRes’ on behalf of ‘Hope Revolution Partnership’ a Christian Youth organisation, has shown that this minority of young people is around 20% of 11-

18 year olds describe themselves as “active followers of Jesus”, of whom 13% say they are practising Christians (Rudgard, 2017). This research has also discovered that visiting religious buildings can be highly influential in a young person deciding to commit to Christianity. In fact, around “13 per cent of teenagers said that they decided to become a Christian after a visit to a church or cathedral”, therefore suggesting that visiting churches, for example in an educational context, could be beneficial to encouraging more young people to attend (Rudgard, 2017).

Young people are still praying in times of crisis, which Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) refer to as “bedroom spirituality”, although they are less likely to commit to going to church (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, as cited in Ross and Beckford, 2010). This is because “The bedroom is often the first space in which young people are able to exert some control, be creative and make their own”, consequently, privacy allows individuals to express themselves more freely, which they may not feel able to do in a large church full of people, where fear of judgement may hold people back (Savage et al. 2006, p.45). For many, prayer is only periodically necessary but there are three main types of prayer explored by young people: “petitionary”, in difficult situations; “confessional”, when acknowledging moral failure and “thanksgiving”, which tends to be less common (Savage et al. 2006, pp. 46-50). This curiosity of a higher power in times of personal crisis shows faith in Christianity is still alive, but Gen Y are taking a different approach to their predecessors. This idea is supported by a study undertaken by Elizabeth Olson at Edinburgh University from 2007 to 2008, which found that for young people to be involved in Christianity they often feel a need to explain themselves to others (AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Research Programme, 2012). Nevertheless, those who

did in fact have a genuine interest in Christianity were more concerned with committing their lives to their faith rather than having a half-hearted approach: "They emphasize the importance of being an 'authentic' Christian, or a person who lives their faith in all spaces and at all times." (AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Research Programme, 2012). Therefore, Gen Y can be described as an 'all or nothing' group, as there is much less focus on simply turning up for the Sunday services and lacking commitment for serving the church. Considering what it can do for 'real lives', by positioning the church in the context of other people's lives, seems to be what Gen Y values most, and according to the conclusion of this study, young, 'authentic' Christians are not affected by the facts and figures of the declining church, but by the genuineness of an individual. This authenticity is regarded as: "having a faith which you have to defend, and taking seriously its difficult demands", which may present authentic Christians in a positive light in comparison to those who do not believe, as these qualities alone are associated with determined, strong-willed people: characteristics which are valued by society (AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Research Programme, 2012).

Church Attendance:

There are various surveys and studies which support the idea that church attendance amongst Gen Y has decreased, due to the level of commitment young people believe it requires. If we compare the results of the 2001 census where people were asked "What is your religion?" to the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS, 2006) in which people were asked: "Do you regard yourself as *belonging* to any particular religion?" they produced entirely different results (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p4). In the census, 72% of Britons and 62% of 16-34-year olds stated that they were Christians, as opposed to 47% of adults

and 27% of 18-24-year olds who felt that they ‘belonged’ to Christianity, according to the BSAS (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p4). Young people believed that there was a considerably larger commitment involved in *belonging* to Christianity and the Church, as opposed to simply *being* a Christian. Furthermore, the number of baptisms and confirmations have also dropped. From 1980 to 2007, baptism rates declined from 98,000 to 28,000 in the Church of England (Church of England, as cited in Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p4). The proportion of teenage confirmations has decreased from 63% in 1976 to 37% in 2006, consequently, the majority of people who are committing to confirmation are now older than 19 (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, pp4-5). This suggests indecisiveness, or an inability to commit to a religion, which may well be typical of Gen Y’s general behaviour. Collins-Mayo et al. describe this as “general fuzziness and uncertainty” as well as religious ideas having “little real impact” on young people (Collins-Mayo et al. 2010, pp19-20). However, baptisms and confirmations are not a guarantee that people remain faithful to the church. Naming ceremonies are becoming more popular, as opposed to baptisms, as a way of celebrating the birth of the child and welcoming them into the family. The decrease in the number of baptisms suggests that, modern families place less of an emphasis on Christianity and its ceremonies. Therefore, if a child has been discouraged from going to church, or has never been, the only way for them to learn about Christianity is to actively seek it themselves. In some situations, this may be difficult where families are either anti-church or anti-religion.

Schools:

The education of young people in the UK is less influenced by Christianity than it was previously, due to the rise in multi-culturalism. Despite Christianity being England’s

official religion, schools are focusing less on Christianity, particularly as England is becoming more multi-cultural and welcoming people of a variety of religious backgrounds. According to *Religious Education in Schools*, a document produced by the House of Commons, written by Long, Hubble and Bolton (2016), all state schools are required to teach Religious Education, but are no longer required to teach Christianity, they are able to decide which major religions they deem to be the most important in different cultural settings (Long, Hubble and Bolton, 2016). Hence, schools are permitted to determine what is most appropriate for their students, but it signifies that they are not necessarily learning about their country's official religion. Depending on the school, the personal views of the teacher and religious background of the students, the teaching may be somewhat biased against the minorities. Moreover, according to the former Education secretary Nicky Morgan, speaking on the *Andrew Marr Show* (2015), schools are required to teach pupils that they live in a Christian country, in spite of this, teachers can "set their own religious studies curriculum, in line with the wishes of parents and the local community", and can they can prioritise teaching "established religions over atheism" (Morgan, 2015 as cited in, Swinford, 2015). Therefore, the government encourages the influence of the Church of England while allowing teachers flexibility in what they teach.

There are other means of educating school children in Christianity such as nativity plays, harvest celebrations and assemblies usually including hymns. These experiences can encourage children to go to Sunday school, family services or even youth clubs. On the other hand, according to Burns (2016), writing for the BBC, the popularity of these events is in decline, as schools are finding nativity plays too stressful for all involved, "for

many parents and teachers, the plays can become "torture"" (Burns, 2016). Stress combined with the difficulty of including children not from Christian families has resulted in some schools deciding to produce a secular school play as opposed to an annual nativity in order to escape the religious issues which can arise (Burns, 2016). Thus, some schools have lost what may be their only Christian event of the year, which is challenging for the Church of England as making contact could have encouraged church attendance.

Nonetheless, the experiences of young people attending these schools will be different to those who attend church schools: "Currently around a third of state schools in England are church schools, predominantly Church of England or Roman Catholic" education and church have always been historically related, but these links have clearly diminished (Teachernet, 2009, as cited in Collins-Mayo et al, 2010, p.56). Parents, with or without a Christian faith, are often keen to send their children to faith schools because, on the whole, they tend to produce good academic results and the ethos of the schools teaches children to behave according to stronger morals (Collins-Mayo, 2010, p.56). Catholic schools tend to be much more denominationally focused, whereas Church of England schools are "more concerned with a 'general theology of service to the nation'" (Kay and Francis, 1996, as cited in Collins-Mayo et al., 2006, p.56). Therefore, if parents of little or no faith wanted to send their children to a good school, it would make more sense to consider a Church of England school rather than a Catholic school as they require a greater faith commitment from students. Children at faith schools have the chance to further explore Christianity in R.E. lessons, with the additional opportunity to experience religion through assemblies, class prayers and

school Eucharists. Through encountering a Christian-based education, they “get a ‘feel for’ being Christian”, and young people are able to make their own decisions about what they believe and find their own religious identity, depending on whether they choose to embrace or reject these beliefs (Collins-Mayo, 2010, p.57). These opportunities provide young people with a reference should they wish to explore Christianity further later in life. Overall, faith schools can be influential in providing young people with a good experience of Christianity, not forcing a commitment from children, but rather allowing them to discover their own identity by learning more about a certain religion. If a greater number of young people attended faith schools, this could possibly reduce the prejudice against Christianity through education.

Universities:

The presence of chaplains in universities is an example of the access Gen Y has, or has had to the Church of England. Many universities have Christian Unions, some have Church Foundations and others may have strong links with local churches. Although chaplains are typically members of the clergy, they are becoming increasingly concerned with multi-faith issues, thus, coming from an Anglican faith perspective with the idea of accepting and supporting all faiths in a pastoral manner. An Anglican presence in the form of chaplains is a valuable part of a university, and in fact many organisations. According to Robert Runcie, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, “the Christian voice needs to be heard in higher education, expressing our deep concern for the whole person. This means treating our fellows as children of God, not mere economic resources” (Runcie, 1988 as cited in Higton, 2011, p.3). It teaches students that they are not simply part of an ‘exam factory’, but it is part of the university’s commitment to

“public good” by providing a “holistic’ education” (Higton, 2011, p.3). While all faiths should be supported and accepted in an educational environment, this mentality is steering chaplains away from their roles as Church of England clergy. They are expected to deal with concerns “under the over-lapping headings of ‘multi-faith’, ‘spirituality’, and ‘well-being’” rather than specifically Anglican issues, meaning that there is much less of a Christian focus for students (Hunt, 2013, p.359). In the 1950s and 1960s, the Church of England agreed that the primary aim of chaplains was to “advance interests of the Church itself without reference to other Christian denominations” (Hunt, 2013, p.360). This was later altered in the 1970s to “disseminate the faith’s message and where the chaplain became a facilitator of a more mission-orientated approach involving other Christian traditions and lay members”, effectively making them aware of the growing multi-faith community and opening them to the possibility of ministering to people of other faiths (Hunt, 2013, p.360). The Church of England is clearly adapting to the modern world, and the changing nature of faith in universities which Gen Y would see as a positive move forward, who are typically more accepting of people with different faiths. However, “Ironically, the attempt to make university chaplaincies relevant to the contemporary world, driven by the need to adapt and even survive, may plausibly lead to their demise” therefore, a decision which the Church of England thought was positive for inclusiveness may have a negative effect on them (Hunt, 2013, p.367).

Why is the Church of England failing to attract Generation Y?

The church seems insincere:

One reason why the Church of England are failing to attract Gen Y is that they are trying too hard to be relatable to young people. Grey (2015) discusses this issue, using the

example of the chaplain of the City of Bath College, Rob Popejoy, who is one of many people trying to be a relatable figure for Gen Y. To quote Grey (2015), Popejoy is a ‘hipster’ who “sports a beard at the age of 30, wears beanie hats and owns a skateboard. He is also heavily tattooed, and has interests in snowboarding, football and hip-hop”. Grey (2015) continues to explain that over the last two decades, numerous examples similar to Popejoy have appeared, attempting to encourage young people that church can be a ‘cool’ environment. However, many perceive this to be insincere, and although some may respond better to a chaplain who appears to be more modern and similar to themselves, they may not feel able to relate to the individuals that Grey (2015) describes. Members of Gen Y tend to require a genuine interest from others in order to want to commit to whatever is on offer: “The postmodern leavers in your life will not respond to your message unless you truly love and accept them, regardless of where they stand spiritually” (Dyck, 2010, p.39). As the example of Popejoy suggests, if young people sense that they are being drawn into the church under false pretences they will not be able to develop the level of trust needed in order to commit.

Modern worship, which typically involves projectors instead of hymn books, guitars in the place of an organ, is not always what Gen Y requires, still, this is how churches often attempt to attract young people. They aim to demonstrate that they can keep up with the evolving world with new forms of technology and so on. On a deeper level, they may be suggesting that as they commit to modernisation through technology, they can reflect the changing world in multiple ways. Grey (2015) suggests that Gen Y struggle with authenticity in particular because they have spent so much time, particularly throughout their school and university education, adapting to different groups of people

in order to fit in, and are so busy doing so that they never take the time to discover who they are. Grey (2015) believes that Gen Y feel the need to be accepted and not instructed to behave in certain ways due to the strict rules that the church lays down. Gen Y need to feel as though they are not pressured into making any decisions regarding their faith, hence, regarding the rules that govern religion, advising them how to behave is not helpful whilst young people are still developing.

Nadia Bolz Weber is an example of interaction between church and modernisation in the USA, as she has gained more interest by breaking down barriers between a pastor and their congregations. Weber, a tattooed, ex-alcoholic and former stand-up comedian, is an advocate for gay rights and looks towards more engaging activities for people to take part in at church, for example baking 'saint cookies' (Little 2015; Weber, 2015, p.4). Her argument for maintaining her foul mouth is that: "I don't think clergy should pretend to be people they're not", based on this statement, she is a better example for young people than the hipster chaplain Rob Popejoy described in Grey (2015), as her reasons for doing this are personal, not necessarily for the greater good. For someone who does not have a particular passion for young people, Weber recounts an opportunity she almost turned down, yet actually had a huge impact on a group of young people. She was invited to speak as a Lutheran pastor at the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans in 2012, she explained in her talk, that based on her background, someone like her should not be talking to a group of teenagers, but God is extremely accepting (Weber, 2015). The shock factor of someone, whose appearance and background were very different to these young people's typical expectations of a pastor, will have helped her cause a great deal. Weber (2015) allows young people an

insight into her own life in order to encourage them that sin is a natural part of life, but all people can be forgiven according to Christianity, this may encourage young people to be more willing to explore the Christian faith. By creating an image of God, who welcomes sinners rather than banishes them, young people display a greater interest in Christianity, and this is shown by the volumes of emails, tweets, messages and letters Weber still receives as a result of her talk (Weber, 2015). Conversely, the traits that Weber displays, for example frequent swearing, tattoos and encouraging people that no matter how much we sin, we are loved and accepted by God may have the wrong effect on impressionable young people, leading them to believe that they can behave in any manner and still be a ‘good’ person. Her message emphasising that clergy (in particular) should not pretend to be people they are not is important, but she may be seen as flaunting various traits which are frowned upon by traditionalists. However, Weber is an American Lutheran example, so it is unlikely that this can be generalised to young people exploring the Church of England, yet the principle is the same: young people will be more interested in a religion if they find someone they are able to relate to.

The Church of England is not accessible to young people:

The Church of England has responded to the modernisation of this country and taken measures to adapt to various changes to churches, which are often imposing buildings with stunning stained-glass windows and old wooden pews, and may appear a little daunting to someone who has not previously spent time inside one. In an effort for churches to become more welcoming environments some have removed their pews, added kitchens and so on in order to create ‘community hubs’. An example of this is St John’s Church, Stadhampton, which has been referred to as “re-medievalisation”

because the church was “recapturing the sense that churches are the heartbeat of the community” (Ormiston, 2013). This has had positive effects as the number of young families in particular has increased: the church has made people aware that their buildings are not used for solely religious purposes (Ormiston, 2013).

Some Christians believe that traditional Christianity should be preserved and that modernisation is unnecessary. However, it is needed, not only from a physical point of view, as some church buildings require modernisation in order to accommodate disabled access, facilities such as kitchens and toilets in order to make events more comfortable. Without some modernisation of buildings, the church will continue to exclude some people. Other methods of modernisation, such as changing worship music or service books to move away from old uncommon language, may not seem as necessary, yet they may help to be more relevant to modern society. Christians see their religion as essential and want to encourage others to also take part, if they can try to create a space that Gen Y feel comfortable in, young people are more likely to take an interest in Christianity.

According to Fitzpatrick (1955), the problem with modern society lies in the failure of community: “Some disintegration has taken place in men’s social relations with the result that they can no longer achieve in society the perfection, the fulfilment, the satisfaction for which society seems to exist” (Fitzpatrick, 1955, p.5). This is also applicable to Gen Y, despite the age of the source, as a group of individualistic people, they are less likely to want to be part of the traditional community setting. Consequently, as there is now less interest in church as people’s beliefs have declined, the sense of community has broken down to a certain extent. It should be in each

church's interest to bring the community back together, and encouraging them to use a place for secular activities may help to invoke a degree of interest.

In addition to encouraging the church into becoming a welcoming place for both secular and sacred activities, often those who are involved in the organisation of a church can inadvertently turn people away. In a study which used interviews to question 34 young people and 8 youth workers, researching young people and their perceptions of church, 'the importance of relationships and social belonging' was identified as one of the key factors of a successful relationship with a church (Arweck and Jackson, 2016). Moreover, tensions between young people or youth workers and their church were also evident, but youth workers can also be reluctant to welcome some people for example rowdy teenagers, yet these are exactly the people the church should be trying to attract (Arweck and Jackson, 2016, p.141). One of the resounding conclusions from this study was that young people find a sense of belonging in youth groups and not church, thus indicating that the church needs to try to be more relevant to young people. Churches clearly must endeavour to make sure young people feel like they also belong in the church too.

The Church and Popular Culture

As theology and popular culture are related in a number of ways, it is possible for Gen Y and the church to learn from each other through popular culture. Niebuhr identified five approaches to the theology of culture, which have been explored by Lynch (2005), these are: "*Christ against culture*", "*The Christ of Culture*", "*Christ above culture*", "*Christ and Culture in Paradox*" and "*Christ as the Transformer of Culture*" (Lynch, 2005, pp.99-100). Overall, they represent various theologies, that Christ and culture can either work

together, or greatly contrast one another. Niebuhr's approaches clearly emphasise the dialogic nature of theology and culture as they identify core issues. However, Lynch (2005) argues that they are limited in detail and are "not necessarily accepted in all theologies of culture" (Lynch, 2005, p.101). Similarly, the work of Savage et al. (2006), also explores the relationship between the church and popular culture, specifically relating to young people. It has the ability to enhance religion, for example "Modern styles of worship, particularly since the 1960s have drawn inspiration from various forms of popular music" (Savage et al., 2006, p.23). This encourages the church to move forward with Gen Y, encouraging interest from those who would not enjoy old-fashioned hymns, accompanied by an organ. Although it has not, as of yet, replaced actual communities "the Internet is used to form communities that supplement... the face-to-face relationships of a local church", thus forming e-communities, for example through social media, emailing and so on (Savage et al., 2006, p.24-5). Rave and club culture with their trance like states "induced by dance, techno-music and drugs" produce experiences similar to what some people gain from a religious experience (Savage et al., 2006, p.25). Therefore, reasons the church may provide Gen Y with for committing may not be relevant to those who already gain what the church can offer from an alternative source which they entirely prefer. We can also resource religion through popular culture: the classic example being TV evangelism (Savage et al., 2006). Moreover, there are films such as *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) which are also used for evangelistic purposes, yet films such as *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings*, relating to the supernatural are used by more conservative Christians as examples of popular culture to be avoided (Savage et al., 2006). Consequently, by encouraging conversations in

reference to popular culture, churches can at least attempt to become more accessible to young people.

What do young people need from the church?

Today's youth are facing an increasing number of issues that they need help and support with. The Church is not obliged by the government to help, but they often have the skills to provide solutions for these troubled individuals. Examples of issues faced by young people outlined by "Youth A Part: Young People and the Church" (1996), it explains the relationship between young people and their attitudes towards the Church:

- "Bullying
- Work and training
- Not having a job
- Homes and housing
- Drink and drugs
- Being a victim
- Family tensions
- Sexuality"

(Youth A Part, 1996, pp.7-8).

Churches have the ability to set up support systems and local groups, alongside working with national and international groups such as 'Youth for Christ' and the 'Salvation Army'. Addressing young people's issues also provides the perfect opportunity for the church to draw them into attending services and various events. Although there is a lack of pressure from any other sources for the church to provide support, "It is the duty of

the church to seek Christ's justice in the world and to work at all levels to understand and change oppressive systems. This is a challenge for all of the people in the church, both young and old" (Youth A Part, 1996, p.8). There needs to be a level of understanding of young people in order to proceed, then again, it is impossible to gain one idea of who young people are or what they want; what may be appealing to one group of people may not be to others (Youth A Part, 1996, p.16). Finding a common ground between what the church teaches and what young people are willing to take part in can also be a struggle. Youth work should cover four main principles: "Education... Empowerment.... Equal Opportunities... [and] Participation", Saunders (2013) develops these ideas specifically relating them to faith and the Bible, as well as emphasising the importance of belonging, but the principles stay the same (Saunders, 2013, pp.83-4; Youth A Part, 1996, p.17). The fact that these principles have remained so similar even after twenty years is significant: either these ideas are perfect and need no revision, or there needs to be serious consideration of an amendment of these objectives. There are several examples of reasons for dropping out of youth services, the following taken again from *Youth A Part* (1996):

- "I grew out of it"
- Not interested in the activities on offer
- I was too busy
- I was bored
- Poor facilities
- Badly organised
- I dislike the people who go" (Youth A Part, 1996, p13).

Therefore, the church's aim to encourage young people to attend should be based on these examples, and address why they are a problem to Gen Y. There are two models to take into consideration in order to discover how the church is inhibiting youth attendance. Monica Hill (in accordance with Professor G Hiebert's analysis) claims that Western society has a "bounded set" mentality: they expect people to adhere to their own essential characteristics rather than reaching out to the community as "It involves getting people to cross their boundary and conform to their category's essential, measurable characteristics" (Youth A Part, 1996, p.14). Conversely, Guder and Barrett (1998) believed that the mission community as a whole, is actually a bounded set within a centred-set organisation: "The bounded-set nature of the disciple community reflects how Jesus chose a group of disciples (a bounded set) at the same time inviting many to come and see where he was going" (Guder and Barrett, 1998, p.209). "A centred-set community invites all to enter the journey at any point they choose" so, the mission community is a relaxed area where people can come and go, and they are slowly filtered into a bounded set where they start to show commitment to the church in some form (Guder and Barrett, 1998, p209). Moreover, there has been noteworthy progress over a decade in which the church has broken down barriers in order to be more approachable, but they will still expect attendees to adhere to their rules.

The Church and Mental Health

There are a number of issues faced by young people associated with mental illness, which the church may be able to help with. Therefore, it is important to tackle potential causes of mental health in order to reduce the number of cases of people struggling with these issues. It is crucial to remember that Gen Y, as young adults, are currently at a

stage of either finishing education or beginning a full-time job, and some are starting a family. At various times in their development young people will need some kind of support and this is an opportunity for the church to provide a support system. According to the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, there has been little research on this group of people, however, they stated that: “some environments in which young people live introduce new factors that may affect their mental, emotional and behavioural health, such as the presence of binge drinking” and so on (National Research Council, 2009, p.171). Other opportunities including joining the military can also have an effect due to “exposure to combat and severe trauma” which can also cause harm both mentally and physically (National Research Council, 2009, p.171).

Due to the impossibility of knowing what actually causes individual mental health issues, opportunities for support must be provided for those who are affected. “One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year” which is a significant proportion of the population, and highlights mental health as being greatly significant (McManus et al, 2009, as cited in Mental Health Foundation, 2015, p.7). In terms of the actions the church should be taking for people with mental health issues, Gieseckus, Smith and Schuster (2017) have devised several strategies for “Care and Counsel as Mission” some of which particularly relate to Gen Y (Gieseckus, Smith and Schuster, 2017, p.24). Firstly, the church needs to “Reduce Stigma”, by educating church leaders they will become more confident talking about it, mainly as part of sermons, this will show more support for people who suffer, and allow them to be more comfortable when seeking help knowing that the church is keen to support them (Gieseckus, Smith and Schuster, 2017, p.24). It is crucial to “Integrate mental health into church ministries”

by treating physical and mental health as the same, so it is possible to help reduce the stigma by not creating a divide between people (Gieseckus, Smith and Schuster, 2017, p.25). The church has the opportunity to support “Advocacy for just allocation of resources for mental health at all levels” (Gieseckus, Smith and Schuster, 2017, p.25). By encouraging awareness of data and resources amongst people helping those with mental health issues, a more effective system of care within the church could be put into place. By offering services to the community, young people in particular may feel more comfortable than simply going to church to seek help, counselling techniques should be seen as a “gift from God” (Gieseckus, Smith and Schuster, 2017, p.26). It is important for each church to consider what really matters to young people, especially the issues faced by individuals in different areas, for example, problems in urban cultures may vary from those in rural cultures. There are various verses in the Bible concerning mental illness, but one especially stands out in relation to how to deal with these issues: “The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed” (Psalm 103.6). The church believes that if someone is unwell, God can heal, thus, supporting the fact that there is no boundary between physical and mental illness. Nevertheless, mental illness cannot necessarily be cured or significantly helped solely by the influence of a doctor or support from a church, it is the connection of both body and soul which needs to be addressed by each area of expertise. The church can serve each person by encouraging them that God can heal each individual.

The Church of England and Sexuality

As homosexuality has become more acceptable in the UK over the course of the lives of Gen Y, it can make the Church of England’s views on homosexuality appear outdated

and offensive to young people. Younger generations are: “changing their minds on homosexuality today not because they’ve suddenly revised their opinion of the cultural context of Leviticus, the meaning of ‘unnatural’ in Romans I, the nature of homosexual practice in Corinth, or the translation of the Greek words in I Timothy, but because what they demand just doesn’t seem plausible anymore.” (Shaw, 2015, p.23). Hence, a changing perspective suggests that Christianity should be less concerned with scripture, and think more logically in the context of society. This is not a popular opinion amongst those who see a religion without a strong focus on scripture as weak and invalid, yet, by others it can be seen as a true representation of Christianity in a new and ever-changing environment.

Society has changed as people are less concerned with some of the strict rules that governed humanity in Biblical times. For those who believe that scripture offers ultimate truth and that we should interpret it literally, it is impossible to conceive that homosexuality could be legitimate. However, we have been wrong before, in relation to the role of women, in society and in the church; in addition to slavery, which although the Bible does not specifically encourage, it gives a list of rules of how slaves should be treated (Exodus 21).

Traditionally, Christians believe that scripture advises homosexuality is wrong. If we look at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, it suggests that homosexual acts took place and they were “wicked”, which is also reflected on later in Ezekiel 16 (Genesis 19). Moreover, if we look at the examples of homosexuality in the Bible two are of rape (Genesis 19:5, Judges 19:22); one refers to prostitution (1 Corinthians 6:9-10); and in reference to female homosexuality Romans 1:26-27 concerns lust rather than love.

These cases are, on the whole, not representative of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) people today. Therefore, other than the traditional view that marriage should be between a man and a woman, its condemnation may have been more to do with the fact that these acts were carried out without love. This shows that the Bible can be interpreted in different ways and raises the question of whether we should interpret scripture from the point of view of someone reading the Bible for the first time or according to traditional interpretations. As society greatly evolved since the Bible was written, it makes sense to interpret it according to contemporary views as they consider aspects of human experience which are not assumed by the biblical texts, for example, contemporary types of homosexuality expressed in single-partner commitments, which do not seem to have existed in the biblical world and therefore are not assumed.

Ed Shaw, in his book *The Plausibility Problem: The church and same-sex attraction*, provides an explanation from his own point of view as a celibate man who considers himself an Evangelical Christian who experiences same sex attraction. Essentially, he believes that people who experience same-sex attraction should remain celibate due to what the Bible says. However, he emphasises that putting a label on individuals is not helpful because we are all children of God, so regardless of anything else, believing in God is the most important part of being a Christian. (Shaw, 2015). Consequently, he suggests that the church needs to be less judgemental, because it is only God who should be defining us not each other, yet he also suggests that living celibate as opposed to being in a same-sex relationship, is definitely more in harmony with the teachings of the Bible (Shaw, 2015). Different interpretations of the Bible have evolved as attitudes

towards different behaviours have changed, yet the purpose of tradition in Christianity is that biblical interpretation needs to be applied to, and when required, challenged by contemporary questions. New and old interpretations do not necessarily make each other invalid, but Christians must appeal to religious authorities in order to discuss new understandings for example, relating to homosexuality.

In several countries homosexuality is still punishable by death, that is not the case in the UK, yet opposition still prevails, particularly from religious influences, suggesting that homosexuality is a sin. Some people are comfortable with uniting religion and their sexuality however, the Bible offers a strong case to suggest otherwise. Conversely, individuals believe that God made all of us in his image and so it is not for us to judge what is sinful. In 2017 the Church of England voted, again, on the issue of legitimising same sex marriage, though this was voted against, by 100 votes to 93 (BBC, 2017). As the results were so close, it is clear that the church is almost evenly divided on the issue, which may of course change in years to come, meaning that younger people who have grown up in a generation more accepting of homosexuality have the power to change the situation if they get involved.

With regard to ordination in the Church of England, according to Ledbetter (2017) writing on Sexuality in the Church of England, officially LGBT+ candidates who are committed to celibacy will progress to ordination, yet in practice they are expected to not disclose their sexuality (Ledbetter, 2017). On the other hand, when people are encouraged not to disclose their sexuality it drastically reduces the number of people they are able to turn to for pastoral support on such personal matters. This can lead to mental health issues, and in some cases problems such as substance abuse (Ledbetter,

2017). Those who believe that there should be equality in the Church of England for same sex couples are unlikely to want to be ordained knowing this situation, meaning that there will be less interest in leadership in the Church of England.

The endless problem is that a majority of non-religious young people see the church as unwelcoming because they are not entirely accepting of the LGBT+ community as this would contradict scripture. For the church to challenge scripture, everything that their religion is founded on, could be treacherous as they would lose the support of many and others may entirely lose respect for them. However, if they do not change their views on homosexuality the support from Gen Y and future generations may be lacking, which will be bad news for the future of the Church of England. It is likely that because the vote on same sex marriage was so close, in the near future this could change. The Archbishop of Canterbury stated at the results of the debate, that the Church of England would make more of an effort to make the church more inclusive for LGBT+ people (Rudgard, 2017). This is a difficult and sensitive issue to discuss, because if the Church of England one day overturns this decision to support younger generations, they may well lose appreciation from others.

Churches who are engaging youth:

Martyn Percy's research in *Managing the Church* (Evans and Percy, 2000) provides us with a potential framework of the church which adheres to modernisation, thus it could appeal to Gen Y. Firstly, he suggests that the church should be seen as a 'household of faith', correlating church and family in order to break down the hierarchy and encourage 'oneness', which supports a friendlier atmosphere where the true authority is God (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.178). Secondly, the church as an 'organism' acknowledges the

need to be able to evolve and develop, and the fact that the church community is dependent on each other, again devalues the need for excessive hierarchy. Thirdly, the church as a ‘Community of Blessing’ highlights the importance for looking at the positives, and discouraging the church from being perceived as a burden, as it has the potential to provide: “genuine opportunities for growth and new life” (Evans and Percy, 2000, p.186).

Megachurches such as Holy Trinity Brompton, Hillsong, and large Christian church networks such as ‘Soul Survivor’ and ‘New Wine’ are examples of how charismatic churches are helping young people. According to Goh (2008), in reference to Hillsong, from an Australian perspective, looking at demographics, young people make up a large proportion of megachurch congregations (Goh, 2008). Although there are a number of issues which are criticised by Conservative Christian ministers, for example, many believe the gospel is somewhat “diluted” by megachurches, in addition to their reputation for being more affluent in comparison to smaller churches, which may create suspicion and belief that megachurches are less authentic than traditional churches (Goh, 2008). Moreover, due to the size of megachurches, they have a greater number of resources and people available for serving the community with regard to faith, mental health, support for people in all walks of life, in addition to creative arts projects (Goh, 2008). This supports the idea of the church as an organism, by finding new ways of involving young people and working together in order to be successful, thus the church is not glued to tradition. Therefore, in addition to providing support, giving young people opportunities to be creative, they are finding other people who are like-minded,

reducing loneliness and boredom, they help to keep young people off the streets and misbehaving, by channelling feelings into something worthwhile.

Holy Trinity Brompton is a network of churches based in London, currently run by Nicky and Pippa Gumbel. Since 1985 they have been involved in church planting and “the church now has a Sunday congregation of 4,500 people” (HTB, 2015). HTB is spread across 4 different churches and has 11 services ranging from informal to traditional, including family-based services and separate child-orientated activities. They also run a wide range of courses for marriage guidance, issues such as abortion healing, eating disorders and bereavement, in addition to the famous alpha courses which have become increasingly popular in churches throughout the UK. Another key aspect of the church is the ‘Connect’ groups, allowing people of all ages and different walks of life to engage with each other and grow spiritually by discussing various issues. HTB could be seen as a successful example of a household of faith, especially regarding the Connect groups as it breaks down barriers and encourages more interaction and oneness.

Moreover, being part of a large church, and possibly part of greater network of churches, may be more beneficial for young people because there are better resources available for them. Nevertheless, the size of megachurches can also be a problem as they cannot become such a tight knit community that a smaller church could. Getting to know each other personally, learning to support via friendships and trusting one another may not be possible where there are so many people who do not know each other. Yet the ‘Connect’ groups at HTB, and various other small groups in churches are examples of how the church can still create a ‘household of faith’, family-like environment. There needs to be an additional emphasis on the church as a ‘Community of Blessing’, as it is

so easy to focus on how the church is failing, instead of concentrating on providing opportunities for new life in the church. Percy's theology for managing the church is of course an ideal, and although no church may entirely fulfil these three concepts, working towards them could help each church be more focused on what they wish to achieve, particularly with regard to reaching out to Gen Y.

Conclusion

I have underlined some of the key reasons why Gen Y are no longer interested in the Church and therefore, do not wish to attend. It is hardly surprising that Gen Y have lost interest in the Church of England, given their apparent lack of commitment to religion in general. Young people rely on a secular trinity of their friends, family and self, rather than turning to the church for support, yet they are still involved in bedroom spirituality. They are having less conversations about Christianity, which means they have less concern for the religion, however, visiting church buildings apparently has a positive effect on Gen Y encouraging them to commit to the Church of England. However, for the minority who are Christians, not only do they seek to be more authentic Christians, as opposed to having a half-hearted approach, they also appreciate more authentic role models. For example, Nadia Bolz Weber has the potential to be more successful than the 'hipster' chaplain Rob Popejoy. Weber models religious honesty as she openly accepts she is a sinner, frequently talking about past behaviours she regrets as something to learn from, using herself as a living example of how anyone can completely turn their life around. Gen Y differentiate between believing and belonging, as the latter implies more commitment. Schools focus less on Christianity, due to the rise in multiculturalism, but faith schools have generally retained their popularity because, on

the whole, they provide children with a good moral education. University chaplains also have more multi-faith roles, yet the presence of the Church of England in universities is important so people understand they are valuable human beings, not resources. Churches are not all accessible to young people, both physically and in terms of the style of services, however, various churches have made efforts to modernise for the sake of future generations, to make them more accommodating places. Lynch (2005) has shown that popular culture is important to consider because the church and Gen Y can use it to learn from each other in a number of ways, and they can understand what young people need from the church and vice versa. One of the main things Gen Y need from the Church of England, is support concerning mental health, particularly in helping to reduce stigma, encouraging awareness, and putting mental health in the same bracket as physical health. More conversations need to happen, particularly involving Gen Y, about homosexuality as this is another disagreement which divides the church and young people, those who do not feel accepted into the church will avoid it with purpose. Despite there being a discrepancy between much of Gen Y and the church, there are some who are successful in attracting young people, for example megachurches, especially those who make more of an effort to see from Gen Y's perspective, encouraging them to be creative in faith. Therefore, the Church must decide whether to take heed from those who are succeeding in attracting young people, particularly focusing on supporting them and encouraging a sense of belonging, or they must accept that the Church of England will continue to dwindle in numbers, and in a few generations time may cease to exist.

In the next chapter I will discuss spirituality as an alternative to established religions and explain why many young people prefer to be spiritual rather than religious. This relates to reasons Gen Y are losing interest in the Church of England, and again, by paying attention to this it is possible to understand where they are going wrong in relation to young people.

Chapter 4: Generation Y and Spirituality

Introduction:

This chapter explores existing definitions of spirituality to form a working definition of spirituality for the purpose of this research. Having established this, it is essential to determine why young people are abandoning religion for the sake of other spiritualities. This basis of this was discussed in the first chapter, however, I will go into further detail, specifically relating to the advantages of spirituality as opposed to religion for Gen Y. As mental health problems are a growing epidemic amongst young people, it is crucial to consider the relationship between spiritual and mental health: whether spirituality can have positive or negative effects on an individual's mental wellbeing.

Distinguishing religion from spirituality- What is spirituality?

In order to discover what kind of relationship Gen Y have with spirituality, first, we must look at the connection between religion and spirituality. There are various definitions of spirituality and some researchers for example Ganga and Kutty (2013), have avoided making a general definition of spirituality because it includes such a broad spectrum of ideas.

Spirituality and religion are not interchangeable terms but strongly related, although there are a number of differences between the two. Heelas and Woodhead (2015) describe spirituality as a “commitment to a deep truth that is to be found within what belongs to this world” (Heelas and Woodhead, 2015, p.6). Therefore, spirituality can be, but is not always, focused on an experience of ‘spirit’ or spiritual force in the physical

world. One of the reasons it is so hard to define spirituality is because it is so varied and depends on the individual. According to De Souza (2003) “spirituality can be described as the human person’s movement towards Ultimate Unity in an ever-swirling spiral built with layers of accumulated learning and experiences which span a lifetime” (De Souza, 2003, p.276). This definition suggests that spirituality is a part of human experience, because there are no ‘rules’ of being spiritual, although various forms of spirituality will have their own belief systems however strict or lenient these are. Spirituality becomes an ever-changing journey which has the opportunity to take any possible direction but life experiences and education will lead us to ‘Ultimate Unity’. Therefore, spirituality can either involve having a relationship with a spiritual entity as a Christian connects with God, or as this ‘Ultimate Unity’ suggests, bonding spiritually with each other to become one spiritual force. However, Swinton (2001), considers a different perspective: “Spirituality is the specific way in which individuals and communities respond to the experience of spirit” (Swinton, 2001, p.14). Reflecting on the origins of ‘spirit’ and what this means in relation to spirituality can provide us with an initial understanding of spirituality. Firstly, it is important to distinguish between the ‘Holy Spirit’ and the human spirit. The Holy Spirit is associated with Christianity and therefore, is not the same as ‘spirit’ or spiritual force in a general sense. However, the human spirit is “the essential life-force that undergirds, motivates and vitalizes human existence” (Swinton, 2001, p.14). ‘Spirit’ is derived from the Latin ‘spiritus’ which means ‘breath’ suggesting that the spirit is completely essential to the human body: as oxygen is needed to maintain the biological functions of the body, the spirit is also fundamental for its maintenance, because it provides humans with a purpose (Swinton, 2001). The human spirit is unique to each person but difficult to define without humanising it; Swinton discusses the

dangers of using the word ‘energy’ to describe the spirit, because it is important not to assume the spirit is a form of energy, although it may, or may not, be similar (Swinton, 2001). Ganga and Kutty (2013), who researched the *‘Influence of religion, religiosity and spirituality on positive mental health of young people’*, identified individuality as being more important than a general idea of spirituality: “No specific definition was assigned to spirituality; instead, we captured the individual’s perception on what spirituality is” (Ganga and Kutty, 2013, p436). This emphasises the extensive nature of spirituality and the impossibility of collating all spiritualities to fit into one definition. The general perception of spirituality has changed over the past 200 years, for example, Schneiders identifies spirituality in the 19th century as being: ““the practice of the interior by those orientated to the life of perfection’ and spirituality was radically distinguished from ‘the ordinary life of faith” (Schneiders as cited in Tacey, 2004, p.32). Spirituality may be an interior practice for some, however, depending on the spiritual focus, there is less emphasis on being a perfect person as spirituality is part of aiming towards having a more perfect life. Although spirituality is still seen as being ‘interior’, spirituality is less related to perfection, rather a journey with many possibilities. According to Bradford (1979) spirituality is “An attunement to and rapport with the transcendent values and ultimate realities of life” which supports the idea that spirituality encourages someone to focus on these values, or a certain aspect of life rather than seeking perfection (Bradford, 1979 as cited in Dadich, 2007, p422). It also requires being prepared for change, accepting that although “Most current thinking tends to express linear movement into the future” life is not simple and there are many possible paths of spirituality (Lealman, 1991, p.265).

A sacred dimension is at the heart of some forms of spirituality; the idea that we are looking towards a higher power or at least something beyond being human, and Engebretson (2010) stresses that where religiosity relates to church affiliation, spirituality can be simply and ambiguously the apprehension of a sacred dimension (Engebretson, 2010, p.6). Although people are less likely to look towards one God in a traditional Christian sense, if they believe themselves to be spiritual but not religious, there is normally still an element of focusing on a form of entity, either physical or metaphysical. The word ‘mystical’ is often associated with spirituality, which emphasises its foundation in mystery beyond human understanding. Tacey (2004) pinpoints the postmodern elements of youth spirituality as “the worldliness of their spiritual expression” and “the refusal of authoritarian styles of religion” which would suggest why young people edge towards forms of spirituality over religion, because its authoritarian nature suggests a need for commitment to which they may not want to commit (Tacey, 2004, p.67). The level of uncertainty surrounding spirituality is evident, because it includes such a broad spectrum of beliefs. The importance of uncertainty as an element of spirituality cements the significance of mystery as Tacey (2004) explains: “spirituality seems a sensitive, contemplative, transformative relationship with the sacred, and is able to sustain levels of uncertainty in its quest because respect for mystery is paramount” (Tacey, 2004, p.11). Taking this into account, spirituality is concerned with the sacred but ‘sacred’ will differ from person to person. The mystery which surrounds spiritual beliefs may not be greater than it is for authoritarian religions, there is simply a large variety of spiritual beliefs outside of religions with specific belief systems.

Therefore, spirituality and religion are related, and can overlap, but they are not the same. Spirituality can be based on a sacred being, such as a god, or focused on an entity which is sacred to an individual or a group of people. De Souza (2003) identified a form of spirituality where people aim towards an ‘Ultimate Unity’ through a process of learning and experience, yet because spirituality involves such a broad spectrum of beliefs there are also people who are much more individualistic in their spirituality. For some people spirituality is an interior practice and so becoming part of a ‘unity’ may not be part of their spiritual journey. There is a large element of mystery in spirituality and religion, because spiritual beliefs cannot be proven to be right or wrong, therefore, a great deal of faith is needed to stay true to what they believe, and in order to counter other people’s reservations and suspicions in what they believe.

A Spiritual Revolution- Are young people moving away from religion and towards spirituality?

Various definitions have revealed that spirituality is an extremely open and individualistic concept which still appeals to today’s young people, as it allows them more freedom than a rigid, established religion. Although Gen Y appear to be avoiding regular attendance of establishments such as the Church of England, many young people remain committed to exploring their own spirituality. Young people are still interested in spiritual searching, however, Savage et al. (2006) would argue that this happens “either inside or outside of institutional religion” (Savage et al., 2006, p.23). Despite maintaining an interest in spirituality, young people sometimes lack direction. According to Dadich (2007) who studied young people in self-help support groups, “some of the young people had difficulty with articulating the type of change they were seeking,

several spoke of change at a spiritual level”, yet there were also people who associated spirituality with “rigid dogma” (Dadich, 2007, p.423). Tacey (2004), adds greater perspective to this explaining that “some student interest in the spirit is atavistic and regressive but the spirit simply needs a new language and a new imaging to make it part of the postmodern intellectual landscape” (Tacey, 2004, p.60). Moreover, this reflects the reasons why young people are losing interest in religion: it is not accessible to them. However, it may also be the case that spirituality is also difficult for some young people to comprehend, and a modern interpretation is needed for them to understand spirituality, inside or outside the context of religion.

Youth Spirituality does not belong in a specific category, but critics believe that although it is not a religious model in its own right, it fits in between the gaps of other religions. Tacey (2004) acknowledges that some view youth spirituality is possibly a variant of paganism or Gnosticism, however, this is a very loose connection (Tacey, 2004). Paganism derives from the early Christian church, yet *paganus* refers to the countryside emphasising its roots in nature (Davies, 2011). However, York (2003) acknowledges critics who see paganism as lacking the grounding that other religions have: “In Wood’s [Peter Wood- Boston University] view, contemporary paganism is a movement that disdains any goal of intellectual coherence, and he questions its position in a university community.” (York, 2003, vii). The overlap with different denominations of Christianity and various religions emphasises the diversity of spirituality in young people, and this is something which should be celebrated. Gen Y, as previously emphasised, are less likely to make rash decisions, and although this may be seen as indecisive, a ‘try before you buy’ attitude can certainly be seen as positive: by exploring themselves, and discovering

what they believe before perhaps finding a religion (if any) that suits them. On the other hand, Webster's Dictionary defines Gnosticism as: "the thought and practice of various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, as cited King, 2005, p.5). Gnostics are: "syncretists, blending elements of philosophy, pagan religions and Christianity" (Hall, 2005, p.41). From these definitions, it would appear that youth spirituality and Gnosticism are hardly similar, apart from the cynical stance of the Anglican viewpoint, both groups present a great deal of heresy. Moreover, because both paganism and Gnosticism blend different ideas they can be related to youth spirituality, because they both cover such a broad spectrum of ideas.

Youth spirituality tends to be more focused on 'self' as opposed to a greater being, which is another reason why spirituality as opposed to religion is becoming more popular (Tacey, 2004). With a rise in people experiencing mental health issues, there has been a growing interest in 'mindfulness', and as a result more people are using apps such as 'Headspace' or 'Calm' to help decrease daily stress and anxiety. Young people may experience stress on a daily basis: schools and universities place a lot of pressure on young people to achieve high grades, be versatile in extra-curricular activities, whilst maintaining a social life. According to Tacey (2004), young people are also on a search for 'wholeness' as opposed to "moral perfection" (Tacey, 2004, p.80). Christianity, with its strong moral focus, acknowledges that in this life we are human and cannot be perfect, yet encourages us to live like Jesus, a man without sin. Spirituality concerns how people feel and what they want to do to experience wholeness, whilst being free to

explore it. Tacey (2004) argues that because spirituality is vaguer than religion, religious institutions relate less to general spiritual ideas (Tacey, 2004).

Youth spirituality also concerns the “breakdown of conventional dualities” which implies that their spirituality is not simply private, public or involves either internal or external experiences, rather a combination of the two (Tacey, 2004, pp.67-68). It tends to relate to the real world, nothing is done without a purpose: “they are indicating that their spirituality is *engaged* spirituality, concerned with the welfare of the world and the sacredness of endangered nature” (Tacey, 2004, p.66). Young people are practical in their spirituality, for example, as emphasised by Jenkins and Pell (2006), environmental concerns are important to young people, therefore, examples such as this may be associated with spirituality (Jenkins and Pell, 2006). Moreover, if their spirituality is rooted in the physical world, or in a god who teaches them it is important to look after the Earth, they are likely to be proactive in protecting it. Young people are more concerned with the environment than previous generations, because they were born at a time when environmental issues were becoming more important (Rogers, 2013). However, as young people become more involved in practical worldly aspects of spirituality, and less so with the institutionalisation of religion, this has created a rift between the church and young people. Spirituality and religion, as we have already seen, are not the same, yet they do have overlapping features. It is unfortunate when young people are stereotyped by the church: “Youth judges religion to be paranoid about evil, whereas religion deems youth to be naïve, escapist and fanciful” (Tacey, 2004, p.85). Of course, this is not true of many churches, however, the general suspicion of one another is evident. If the church took more time to consider the needs of Gen Y,

then they could work together synergistically, and learn from each other as “religion and youth spirituality are possessed of valuable truths” (Tacey, 2004, p.85). Education is needed to help people find a common ground and work together, in order to be able to work with not against each other.

Although there is a difference between religion and spirituality, religious institutions should still have ways of supporting those who are solely spiritual, or in fact those who are not spiritual whatsoever. According to Kay and Francis (1996): “there is a general deterioration in attitudes toward Christianity during the years of childhood and adolescence... children start with positive attitudes toward religion and end with negative ones” and although this process tends to take longer in denominational schools, the decline still occurs throughout their school career (Kay and Francis, 1996 as cited in Engebretson, 2010, p.7). As spiritual development occurs over the course of a lifetime, if an institution shows lack of interest in a generation, a young person who might later want to explore a religious institution may not feel comfortable doing so. It is unclear as to why this change takes place, although in adulthood a secular life is more widely accepted (Engebretson, 2010). Young people need the support of religious institutions in order to aid their spiritual development; good experiences of religion may not be enough to make someone want to immediately commit, yet memories of a good experience may encourage them to return in later life. By supporting their spiritual development, at whatever stage they may be, religious institutions have the opportunity to exchange views with young people, and gain each other’s trust.

Therefore, young people are more interested in spirituality than committing to various religions at a time when they are still developing, and on the whole, do not feel entirely

directional (Dadich, 2007). Religion is fairly inaccessible, or at least not easy for young people to understand, and it needs to be modernised in order for young people to be able to engage. Although spirituality is more accessible, it needs to be explored and explained to young people in a manner in which they can comprehend. Youth spirituality tends to primarily concern the self, and is also rooted in the physical world, and at the same time, it fills the gaps that religions do not necessarily cover.

Spirituality and Mental Health in Young People

It has already been established that young people struggle with a number of different issues, particularly relating to mental health and the social taboo which surrounds it makes it even more difficult for young people to discuss their troubles with others. The relationship between spirituality and mental health allows the opportunity for religious institutions and spiritual groups to support people suffering from mental health issues.

The interaction of spirituality and mental health has been explored by many researchers notably Swinton and Pattison (2001). However, much of the research into spirituality includes Christianity as a religious base as opposed to a non-specific religion based spirituality. Research concerning mental health and spirituality focuses strongly on depression as 1 in 6 people suffer from it. The Mental Health Foundation (2006) gives the following as a definition of spirituality: "Spirituality is that aspect of human existence that gives it its 'humanness'. It concerns the structures of significance that give meaning and direction to a person's life and helps them deal with the vicissitudes of existence" they further suggest that if the dimensions of spirituality are imbalanced this could cause mental health issues (Swinton and Pattison, 2001, as cited in The Mental Health Foundation, 2006, p.7). However, there is a discrepancy between whether health

professionals consider spirituality to be beneficial or not for protecting patients' mental health: "45% of mental health professionals felt that religion could lead to mental ill health and 39% thought that religion could protect people from mental ill health" (Fosket, Marriott and Wilson-Rudd, as cited in The Mental Health Foundation 2006, p.9).

There is little specific advice from health professionals to either encourage or discourage young people into exploring spirituality. Moreover, from the viewpoint of someone suffering from mental health issues, a user-led survey from the Mental Health Foundation, "over half of service users had some form of spiritual belief and these beliefs were positive and important to them in terms of their mental health" (Mental Health Foundation, 2006, p.9). Therefore, spirituality is unlikely to have a negative effect on symptoms experienced from mental health issues. According to Swinton (2001) the actual symptoms of anxiety and stress can also have spiritual symptoms which would imply that spiritual behaviour may help the healing process. These symptoms include:

- "a loss of meaning in life
- obsessional religious thoughts and actions
- feelings of alienation and indifference
- loss of previous spiritual belief
- no sense of the future
- fear of death
- fear of the consequences of 'sins' or religiously-defined 'bad' behaviour and/or
- an inability to focus on 'God' or to meditate"

(Swinton, 2001, as cited in The Mental Health Foundation, 2009, p.12).

Therefore, these spiritual symptoms have spiritual answers, for example a believing in a higher power could provide someone with a sense of meaning in their life and reduce feelings of alienation and loneliness, in addition to providing some comfort in relation to life after death. Although spirituality may not alleviate all the problems associated with anxiety, according to Swinton's (2001) research, symptoms may be reduced.

According to Ganga and Kutty (2013) Positive mental health: "is a dynamic state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his/her own potential, with an underlying belief in the dignity and worth of self and others, can cope well with the normal stresses of life, is able to work productively and can contribute to the community" (Ganga and Kutty, 2013, p.436). Therefore, to some degree it is fair to say that many of us often fall short of this definition. Based on this alone, spirituality could help individuals to eliminate or diminish mental health issues. Through relaxation techniques such as mindfulness and meditation, individuals are more likely to help themselves overcome day to day stresses. Being spiritual can assist people in discovering more about their own self-worth and that of others. Many religions encourage community participation, and spiritual involvement- even simply discussing their spirituality with others will be a good foundation on which to build.

There is a possibility that spirituality can be beneficial for mental health care. Mental and physical health are highly related, and an example of how they connect is stress: when tension is high, it takes its toll on the body. As a result, people can experience headaches, general aches and pains, insomnia and so on, therefore the spirit and body cannot exist without each other. Loneliness, exclusion and lack of value can lead to mental health symptoms, these can "significantly impact upon the recovery and stability

of the person" (Swinton, 2000 as cited in, Swinton, 2001, p.18). Spirituality and religion can help to conquer these problems.

Swinton (2001) highlighted Elkins et al.'s (1988) definition of spirituality: "Spirituality... is a way of being and experiencing that comes through awareness of transcendental dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be ultimate." (Elkins et al., 1988, as cited in Swinton, 2001, p.20). Spirituality in this sense would help to prioritise oneself and what is most important to an individual. However, this could also cause problems, for someone experiencing hallucinations or a mental fixation on something which will not help them: what they consider to be the most important with regard to self, may not be what they need, yet this should not be an issue in most cases.

According to Ellison, (1983) the essence of spirit "enables and motivates us to search for meaning and purpose in life, to seek the supernatural or some meaning which transcends us, to wonder about our origins and our identities to require mortality and equity" (Ellison, 1983, as cited in Swinton, 2001, p.16). Without clear direction or purpose to one's life, mental health problems may occur. Religious communities are capable of offering social support. For example:

1. "By protecting women from the effects of social isolation;
2. By providing and strengthening family and social networks;
3. By providing individuals with a sense of belonging and self-esteem
4. By offering spiritual support in times of adversity"

(Loewenthal, 1995, as cited in Swinton, 2001, p.47).

However, not all young people will know what help is available, and non-religious people may avoid religious institutions for fear of being drawn in and forced into committing. Alternatively, the idea of religious-based advice or support may also deter them. Carson (2008) states that: "Pastoral care includes holding on to that hope on behalf of those who cannot, until they are able to rediscover it for themselves" which shows what religious institutions should be doing for people suffering from mental health issues (Carson, 2008, p.7). Therefore, there needs to be more education and awareness for religious institutions on the importance of caring for people who suffer from mental health issues, and also for people who do not attend religious institutions for people to understand their motives.

Some young people, particularly those with social anxiety are less likely than others to feel that they are able to seek help, despite spirituality being a likely factor in helping with mental health issues, and the importance of support from religious institutions. O'Connor et al. (2014) uses the 'Health Belief Model' devised in the 1950s by psychologists Hochbaum, Rosenstock and Kegels to illustrate that being proactive about someone's own health issues is dependent on:

1. "level of perceived susceptibility to the particular illness or condition;
2. perceived degree of severity of the consequences resulting from the condition;
3. level of perceived benefits in taking action in terms of reducing severity/susceptibility;
4. level of perceived physical, psychological financial and other barriers or costs related to initiating or continuing the advocated behaviour;
5. positive health values or 'general health motivation'" (O'Connor et al, 2014)".

If someone is unaware of the severity of the condition they are experiencing, or are not able to see the benefits of seeking help they are unlikely to have the motivation to do so. Therefore, it may well be the case that those who need help the most; those who do not realise they do, will not seek any help. In addition to not being able to see the benefits, “introverted individuals are relatively unlikely to seek help for mental health concerns” (O’Connor et al, 2014). For those who become anxious talking to strangers, particularly with regard to private issues, seeking help may be challenging, and those who are not used to seeking help are unlikely to suddenly feel comfortable doing so: “General health motivation...is rather a trait-like construct, likely formed in childhood and stable throughout life” (O’Connor et al, 2014). There is little suggestion from researchers as to what can be done to encourage those who are less likely to seek help, but offering and promoting the opportunity for help remains crucial.

Looking specifically at suicide as a result of mental illness, there is research to suggest that although the rate of successful suicide in young people is fairly average in relation to other age groups, according to data from Samaritans (2017) “Young adults age 18-25 years old, report higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts than older adults” (Kyle, 2013, p.47, Scowcroft, 2017). This raises the question of whether spirituality helps to reduce suicide rates. Links between faith and suicide are somewhat unclear as most studies have no *causal* links but there are indications implying a possible connection. Sometimes spirituality is related to experiencing hallucinations however, it has been suggested that: “Spiritual beliefs may function as a mediating variable between risk and protective factors due to the basic tenants of spiritual faith” (Kyle, 2013, p.61). By encouraging people to find some direction by exploring their faith, or deciding to live for

the sake of a ‘higher power’, i.e. a God and the idea that they will be rewarded for good behaviour in this life by something greater in another life this may provide young people with a sense of hope. However, according to Kyle (2013) the only religious group with decreased risk of suicide was Protestantism due to their religious doctrine and moral objections to sin (Kyle, 2013). In comparison, Catholicism opposes suicide on the basis of the sanctity of life, which may deter people from committing suicide.

There are a number of researchers who have made connections between spirituality and positive mental health, despite the negativity surrounding spirituality and the treatment of mental health issues. Regardless of its rejection of this by some health professionals: “mindfulness-based approaches derived from spiritual practice are now recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence for relapse prevention of depression” (Cook and Powell, 2013, p.385). Mindfulness helps individuals internally reconnect with themselves, by using breathing techniques and so on. Moreover, these spiritual techniques are unlikely to cause harm, and mindfulness therapies informed by spirituality “are effective in the field of substance misuse”, further emphasising the benefits of spirituality in treatments (Cook, 2009, as cited in Cook and Powell, 2013, p.385). However, they also acknowledge the work of King et al. (2013) who concluded that: “People who have a spiritual understanding of life in the absence of religious framework are vulnerable to mental disorder” (King et al., 2013, as cited in Cook and Powell, 2013, p.385). This would suggest that vague spiritual beliefs alone are not grounded enough to be of any significant help with mental illness, yet rigid religious beliefs with strong moral basis, may be more beneficial. However, there were similar levels of the prevalence of mental illness amongst those who were religious and those

who were not, apart from the fact that those who were religious were less likely to have used drugs (King et al., 2013, as cited in Cook and Powell, 2013). Although there appear to be positive benefits, no causal link can be established, because the prevalence of mental illness is more likely to have been related to the use of drugs rather than spiritual behaviour, helping to reduce the negative mental health. The effects of the use of drugs and consumption of alcohol is of course another problem faced by Gen Y: if there is a possibility that spirituality could help with the prevention of usage or even the aftermath this could seriously benefit young people.

Sveidqvist et al (2003) studied the perspectives of young people and what they perceive to be important for their own mental health as opposed to what other generations believe to be beneficial to general mental health. They concluded that young people believe that spirituality has a positive effect on mental health for the following reasons:

- “a sense of meaning and purpose
- a sense of security and peace from ‘knowing everything happens for a reason’
- a sense of comfort and support, ‘like you’re not totally alone’.
- A source of energy, strength and inspiration
- Improved personal growth and well-being- ‘knowing more about myself and my beliefs makes my self-confidence better’.” (Sveidqvist et al., 2003, p.40).

Much of the research into young people has identified that spirituality (in young people) is self-based. Spirituality can provide young people with a reason for living, and make them feel like they are part of a community and therefore have other people to live for. The feelings of loneliness which have the potential to spark mental illness can at least be reduced. However, this has an effect on the definitions of spirituality and religion:

because spirituality is so individual although it may help to give someone “a sense of meaning and purpose” it may not necessarily help with community and knowing “you’re not totally alone” (Sveidqvist et al., 2003, p.40). These young people agreed that: “religion and spirituality are not synonymous or necessarily mutually inclusive and that ‘you can be a spiritual person without being religious’” so it is contrasting that young people see spirituality alone as being incredibly beneficial to mental health (Sveidqvist et al., 2003, p.38).

Spirituality and mental health are related because according to Swinton and Pattison (2001) spirituality is what gives us our humanness and an imbalance of this could lead to mental illness. Although the Mental Health Foundation (2006) highlighted the fact that there was a large percentage of health professionals who believed that spirituality had a negative effect on mental health, the advice for those who suffer from mental illness is seriously lacking, which would suggest that this is largely irrelevant. From a sufferer’s point of view spirituality was helpful in recovering from mental illness (Mental Health Foundation, 2006). However, some people will feel less comfortable when seeking help and advice for mental illness, just as others will find it difficult to seek spiritual advice from religious professionals (O’Connor et al, 2014). Sveidqvist (2003), looked specifically at the relationship of young people’s mental health with spirituality and emphasised that they believe spirituality is important for maintaining good mental health.

Spirituality and Belonging

Four factors which are essential to young people’s growth both relating to spiritual and non-spiritual aspects of their lives are: a sense of belonging, relationships, community

and identity. The lack of these aspects can lead loneliness and confusion because without the interaction with others or an exploration of their own identity they will lack direction and purpose, which has the potential to lead to mental health issues.

Belonging to a community allows people to congregate with others who have similar beliefs or other commonalities. A sense of belonging therefore encourages people to see that what they believe is acceptable because others believe the same: being united in belief reassures people that they are not alone. Communities often promote a safe space for people to discuss personal concerns, as a consequence of the trust which builds up within a community. In fact, people who specifically belong to spiritual communities may consider the people they have met there to be their priority for discussing personal issues. Relationships are often a factor in initiating spiritual exploration: for example, if a friend, family member or partner is committed to a form of spirituality, out of respect for that person they might be intrigued and explore it themselves. In addition to this, relationships are formed out of belonging and relationships between different people can help to link various communities. A person's identity can be founded in their spirituality which means that belonging to a community and forming relationships with other like-minded people can contribute to their own self-understanding. Identity can also originate from a person's family heritage, and where they come from: these are all related to a sense of belonging.

Being spiritual as opposed to religious may fall under the category of 'no religion'. According to the statistics from the 2013 Census for England and Wales, the percentage of people reporting their religious status as 'no religion' had risen to 50.6% of the population, as it continues to rival Christianity (Woodhead, 2016, p.246). Looking at

specific age groups the ‘no religion’ category was at its highest for 18-24 year olds, which is presumably because over the course of generations people who describe themselves as having ‘no religion’ will bring up their children encouraging them to believe the same way, but of course there will be some young people who change their mind and follow their own paths (Woodhead, 2016, pp.247-249). It is not necessarily the case that people of ‘no religion’ do not believe in a god or higher power, only that they do not affiliate themselves with a particular religion. Similarly, this also means we cannot automatically assume that most of them are atheists: in fact, only 41.5% are “convinced atheists” (Woodhead, 2016, p.250). “Denominational identities have ceased to be important as they once were” and it is not necessarily the case that secularisation has taken place but many people’s beliefs have been liberalised (Woodhead, 2016, p.255). Politics and ethics are increasingly becoming crucial parts of people’s identities, as people believe that these are more proactive ways to make the world a better place, suggesting that morals are becoming more important than organised religion. As some young people describe churches as “sexist and homophobic” and also refer to sex scandals in the Roman Catholic church, there are plenty of other moral alternatives to religion so it is simply ceasing to be necessary to today’s young people (Woodhead, 2016, p.257). Therefore, less people are considering religion as part of their identity, but are concerned with politics and morality: for some people this is the basis of their spiritual beliefs, but many will not even acknowledge spirituality within this. The need for belonging and being part of a community can be found elsewhere, such as involvement in political or charity events, forming relationships with people they meet via these events, or going along because they have been encouraged to by friends and family.

Community is also at the heart of ecumenism, a concept which I will examine further in the next chapter, as it aims to unite Christians of all backgrounds. Individual, local communities do not consider themselves to be threats to one another, simply “many different contexts in which Christian faith lives” (Jeanrond, in Gunton and Hardy, 1989, p.102). Thus, they are not in competition with each other, they only differ according to the background of individuals or the environment in which they live. There should be no question of right or wrong, there is only a need for communities to accept one another and unite on what they share. Schreiter simplifies denominational differences by explaining that “the Christian Tradition is in fact nothing other than ‘a series of local theologies, closely wedded to and responding to different cultural conditions’” (Schreiter, 1985, as cited by Jeanrond in Gunton and Hardy, 1989, p.102). Despite ecumenism not focusing on what is right or wrong, Jeanrond (1989) suggests that there may be an issue of authenticity in local theologies and “the set of criteria by which to judge the authenticity of any particular local community, or in other words, the criteria for Christian identity.” (Jeanrond, in Gunton and Hardy, 1989, p.103). Although it is not the requirement of the local communities to discuss authenticity, it is important to include this in conversations. This may also help to unite churches as it will allow them to have conversations about individual beliefs, and by constructively criticising each other, they will have the opportunity to see an outsider’s perspective on their own beliefs. Consequently, by re-evaluating their own interpretations of Christianity it opens up the possibility of finding common ground. Although co-operation and discussion between churches cannot eradicate problems of authenticity: “it may at least contribute to keeping alive the consciousness of possible failures and distortions in any local appropriation of the Christian faith” (Jeanrond, in Gunton and Hardy, 1989, p.103).

Ecumenism can also help to promote local community projects, uniting Christians of different spiritual backgrounds for a good cause, thus helping to form good relationships between those who otherwise would not necessarily meet. Some churches regard themselves as part of “ecumenical networks”, working with others for a “mutually agreed purpose”, which encourages them to address local and global issues for instance supporting Fairtrade by using their products in refreshments after services and so on (Cameron et al., 2005, p.71). In other churches, it is possible that theological differences may hinder community efforts, as they favour their own congregation against the wider community. For example, Guest (2005) suggests this is the case for the more “theologically conservative churches”, supporting projects including the ‘Evangelical Alliance’ and others “that reflect their doctrinal position” (Guest as cited in Cameron et al., 2005, p.106). In addition to helping the community, other ecumenical events are organised for the sake of the unity of congregations. Worship events such as the yearly ‘Thy Kingdom come’ in addition to Taizé services- originating from the ecumenical community in France, are both examples of ecumenical services encouraging Christians from all backgrounds to unite. These are excellent opportunities for churches to be inspired by each other through effective and authentic worship, in fact: “some churches may draw on global networks for ideas and resources they can use in worship” (Cameron et al., 2005, p.71). Moreover, churches can achieve more by linking with others further afield, experiencing cultural differences, and exchanging understandings of various theologies, forms of worship and so forth.

As young people are becoming more concerned with politics and ethics over religion they tend to get involved with something if they believe it has the power to change what

matters most to them. For those who do not believe in prayer as a solution to the world's problems, they feel the need to be more proactive by raising awareness, or money for certain issues, and physically going to help those in need. Some ecumenical groups are working in this way by drawing together Christians of different backgrounds to tackle important issues, and some are more physically involved in confronting problems than others. As young people's spirituality has evolved, they no longer necessarily need the church and their organisations, as there are secular groups tackling similar political and ethical issues to various churches. Based on prior experience or the influence of others such as friends or family, they are more likely to act independently until the church starts to offer something that appeals to them which secular society cannot.

Conclusion

Spirituality and religion are strongly related terms but not interchangeable, as spirituality is much more fluid and can differ between various people. The reason young people are, on the whole, more interested in spirituality as opposed to religion is because religion often feels inaccessible. This was discussed in relation to the Church of England in the previous chapter, which supports the idea that churches especially are inaccessible. Although youth spirituality is considered to be in its own category of spiritualities, it cannot be described as a religion, but it manages to fill some of the gaps that religion fails to satisfy. Being 'spiritual' as opposed to religious, allows young people the freedom to explore before perhaps later settling down into a particular belief system. The Church of England has the opportunity to support young people in this, encouraging them to explore the church without suggesting that there is any pressure to commit, especially as they are not only developing physically and emotionally, but

also spiritually. However, if it is the freedom to believe whatever they wish, the Church of England would have a hard time convincing them to adhere to a specific belief system. Gen Y are very much focused on the self, which is why mental health is such an important issue to consider in relation to spirituality. On the whole, spirituality should not hinder mental health, and young people believe that having a strong belief system can in fact help with any mental health issues.

The following chapter continues by proposing ecumenism as a solution to the Church of England's problem of declining interest. I will highlight the key areas of ecumenism, based on what already exists and is successful, in addition to discussing the benefits of breaking down barriers between denominations working to find commonalities.

Chapter 5: Generation Y and Ecumenism

Introduction

This chapter associates ecumenism with its relevance to Gen Y and the Church of England, and the possibility of ecumenism being a solution to a lack of interest in Christianity in general. Firstly, I will consider the definitions of ecumenism and delve into ecumenical theology to construct a sufficient understanding of the topic. This chapter continues to explore the advantages of community to Christians and how ecumenism can help to achieve greater associations with fellow Christians. This can be achieved through breaking boundaries: physically and through language. In addition, I will investigate the reasons why churches are so divided, based on other factors besides denominations. Following this to support the idea that ecumenism is the answer to the Church of England's problems, I will consider examples of how ecumenism is working in the real world with regard to young people, and how this can continue in the future.

What is Ecumenism?

Ecumenism is a movement supporting the unity of churches, searching for a common ground between different Christian denominations. Cameron and Pattison (2005) define ecumenism as: "the name for collaborative working between churches of different denominations and the ideal of unity that underpins it" (Cameron et al., 2005, p.66). Galatians 3:28 states: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus", which is the perfect example of ecumenism in the Bible. This highlights scriptural emphasis on unity, and only through truly knowing him can we achieve ecumenism by accepting one another as equals, and acknowledging God as the only one superior to us all. Ecumenism is not a

battle for individual churches to fight, although it may start on a smaller scale through events uniting communities, it has the potential to build and become more widespread, breaking down barriers and bonding with other denominations. Ecumenism tends to require a great deal of listening, deciding what is best across various traditions: “It seeks not to defeat them but to respect and learn from them. It earns the right to speak only by listening, and it listens much more than it speaks.” (Hunsinger, 2008, p.2). This supports the idea that ecumenism cannot be fought for, it is simply a quiet concept of Christianity which denominations can opt to accept and become united or ignore, thus acknowledging that their beliefs are more important than worshipping God in accordance with each other. For those who do not accept ecumenism, according to Evans (1996) there tend to be two forms of negative responses, the first is: “no response at all” and the second is to “acknowledge a sense of the threat posed to separate Christian identity by ecumenism” (Evans, 1996, p.19). Consequently, this emphasises the need for Christians to protect their own identities for fear of being absorbed by another denomination. However, absorption or merging into other denominations is not how ecumenism should be achieved. Ecumenical method “makes an absolute requirement of respect for the ecclesial being of other communities” in addition to being “non-adversarial” (Evans, 1996, p.23). This is echoed by Hunsinger (2008) who states that ecumenism “means that no tradition will get anything it wants, each will get much that it wants, none will be required to capitulate to another, and none will be expected to make unacceptable compromises” (Hunsinger, 2008, p.2). This emphasises how peaceful, unfrontational and accepting ecumenism is, nonetheless, without the denominations compromising at the expense of others it is unlikely that full ecumenism will ever be achieved. On the other hand, the same could be said of evangelism; one

could argue that the majority of people will not want to hear what those evangelising have to say, yet they do it anyway for the sake of the few who are interested. At the heart of Christianity is faith in the unknown, Jesus tells Thomas in John 20:29: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed", emphasising that Christians have not materially seen much of what they believe in. Therefore, Christianity maintains that ecumenism may not be easily achieved, but the key to achieving anything is keeping faith.

In the light of creating harmony between churches it has been emphasised that compromise between, and absorption of denominations is not how ecumenism succeeds. Other goals of ecumenism have been identified by Hunsinger (2008): "Church-dividing views should be abandoned, especially in the form of false contrasts", however, "Where possible, misunderstandings from the past should be identified and eliminated" (Hunsinger, 2008, pp.9-10). At the same time, they are required to see that: "The range of acceptable diversity should be expanded as fully as possible within the bounds of fundamental unity", thus helping to keep some of the denominational differences which create their individual identities (Hunsinger, 2008, p.10). There may not be a solution to smoothing over disagreements between denominations, yet individual churches are expected to identify their own 'misunderstandings' which may be trying for some churches who are more set in their ways. Hunsinger (2008) also stresses contrasting views between churches "should not be glossed over by resorting to ambiguity", as they will only resurface at a later date (Hunsinger, 2008, p.10). Although ecumenism seeks to find common ground, this must be achieved theologically; scripture must not be compromised in order to achieve unity (Hunsinger, 2008, p.10).

Unitatis Redintegratio outlines a Catholic viewpoint on ecumenism, which shows that unity is key to the body of Christ. Rifts between the churches are condemned (1 Cor. 1:11, 11:22), because the church should be *one* church. Ecumenism specifically relates to unity between Christians, and the divisions between Christians does not help the overall image of Christianity, as they should be producing a united front. As the decree, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, focuses on Catholicism as the one true Christian church, which according to Evans (1996) absorption of other denominations is not how ecumenism should be achieved. Hence, *Unitatis Redintegratio* is flawed as it undermines other denominations, suggesting that they are wrong, rather than working together and learning from each other. *Unitatis Redintegratio* also fails to specifically define what ecumenism is, which presents difficulties in relating it to modern ecumenism, as we are unsure of their exact motives.

Ecumenical theology “presupposes that every tradition in the church has something valuable to contribute even if we cannot yet discern what it is”, assuming that because all denominations share the same origin, enough commonality will be found, in order for a variety of Christians to work together for essentially the same cause (Hunsinger, 2008, p.2). However, ecumenism does not entail combining all churches into one “true church” as “it will succeed only by a deeper conversion of all traditions to Christ” moreover, it focuses on working to be more like Jesus, as opposed to discussing the best features of each denomination (Hunsinger, 2008, p.2). The peaceful notion of ecumenical theology means that it is simply aiming to respond to the division between denominations with unity rather than offering alternative beliefs. For that reason, ecumenism has the power to unite Christians with opposing views to controversial

issues, and to “make what appear to be parallel lines meet” (Evans, 1996, p.19). The Sixth Lambeth Conference in 1920 was a turning point for modern ecumenism; the First World War had ended two years previously and the sting of the death and destruction was still affecting daily lives. The conference accentuated the need for peace not just with other countries but also between different Christians. Resolution 1 of Christian and International Relations states: “We rejoice that in these times of peril God is giving to his Church a fresh vision of his purpose to establish a Kingdom in which all the nations of the earth shall be united as one family in righteousness and peace. We hold that this can only come through the acceptance of the sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his teaching, and through the application of the principles of brotherhood, justice, and unselfishness, to individuals and nations alike” (The Lambeth Conference 1920, 2005, p.4). Hence, the Lambeth Conference of 1920 suggests that when Christians truly acknowledge Jesus Christ as their absolute authority, they can achieve unity and peace with one another.

There are of course many different ecumenical theologies depending on the aims of individuals, communities and so on. George Florovsky, an early pioneer of modern ecumenical theology, goes so far as to say that “there cannot be an ecumenical theology, there can only be theologies of ecumenism”, emphasising the great variety in ecumenical viewpoints and the fact that churches are not able to agree on one ecumenical theology (Florovsky, (no date) as cited in Evans, 1996, p.20). Although Evans (1996) states that it is “necessary to distinguish conceptually between theologies of ecumenism and ecumenical theology” we are moving towards a theology which has the primary purpose of uniting Christians (Evans, 1996, pp.21-22). “Ecumenical theology is

at present as various as the frameworks in which it goes in. Yet it already has common elements which arise out of its ecumenical character”, thus emphasising the broad nature of ecumenical theology (Evans, 1996, p.23). There are various levels of ecumenism, for example those who believe that unity already exists, for example, people who believe that simply being a Christian of any kind provides enough unity, then there are those who are undecided on the unity they want to achieve and others who either pay little attention to it or do not believe that ecumenism is achievable. Evans (1996) identifies that ecumenical theology can either be bilateral or multilateral (Evans, 1996). Bilateral tends to be more extensive because it is only dealing with two main levels, and relates to confessional theology, however, bilateral has the potential to become multilateral. Thus, multilateral attempts to unify more than one community (or denomination) which could stretch to an international level.

Ariarajah (2009), has written on the subject of “wider ecumenism” and “macro-ecumenism” the former, as it would suggest, refers to ecumenism beyond local communities and the latter goes beyond Christianity, attempting to make links between other religious communities and cultures (Ariarajah, 2009, p.322). As Ariarajah states: “it was intended that churches, working, speaking and acting together, would claim the credibility and the capacity to confront the powers of evil and speak the word of healing to nations in turmoil”, therefore, he is implying that it is more a case of answering human problems rather than finding Christian solutions to Christian problems (Ariarajah, 2009, p.323-4). In fact, the Church could use macro-ecumenism to their favour, by enticing Gen Y into an idea which promotes peace throughout people of various backgrounds,

breaking down the barriers of religion and culture, but an idea promoted by the church, this could improve their popularity whilst committing to serving the world.

Consequently, it is important to remember when studying ecumenism, that there are many different approaches by various denominations, and some will be more willing than others to take part, which will be explored throughout this chapter.

Breaking Boundaries

We must consider physical boundaries which divide people into urban and rural congregations in addition to the larger scale boundaries created by countries' borders, and the language restrictions that accompany distance in order to help break down the boundaries between individual churches.

Urban churches can benefit from creating links with others, especially where the size of the congregation has seriously depleted, in order to "build up a sufficient critical mass", it needs to join together with other local, like-minded individuals (Evans, 1996, p.149).

By meeting with those of similar backgrounds strong ecumenical relationships can be formed. For example, people are able to understand "how the problems they each face are symptoms of much larger issues which they can address together", nevertheless, prejudices remain which makes an entirely successful relationship between churches difficult (Evans, 1996, pp.149-50). The difference in age, race and economic situation can unfortunately still cause rifts regardless of the efforts for reconciliation. Anglicans and Roman Catholics, as well-established denominations in the UK, tend to persist in many different areas of the country regardless of economic situation. However, various other "mainstream denominations have become so weak they have pulled out of the poor urban areas altogether", yet as a result there are communities who "often bring

their own dynamic religion with them”, therefore, setting up new faith unities with a significant impact (Evans, 1996, pp.129-3).

When uniting various churches, it is important to consider the issue of ‘tribalism’ which, in terms of popular culture, relates to loyalty to a specific social group, “especially exaltation... above other groups”, the worst forms of tribalism have in fact resulted in genocide (Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.79). Previous generations were iconised by various subcultures for example ‘Teddy Boys’ in the 1950s, ‘Mods and Rockers’ in the 1960s, the 1970s hosted a variety of Glam rockers, goths and so on, and the 1990s were associated with ‘lad culture’. However, due to the technological advances of the last 20 years, the ‘tech savvy’ younger generations are considered to be ‘subculture-less’ because they are spending a greater amount of time online as technology allows them to do so many every day activities, particularly online social activities, without leaving the house. If we look towards punk culture we can observe: “the normative values of punk youth culture reflect the normative values of contemporary youth culture” because they are less concerned with people’s individual beliefs, but more so with religious institutions (Abraham, 2014). Individualised spiritualities are more popular since they deny religious institutions “power over a vital aspect of the lives of young people” (Abraham, 2014). Although dialogue between youth subculture and religious institutions may highlight individual prejudices for one another, there are ways of healing relationships between them. For example, institutions hosting subcultural activities “through acts of creative self-expression” such as concerts, can allow an education of one another, creating the potential for “respectful relationships” (Abraham, 2014). Despite the difficulty of including others into churches for the purpose of uniting all people, churches can

become more diverse and eliminate prejudices. By working together, various congregations can achieve what the church calls for: "a repentant and welcoming spirituality and that will empower us to become more open to the new urban world and the challenge of our cosmopolitan mission" (Evans, 1996, p.151).

From a global perspective, there are more difficult boundaries to overcome, for example cultural differences, and language barriers. According to Johnson and Wu (2015), 'New humanity thinking' wants us to create a 'New Kingdom', a 'New Family' and a 'New Temple' (Johnson and Wu, 2015). A 'New Kingdom' requires housing strangers in a foreign land: "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come" therefore, for Christians, the physical city in which we live in is not important, but in heaven no one will be divided by denomination, race, gender, culture and so on. According to ecumenism Christians should be living as if the kingdom of heaven is already here. The 'New Family' involves putting aside our differences for the sake of God's will: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). In the church, family should not be determined by bloodline, as Christians are all part of one heavenly family and should stay committed in order to unite others, it is God's love for all people that will keep Christians motivated towards this goal (Matthew 28:18-20). Lastly, the church as a 'New Temple' requires unity: "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:21-22; Johnson and Wu, 2015, pp.63-4). By encouraging Christians to worship under one metaphorical roof, scripture can be fulfilled, hence, ecumenism is at the heart of the Bible, as it underlies much of Jesus' teaching. This

emphasises its great global significance and allowing Christians to adopt a broad Christian identity.

Language prevents some people from engaging with each other, so in order to achieve global ecumenism, a common language is required. Originally, in the early Church “the language in which formal or official statements were made was at first predominantly Greek, with Latin the second language for these purposes” (Evans, 1996, p.90). Modernisation has allowed scripture to be translated into many different languages to allow people all over the world to understand the Bible in their own language. Latin is still used in the Tridentine and Novus Ordo Masses in the Catholic Church. It has been argued that translating scripture into other languages may lose some of the meaning in translation, as well as the “distress caused to some English Anglicans by the replacement of the familiar and beautiful language of the sixteenth century Book of Common Prayer with the modern English of the Alternative Service Book”, although the alternative service book was rejected by various congregations and is no longer in use (Evans, 1996, p.90). By refraining from using ancient languages, and exploring Christianity in our own common tongue, more unity is lost, which is perhaps why the traditional Catholic Latin Mass remains popular. However, “Human language is inadequate for talking about God” (Evans, 1996, p.95). The true mystery of God can never be grasped or explained in a language which is our own, yet finding a modern ecumenical language will also struggle to explain scripture in a coherent manner to all nations. Another issue is that “there is not one global context, but several, and that their relevance to congregational studies depends upon the type of congregation, or congregations, under consideration” (Woodhead as cited in Cameron et al., 2005, p.59). In a religion that is dominated by

Western Culture it is easy to think that we can consider issues simply from a Western point of view, and suggest that a Western language is used. Nonetheless, it is important to think outside the bounds of specific cultures. World music is an effective way to bridge the gap between people who cannot speak the same language, it allows interaction between Christians who might not otherwise be able to communicate, in a ‘language’ they can understand and share. Through music and also sport- another possible example of breaking language barriers, it adds “an essential dimension to global Christianity- to our global Christian family” (Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.81). These factors can also help build a bridge between Christians and non-Christians, so not only does it help ecumenism it can also help to draw more people into the church.

Division of churches

Divisions exist both between and within Christian denominations, people tend to congregate where they feel most comfortable for example according to gender, age, ethnicity, economic situation and so on. According to Cleveland (2011) this allows people to “freely criticize those who disagree with them, don’t look like them, and don’t act like them” (Cleveland, 2011, as cited in Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.110). Consequently, churches are significantly divided on more than different theologies, and assume inauthenticity of other Christians with alternative beliefs. Other tensions come from social issues, which are sometimes difficult to legitimise by scripture for example gay marriage and abortion rights, in fact: “Social issues are becoming more divisive than biblical inerrancy or doctrinal disputes” (Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.121). Therefore, these conversations can be problematic for those who feel rigidly bound by scripture and those who prefer to take scripture less literally and more in the context of societal

changes. These divisions may seem confusing for a young person deciding to go to church for the first time, and the acceptance of churches on a variety of issues will have repercussions on who forms their congregation. In order to make this a less confusing process by making people more enthusiastic about ecumenism: "We need to see others in an accurate light with the goal of connecting to those who are different within our respective churches, as well as to the larger body of Christ" (Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.111). In Genesis 9, all the nations were divided physically, but according to the Bible we are all from the same origins. However, Bonhoeffer emphasises the fact that these divisions are not necessarily sinful errors: "Conflict as such is not the consequence of the fall, but arises on the basis of common love for God." (Bonhoeffer, 1963, as cited in Sagovsky 2000, p.8). Where disagreement is faced in the security of communion there is a level of trust which helps to resolve matters for the good of those involved, although if trust has broken down, debates can be more challenging (Sagovsky, 2000). Thus, finding solutions to problems and building bridges between denominations is more complicated when Christians feel as though they are out of their comfort zone.

The Council of Nicea in 325 AD was the first ecumenical council connecting Bishops from different Christian denominations. "Constantine realized that the unity of the church was essential to the stability of the empire, and wanted to establish peace within the church over the issue of the identity of Christ" (McGrath, 2011, p.17). The Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964) suggested that the lack of "the sacrament of orders... [communities] have not preserved the genuine and total reality of the eucharistic mystery" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964, as cited in Hunsinger, 2008, p.191). The Eucharist is a sacrament of unity, an opportunity for all Christians to meet

and worship yet each church has certain restrictions on who can and who cannot take communion. For example, Catholics believe that those who have not confessed their sins cannot receive communion. For all Christians to partake in the Eucharist together would be a sign that unity and therefore, ecumenism is taking place. “To celebrate the Eucharist together is to be open together to the work of grace which alone will bring that unity into being” (Hill, 1992, cited in Evans, 1996, p.181). At the Last Supper, Jesus prays for unity: “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11). Therefore, the first Eucharist places significant emphasis on unity, suggesting we should adhere to this example. The Council of Nicea shaped the future of Christianity and was the essential basis for ecumenism. The Eucharist is crucial to Nicene Christianity because it “begins and ends in worship”, yet, baptism, Eucharist and proclamation of the Word are all interrelated (Hunsinger, 2008, p.282). Churches have different opinions about this trinity of the most notable parts of Christianity, and ironically the three matters which were meant to draw churches together are often the factors that tear them apart.

The Nicene Creed states that “We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins” which suggests that ‘one baptism’ should unite us, yet it does not. The debate on infant versus adult baptism is a perfect example of this (The Archbishops’ Council, 2000, p.173). There is no biblical justification for infant baptism, yet it is grounded in the idea of original sin, whereas adult baptism allows a person to commit themselves to their faith without the prior decision of family members. “Both baptism and Eucharist celebrate the same mystery, namely the death and resurrection of Christ and the power of the

Spirit”, in spite of this, the connection between the two has been lost and is often not acknowledged (Wood, in Seitz, 2001, p.197).

The common problems causing the division of churches, range from global issues to theological discrepancies. The World Missionary Conference which took place in Edinburgh in 1910 was a call for ecumenism, bringing together Christians from many different traditions. Three main points were identified as being essential for planning evangelisation: “(1) life and work, concerned with fostering a common Christian response to war, poverty, and oppression; (2) faith and order, addressing disagreement over doctrine, sacraments, and church authority; and (3) missions, expressed in the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC), promoting a more cooperative approach to evangelism.” (Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.103). Accordingly, there was a call for solidarity, and to understand the basics of the Christian faith, as a misunderstanding can lead to more conflict. Wigg-Stevenson (2013) identifies various problems we need to overcome: we believe ourselves to be the “hero of the story” rather than acknowledging Christ as the true hero, people expect God to be waiting to “serve our causes”, and we also tend to underestimate problems but overestimate what we are capable of (Wigg-Stevenson, 2013, as cited in Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.158). The ‘one holy, catholic and apostolic church’ Christians should be striving to achieve or rebuild, celebrates the resurrection, through the Eucharist, baptism and the written Word, rather than searching for what they think is an ideal for their own church.

Conversations between people of different backgrounds and churches can lead to a greater understanding of others’ beliefs in Christianity. “Greater mutuality among the churches through a deeper conversion to Christ, Küng (1967) believed, was the only way

beyond the impasses of division" (Küng, 1967, as cited in Hunsinger, 2008, p.21). However difficult these conversations may be, churches have the opportunity to be inspired by each other and change their ways by identifying successes in other denominations. It could also encourage the reintegration of Gen Y by being inspired by their own achievements and discovering ways in which the church can evolve according to younger generations. This emphasises the idea of churches setting aside prejudices and returning to their roots, committing to Jesus in order to discover their real authentic purpose. Cleveland (2011) states: "...We need to adopt the belief that to be a follower of Christ means to put our commitment to the body of Christ above our own identity and self-esteem needs" (Cleveland, 2011, as cited in Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.61). This suggests that Christianity has been interpreted through so many different lenses, and some people have lost sight of authentic Christianity. Küng (1967) sums up the idea of human truth highlighting the fact that: "All human truth... stands in the shadow of error. All error contains at least a grain truth. What a true statement says is true; what it fails to say may also be true" (Küng, 1967, as cited in Hunsinger, 2008, p.21). As human beings, we do not know what is authentic and we must accept this, we are commanded not to "bear false witness" (Exodus 20:16) whilst treating alternative views with suspicion. Yet by having conversations from different viewpoints, it is possible that ecumenism has the potential to challenge tradition thus, considering the thoughts of younger generations.

Nevertheless, there are disadvantages to co-operation between communities for example, committees are created by choosing leaders and therefore, not involving the entire community implies that their views may not be fairly represented. Thus, "the

result of this situation is that the sophisticated formulas worked out by such ecumenical committees have no direct bearing on any of the local communities.” (Jeanrond, in Gunton and Hardy, 1989, p.104). The perception of unity has changed over the years insinuating that “Christian unity can certainly no longer mean a total doctrinal, liturgical and organisational uniformity or standardisation.” (Jeanrond, in Gunton and Hardy, 1989, p.104). As liberal churches have altered their opinions towards acceptance of women in leadership, in addition to the ongoing discussions concerning homosexuality, orthodox churches stay true to their origins. Younger generations may be more attracted to liberal churches, yet older generations or those more attached to traditionalism may still have an issue with liberal decisions, creating a divide between these generations. Nevertheless, ecumenical discussions allow conversations and comparison of opinions between those who would not normally meet.

Examples of Ecumenism and young people

There are various councils of churches and ecumenical institutes across the globe, particularly supporting young people. For example, the World Conference of Christian Youth in Amsterdam was one of the first significant ecumenical conferences to encourage young people to take an active part in Christianity. The objectives of the conference were to represent young people and youth leaders throughout the world from various Christian movements: “Its purpose is to mobilize youth to witness to the reality of the Christian Community as the God-given supranational body to which has been entrusted the message of the victory of Jesus Christ over the world 's spiritual, political and social confusion.” (World Conference of Christian Youth, 1939, p.337). This

was an opportunity for young people to be taken seriously, however, with the Second World War approaching, many other significant advances towards global ecumenism had to wait until the war was over. Young people are necessary for the success of the ecumenical movement as “Much of the energy behind the impulses for Christian unity in the early 20th century came from movements of young people and students” (World Council of Churches, 2017). Gen Y are keen to fight for equality when it comes to social issues, and therefore, the unification and peace which ecumenism promotes should appeal to young people who are already involved in various churches.

Taizé is an ecumenical monastic community in France hosting a range of people of all ages, with a particular focus on young adults. Organised by a combination of Protestant and Roman Catholic monks, ecumenism is integral to it, which generates interest in young people. It began in the Second World War at a time when many people only had the bare essentials in life, and in order to live as Christians they could no longer remain divided (Clément, 1997). The ecumenism founded at Taizé was compared to that of the prison camps: “an ecumenism put into practice as mutual service and as a hope that could not be separated from prayer and love” (Clément, 1997, p.11). In reverse for the monks “there is this possibility of living out an unselfish love which opens onto the mystery of God and the mystery of the person, and it is probably this which attracts the young people most of all” (Clément, 1997, p.24). Therefore, there are two sides to life at Taizé: the monasticism and the invitation to a community of young people to experience peace and prayer in the company of Christians of many different backgrounds, and at the heart of both of these features is love. The simplicity of life at Taizé and the peace it promotes encourages listening from both young people and the

monks. "Young people need the presence of someone who does not demand anything and who is simply ready to listen. And the monk does not ask anything for himself; he does not seek to capture or absorb or seduce; and so he is ready to listen." (Clément, 1997, p.24). Although forgiveness is recognised by most young people as an important moral, sometimes they feel repelled by Christianity's emphasis on sin. Conversely, at Taizé "there is no emphasis on sin" which helps create a more welcoming atmosphere, where people are accepted as human beings loved by one God (Clément, 1997, p.24).

Alpha was established as a short course in the 1990s at Holy Trinity Brompton, London, for outsiders who wanted to explore the Christian faith, it has triumphed internationally, and is now translated into 112 different languages (Alpha International, [no date]). It is an excellent ecumenical opportunity for all churches, and most mainline denominations offer courses throughout the world. Each course may be different, and focuses on a different question of faith, in order to create conversations between people who are curious about the Christian faith (Alpha International, [no date]). Alpha encourages various churches to join together to break down boundaries in order to evangelise as a unity rather than recruiting people to their own denomination. It is especially popular amongst young people, because it allows questions to be asked in an environment with others who are unsure what to believe. Collins-Mayo et al. (2010) identify the benefits of young people and Alpha, explaining that they "bridged from mutual to communal validation", because the courses allowed individuals to be free to explore their own ideas whilst edging them towards a Christian belief system (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010, p.61). Alpha courses occur in a range of different places, such as churches, cafes,

universities and so on, therefore, some are more secular environments, which may make people feel more at ease to be in an atmosphere they are used to.

Christian conferences such as Greenbelt, New Wine and Soul Survivor are popular, especially amongst young people and families, allowing them to volunteer or simply attend for their own benefit. They are non-denominational, and welcome Christians of all backgrounds to their summer conferences. For example, each of New Wine's summer conferences attract about 10,000 people every year from various denominations (Taylor, 2009). These conferences, whilst being appreciated as a yearly celebration uniting thousands of Christians, allow people to take something back to their churches, thus helping to connect churches after they have left the conferences. "Divisions do not destroy but damage the basic unity we have in Christ", so any attempt at ecumenism is an achievement for Christian churches (Anglican-Orthodox Dublin Statement, 1984, as cited in Evans, 1996, p.91). Ecumenism only works when it starts on a small scale, yet by linking with multiple churches and "by establishing our common humanity will we be able to lower the walls between us and come together to solve global problems affecting all of us." (Johnson and Wu, 2015, p.68). Consequently, conferences such as New Wine and so on, are valuable for making connections with other churches, forming friendships, building respect for one another and becoming more ecumenical.

Parachurch organisations such as Samaritan's Purse, Christian Aid and Christians Against Poverty (CAP) allow people to work outside of and with various denominations. They are "typically ecumenical agencies, grounded in religious values, and drawing upon church-based constituencies for support, that seek to have an effect on the public at large through social service provision, political mobilization, and consciousness raising"

(Bagget, 2002, p.57). Samaritan's Purse and Christian Aid provide aid especially in times of crisis to countries all over the world, and Christians Against Poverty work with people in the UK to help them out of difficult situations such as being in financial debt. These organisations are supported by a number of different denominations who work together to achieve the same aims. Therefore, it may be that through parachurch organisations it is easier to achieve ecumenism, rather than attempting to form one ecumenical church. By actively helping the global community, this supports Percy's (2000) 'A Theology of Change for the Church'- by returning to basics of Christianity to help one another, rather than becoming preoccupied with organising Sunday services and the formalities of going to church. As previously mentioned, Youth spirituality is "*engaged* spirituality, concerned with the welfare of the world..." thus young people should be more interested in getting involved with these parachurch organisations (Tacey, 2004, p.66). Moreover, not only is ecumenism good for uniting Christians, but by promoting ecumenical organisations such as the above, it may help to attract more young people into the church, showing that they are actively caring for the community rather than just existing.

Conclusion: The Future of Ecumenism

If Christians all truly believed in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus", ecumenism would come naturally to many. With regard to saving the Catholic church, by means of "Ecumenical therapy" Küng believes that the church should be focusing on communicating the Christian message in a "language as it is spoken today" avoiding "biblical archaisms" and "trendy theological jargon" (Küng, 2013, p.256). Similarly,

baptism and the Eucharist need to refrain from discriminating against other Christian denominations “on the basis of unessential doctrinal differences” (Küng, 2013, p.257). By providing pastoral liturgies for all occasions, they have the potential to attract different denominations. In a world where terror attacks are becoming more frequent and Brexit has divided Europe, it is the duty of churches set an example to the rest of the world, they can be united despite their individual differences. Social issues, concerning sexuality, abortion and so on, can be difficult to resolve in churches who believe in scripture suggesting they should do the opposite of what society is telling them is acceptable. According to Küng (2013): “In view of the complexity of most social issues, as a rule the Gospel can only provide general orientation regarding the fundamental principles that should govern actions in a particular context;” (Küng, 2013, p.258). Therefore, acknowledging this and the changes which have occurred into account, for example the partial acceptance of homosexuality into some churches, it is possible, that in years to come, more churches will change their views on what really matters to society.

Gen Y, have the opportunity to voice their opinions on social media, and whilst this may cause arguments with regard to more radical views, it allows more people to be heard, compared with previous generations who did not have internet access. Student Christian Unions, and organisations such as Fusion which offer a ‘Student Linkup’ service for students to be connected with a new church at university are already making links between different denominational churches, and even on a larger scale through University and Colleges Christian Foundation (UCCF) which encourages Christian Unions (who are normally non-denominational) to meet with others and create connections.

Therefore, it is clear that Gen Y are working towards ecumenism, whether or not this is actually their motive, suggesting that those already committed to the church are keen to work towards a less divided Christianity. However, examining Gen Y in its entirety, it is noticeable that fewer young people are interested in going to church because their spirituality tends to be more individualistic. If ecumenism can be achieved, it may encourage more people to attend churches as they show a more united front, but still allow for individual differences. Thus, Gen Y has the tools and the opportunity to make it possible, so the future of ecumenism is in their hands.

Various churches will have grounds for abstaining from association with other denominations for example suggesting the time is not right, that meetings and synods are required to discuss what ecumenism will entail, and other excuses such as needing to pray, and believing they need to suffer (Küng, 2013). Nevertheless, ecumenism can be as simple as putting theological differences to one side, and embracing other churches as friends, respecting them for what they believe. The problem of authenticity of other denominations may trouble some people, but by keeping an open mind, people can at least bond on what they do have in common. According to Cardinal Suenens (1978): “One cannot work effectively for ecumenism unless one believes in the power of the Holy Spirit who, on Easter morning, raised Jesus from the dead and remains with us to the end of time” so, returning to basics deciding what matters most to Christians is where ecumenism should really begin (Suenens, 1978, p.96).

This is why Alpha courses, and conferences such as New Wine are key to ecumenism, because they provide a talking point for all to discuss issues that have a bearing on them. The true success of ecumenism is summed up by Cardinal Suenens (1978), who

explained that there needs to be less focus on being united into one body: "Ecumenism is already succeeding, day by day, when it leads us to open ourselves, together, to the gifts and riches of the Spirit which lie beyond all confessional barriers. Its primary aim is to revitalize us and thus give us credibility in the eyes of the world." (Suenens, 1978, p.94). Therefore, successful ecumenism starts on a small scale, focusing on local communities, and smaller links before it is taken fully into the global church.

Overall, the promise of ecumenism has the potential to be a good solution to attracting Gen Y to Christianity, but there is little evidence to suggest that young people are specifically concerned with ecumenism. However, ecumenism is apparent in various organisations and activities which are popular amongst the Christian young people. For example, attendance at summer conferences such as Greenbelt, New Wine and Soul Survivor are popular amongst young people. The Church may be more successful in wider ecumenism, looking at the popularity of Taizé, the World Council of Churches, and the World Conference of Christian Youth, as opposed to a lack of specific local ecumenical projects. Although it may not be a number one priority, ecumenism is taking place, especially through Christian union meetings, where all denominations are invited to meet, often to worship and pray together. Christian ecumenism may in theory have an appeal to some of Gen Y, with its emphasis on unity, yet it is clear that young people value identity, and perhaps a rigid belief system and ecumenism may inhibit individuality to an extent. However, a greater experience of wider ecumenism and more specifically macro-ecumenism could be more appreciated by Gen Y and help to encourage them towards a spiritual commitment. By breaking down barriers between churches and acknowledging the reasons for divisions between churches it will be possible to create

a more authentically Christian environment: accepting of all people. Nevertheless, ecumenism may not actually promote the Church of England as it encourages breaking down the divides between denominations. This could be a sign that denominations are not beneficial to the success of Christianity in the long term, but it is the choice of Gen Y to decide what they require, and churches to consider whether they value their own denominations or Christianity as a whole.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, after researching Gen Y and their attitudes towards the Church of England and Spirituality, and whether ecumenism is a possible solution to the decline in interest in Christianity, I have discovered that Gen Y are less interested in the Church as a support system, because they feel more comfortable turning to family and friends instead (Savage et al., 2006). Religion no longer forms part of an everyday routine for many, thus pursuing the church in time of crisis seems illogical as religion is becoming less relevant in society. However, the idea of ‘bedroom spirituality’ and praying in times of crisis are still very much alive, suggesting that it is the institutionalisation of religion as opposed to having at least a vague belief in God, which deters people from attending (Collins-Mayo et al., 2010). This explains why church attendance rates have declined in recent years, implying that the Church of England needs to offer more than secular society cannot offer to increase its appeal, as the promise of an eternal life in heaven is clearly not enough.

The focus on authenticity is evident; young people have more respect for those who are authentic and appear fully committed to their religion, as opposed to having a lukewarm approach. Schools are placing less emphasis on Christianity, despite it being England’s official religion, in an attempt to be more accepting of our multicultural society, being careful not to discriminate against those of other religions. Yet this means that schools are less likely to provide children with a thorough education of Christianity, and while it is a worthy notion to teach children about a variety of religions, it implies that they are learning less about the religious heritage of their country. Similarly, chaplains are required to provide pastoral support for young people of all backgrounds, as many

chaplains are trained in the Church of England, their Christian background could become largely irrelevant in years to come. Nevertheless, those who try to access Gen Y's level do not entirely succeed, for example while some people may appreciate Rob Popejoy's different approach to chaplaincy, others may treat him with caution, as some young people did not believe him to be sincere (Grey, 2015). Nadia Bolz Weber on the other hand, according to young people, appears to be sincere. Although there needs to be serious consideration about who Gen Y will positively respond to, it can be difficult to decide who young people will consider authentic, and of course not all of them will agree.

A greater emphasis on young people's mental health needs in the church is required, although there are individual churches and some organisations such as the Samaritans who can help with issues. Awareness of these organisations is also necessarily, as many young people are unlikely to realise that there is a great amount of help accessible to them. As it is the case generally in society, reducing the stigma is key to tackling mental health, as many circumstances stop people from seeking assistance. More acceptance will lead to more conversations, encouraging a greater number of people to help those suffering from mental health issues. Churches have the potential to be the help or the listening ear that many young people require, but these services need to be promoted and advertised in a way that really speaks to young people.

While individual churches, or members of various congregations may not agree with the acceptance LGBT+ people to varying degrees, they must understand that as society changes, if the church wishes to attract future generations the Church of England will be

viewed negatively by a large proportion of society. However, it is a challenging topic for the church to debate, because of the arguable scriptural opposition.

Larger churches tend to attract more of Gen Y, because they are able to offer greater support, and more opportunities because there are additional people to give their time.

Yet it may also be because some larger churches take a more modern approach.

Although Percy's 'Theology of change for the church' outlines possibilities for the modernisation of the church, it presents an ideal situation. Moreover, it is an excellent threefold model that churches could be relating to if they value their future. Gen Y are the future of the church, and should be considered in any decisions made. By engaging with popular culture, the church will discover more about Gen Y, and have the ability to communicate more effectively with them. Therefore, they need to stop neglecting Gen

Y in order to survive.

Gen Y's growing interest in spiritual behaviours as opposed to religion, may be one of the reasons why church attendance rates are declining. As they have grown up in an era where conflict and terrorism associated with religion have become more frequent, religions including Christianity have been given a bad name. There are also people who have not settled on specific spiritual beliefs as this is a development process which needs to be tried and tested. Youth spirituality in particular, is a way of accessing the self, helping people to discover their own orientations towards different moral codes, or a being happy in themselves. Therefore, it highlights young people's emphasis on their selves, which is something that religions such as Christianity should contemplate when attempting to attract the attention of Gen Y. The church needs to accept that young people may not be ready to commit to Christianity, or may never want to, but allowing

space to explore their spiritual beliefs in an atmosphere free of judgement, encouraging them to ask questions would be a good start to support Gen Y in their spiritual development.

Spirituality is frowned upon by some medical professionals who may view spirituality as harmful to the recovery process especially concerning mental health. Moreover, I have identified various studies which show that unless the spirituality itself is negative it should not harm the patient, and a positive spirituality, for example believing that there is someone or something they need to live for, could help to diminish the intensity of mental health problems. According to Sveidqvist (2003) young people see having a purpose in life as one of the most important aspects of having positive mental health. Thus, on the whole, being spiritual has the potential to be able to help, but of course it is not a guarantee, as no causal link has been established in previous research. Therefore, spirituality is dependent on the individual, and whilst positive spiritual behaviours may help in many aspects of Gen Y's lives, what may seem positive to one person may appear negative to another. It is problematic for researchers to study such a subjective matter.

As a peaceful movement which supports the unity of churches and searches for common ground between the denominations, ecumenism is not as popular as it perhaps should be, but it should be seriously considered as a possible solution to a decline in interest in Christianity. Ecumenism is biblical, it is a concept to accept through listening to one another rather than an argument to be resolved. According to Evans (1996) this viewpoint suggests a feeling of being threatened by other denominations. Generally, methods of opposition to ecumenism include ignoring or trying to protect their own

identities. As ecumenical theology “presupposes that every tradition in the church has something valuable to contribute even if we cannot yet discern what it is” it is not for individual communities to judge (Hunsinger, 2008, p.2). Thus, a re-evaluation of interpretations of scripture and belief is extremely difficult. It is clear that ecumenism cannot be a quick process, it may not even be possible, but as it was Jesus’ desire that there should be one church, it is important that Christians do not dismiss it so hurriedly.

Ecumenism on a smaller scale can be used to help promote local community projects, encouraging people from different denominations to get to know each other. On a global scale, although there is the issue of physical boundaries and language barriers, it can help to ignite the true Christian spirit, reaching out to others in need, sharing ideas, and knowing they have support however far away in times of crisis. According to Evans (1996) ecumenism can help create “a repentant and welcoming spirituality and that will empower us to become more open to the new urban world and the challenge of our cosmopolitan mission”, and this is a future that Gen Y can choose to be a part of (Evans, 1996, p.151). In the spirit of ecumenism, young people often just need someone to listen, identified by Clément (1997), writing about Taizé. Ecumenism is of course primarily about listening, which suggests that if more people knew about it, they would support the movement. Moreover, it is evident that a form of unconscious ecumenism takes place particularly in universities and schools, where Christian Unions meet, worship and pray together. As a concept which is hardly discussed in the day-to-day context of a church, despite there being a number of individuals, and perhaps whole church congregations who oppose ecumenism, there should be more opportunity to overtly talk about it beyond the barriers of church committees. By encouraging

members of various denominations to bond, it is possible that ecumenism can be achieved on a small scale, and perhaps the success of these societies suggests that they would be effective outside the context of an educational environment. By uniting the church in a discussion about ecumenism, while trying to preserve individualities, it may make the possibility of a wider ecumenism a more viable process.

Therefore, ecumenism may be a helpful solution to the problem of declining congregations, but it does not appeal to all, including many who are already members of churches. However, I believe it is for the good of the church to do what they can for younger generations and for the future of the church. Ecumenism may not be the only solution to attracting younger generations: if they focus on their needs, by providing support, particularly in relation to mental health, and promoting it as much as possible they will hopefully be successful in attracting more young people.

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