

Report

What can be expected of parish revitalisations?

Eido Research

Five key findings from this report

1. There have been at least 221 church revitalisations through planting in the Church of England: more than half have been planted since 2020
2. After a revitalisation, median weekly attendance increases for the first three years (from about 50 to about 115), then plateaus thereafter. However, some larger revitalisations continue to grow past this point
3. Median child weekly attendance increases steadily: while revitalisations had six under 16-year-olds in attendance the year before they were planted, this increases to 23 by year five. More than two in five revitalisations (45 percent) will have a ministry to all ages (defined as 25 or more young people in attendance) by the fifth year after planting
4. **Analysis of Church of England attendance data does not support the theory that church revitalisations are reducing the attendance of nearby Anglican churches.** This is not to say that transfer growth does not exist: merely that in the long run we saw little evidence of transfer growth reducing the attendance of neighbouring churches
5. Further research is needed on transfer growth and the experiences of others affected by revitalisations (beyond revitalisation leaders)

Executive summary

State of revitalisations

General

- There have been at least 221 church revitalisations through planting in the Church of England
- More than half of revitalisations have been planted since 2020
- More than 26,000 people currently attend church revitalisations: while revitalisations make up 1.5 percent of churches in the Church of England, they represent over 4 percent of the Church of England's average weekly attendance
- London has over three times as many revitalisations as the diocese with the next highest number
- Half of revitalisations belong to the HTB network; HTB (the church) has individually planted 16 percent of revitalisations
- Senior revitalisation leaders are highly likely to be white men: 92 percent are white, and 82 percent are male
- 32 percent of revitalisations had received funding from the National Church Institutions; 72 percent were founded by a resource church

Church tradition

- Sending churches tend to be evangelical and charismatic
- Receiving churches are more varied, although they are most commonly described as traditional, liturgical, and middle-of-the-road
- Churches which result from revitalisations tend to resemble the sending church in being evangelical and charismatic – although they are also more likely than sending churches to be described as liturgical and traditional

What can be expected of a new revitalisation?

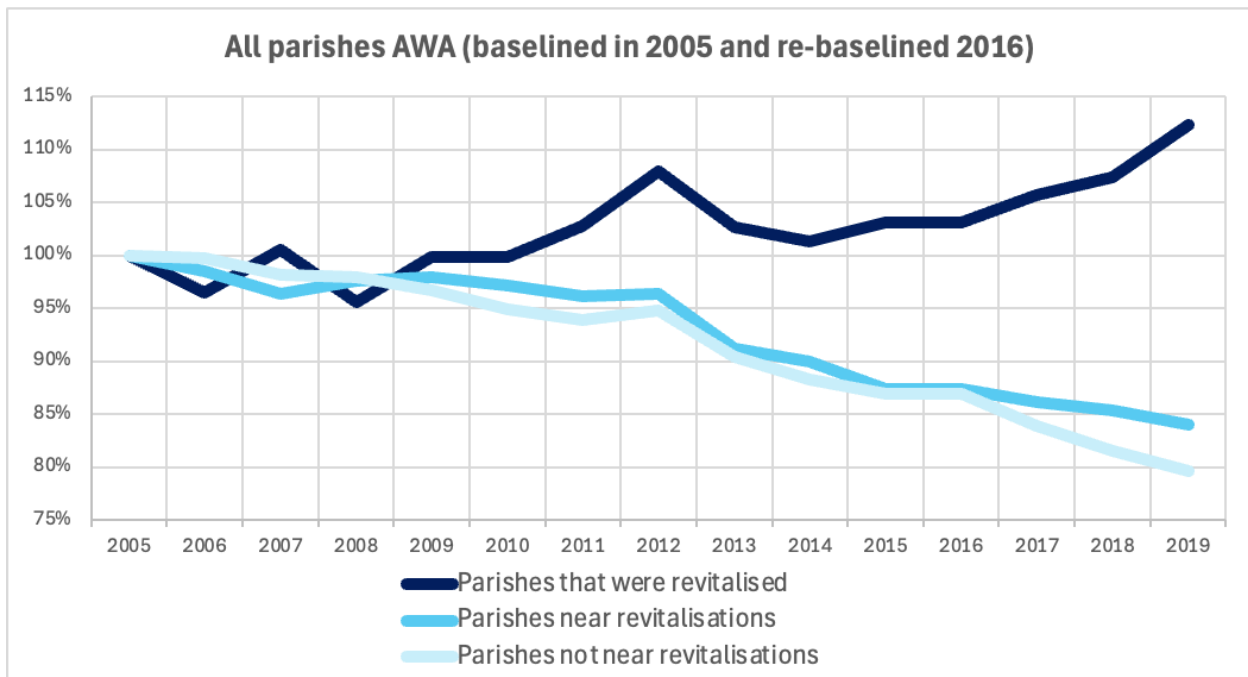
General

- Median weekly attendance increases for the first three years (from about 50 to about 115), then plateaus. However, some larger revitalisations continue to grow past this point
- Median child weekly attendance also increases: while revitalisations had 12 under 16-year-olds in attendance the year they were planted, this increases to 23 by year five
- More than two in five revitalisations (45 percent) will have a ministry to all ages (defined as 25 or more young people in attendance) by the fifth year after planting
- Revitalisations' median giving increases to around £210k by the seventh year after they are planted (from a starting point of £30k) – then decreases

- Median parish share increases steadily, from £26,635 the year before revitalisations are planted, to £78,800 by year nine. Wealthier revitalisations do not seem to pay additional parish share
- Median expenditure also increases sharply: from £78,428 the year before revitalisations are planted, to £340,640 by year seven. This may partly explain the financial pressure experienced by revitalisation leaders: particularly in the early years, revitalisations spend about twice of what they receive through giving
- 38 percent of revitalisations which have been in existence at least five years have planted another revitalisation

Transfer growth and effect on neighbouring churches

- **Analysis of Church of England attendance data does not support the theory that church revitalisations are reducing the attendance of nearby Anglican parishes**
- The following graph depicts changes in attendance for parishes since 2005:
 - Parishes which were or became revitalisations grew
 - Parishes which were not near revitalisations declined
 - **Parishes near revitalisations declined less**, retaining more of their 2005 attendance



- Leaders estimate that their congregations are composed of the following groups:

Plant team	Inherited congregation	Unchurched / Dechurched	Other
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13%	20%	29% ¹	38%
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- As a proportion of the wider congregation:
 - The plant team decreases gradually over time
 - The inherited congregation also decreases, but **much** more steeply than the plant team
 - Unchurched/dechurched people remain relatively constant (although with significant variability which may reflect leaders' uncertainty about the proportion of their congregations who were formerly unchurched/dechurched)
 - "Other" increases dramatically: from 17 percent the year revitalisations are founded to 70 percent for the oldest revitalisations
- It is unclear what is causing some of these changes:
 - Inherited congregations may be leaving or dying – or leaders may simply be better at remembering who was in their plant team than who was in their inherited congregation
 - The increase in "other" may partly be caused by transfer growth – although this is unlikely to be the sole cause as it continues over more than 15 years. New people moving to areas near revitalised churches may be choosing to attend these churches instead of other options

How are revitalisations experienced qualitatively?

- Leaders attributed success in revitalisations to prioritising mission (especially evangelism), children's and families work, good relationships with the receiving church and the wider community, equipping laypeople to lead and serve, and prayer
- Leaders also discussed the following barriers to revitalisations:
 - A lack of funds
 - Tension with the receiving congregation
 - Issues with the building
 - A lack of lay leadership
 - Burnout
- Interviewees advised revitalisation leaders to focus on listening and learning, avoid rushing, ensure that they have the right team, identify and build up leaders from the congregation, and to grow in self-knowledge and a recognition of their own weaknesses
- They advised receiving churches to be ready for a high degree of change, approach the revitalisation with humility, and consider the decision of whether to receive a revitalisation carefully

¹ This proportion should be regarded as an upper limit given incentives for church leaders to overreport the number of formerly dechurched and unchurched people in their congregations.

Further research needed

Eido would suggest that further research be undertaken on:

1. **Transfer growth:** Eido would recommend that further research be commissioned on transfer growth **as reported by congregation members**. Much of the data reported here relies on national attendance data and church leaders' estimates – but what do congregation members say about their own church attendance patterns before joining the revitalisation? Are these patterns in line with what is reported here?
2. **How to work effectively with receiving churches:** This was one of the primary barriers to revitalisations' success. How might leaders and plant teams work more effectively with these congregations?
3. **How are revitalisations experienced by other groups?** Nearly all the qualitative research conducted for this report has focused on the perspectives of revitalisation leaders. Additional qualitative research could examine how revitalisations are experienced by:
 - The receiving congregation
 - The plant team
 - New people joining the revitalisation
 - Leaders and members of neighbouring churches

Introduction and research methods

In autumn 2024, the Church of England commissioned Eido Research to investigate church revitalisations through planting: defined as sending a leader and team from one church to another church to reboot the mission and ministry of the second church.

The research had the following purposes and questions:

Research purposes

Understand the scale and breadth of parish revitalisations across the Church of England

Firstly, the research sought to create a catalogue of all revitalisations, and a “family tree” of planting relationships. This phase of the research aimed to create a list of church revitalisations (and the relationships between them) for the Vision and Strategy Team to consult in future.

Create a model of what can be expected from parish revitalisations

Secondly, the research was designed to model what could be expected from church revitalisations, including quantitative and qualitative assessments of impact, the effect of contextual factors including tradition, and any best practice that emerged. Findings from this phase of the research would provide diocesan decision makers, local churches, plant leaders, and national evaluators with a better understanding of the expected impact of revitalisation to assist in the development of mission and ministry plans.

Direct resources to parish revitalisations which are most likely to achieve the Six Bold Outcomes

Finally, the research sought to equip the Vision & Strategy Team to devote resources to revitalisation approaches which were most likely to achieve the Church of England’s Six Bold Outcomes.

Research questions

What parish revitalisations have taken place, and what is the relationship between them?

This question focused on discovering the number and distribution of revitalisations, the planting relationships between them, how they had been funded, and how often they planted further revitalisations.

On the basis of past data, what can be expected of a new church revitalisation?

The Vision & Strategy team wanted to examine the effect of revitalisations on attendance (including children’s and young people’s attendance), finances (giving, parish share, and expenditure), and the formation of new worshipping communities. Eido was also asked to estimate the effect of transfer growth and the impact on neighbouring churches.

How are church revitalisations experienced qualitatively?

Finally, Eido was asked to examine how revitalisations were experienced qualitatively, including what revitalisation leaders saw as enabling and hindering the success of revitalisations and stories from their experience of revitalising churches.

Research methods

To explore these questions, Eido adopted the following approach:

Developing a catalogue

To identify revitalisations, Eido spoke to church networks, church-planting organisations (e.g., the Centre for Church Multiplication and Revitalisation Trust), and diocesan mission enablers. We also analysed data from Statistics from Mission and conducted online searches to discover revitalisations not mentioned by the organisations above.

Two types of revitalisations were included in the catalogue:

1. Church plants into existing congregations (referred to as “grafts” below)
2. Church plants into closed church buildings

If we were to conduct this research again, we would distinguish between these types of revitalisations more in our analysis. In this report, it is safe to assume that “revitalisations” refers to both of these types of churches – apart from where we specify otherwise.

Survey with revitalisation leaders

To refine this catalogue and to gather data on revitalisations not captured in Statistics for Mission, we then invited revitalisation leaders to participate in a survey. In total, we heard from 102 respondents.

The survey asked about how the church was revitalised, the tradition of the sending, receiving, and revitalised churches, transfer growth, the demographics of the leader, and several other topics.

Interviews

To provide further qualitative context to our data, we conducted six interviews with people involved with revitalisations (primarily revitalisation leaders). Interviewees were selected to ensure diversity by:

- Churchmanship
- Region
- Revitalisation context (to ensure that revitalisations on estates and in deprived contexts were represented)

Creating a family tree

Drawing on the revitalisations catalogue, Eido created a “family tree” showing the planting relationships between revitalisations and their parent churches. This family tree has been sent to the Vision & Strategy team alongside this report.

Analysis of Church of England data

Finally, Eido analysed existing Church of England data from Statistics for Mission to establish what effect revitalisations had on giving, attendance, expenditure, parish share, and the founding of new churches and worshipping communities. We also examined attendance patterns for churches near revitalisations to model the effect of transfer growth.

State of revitalisations

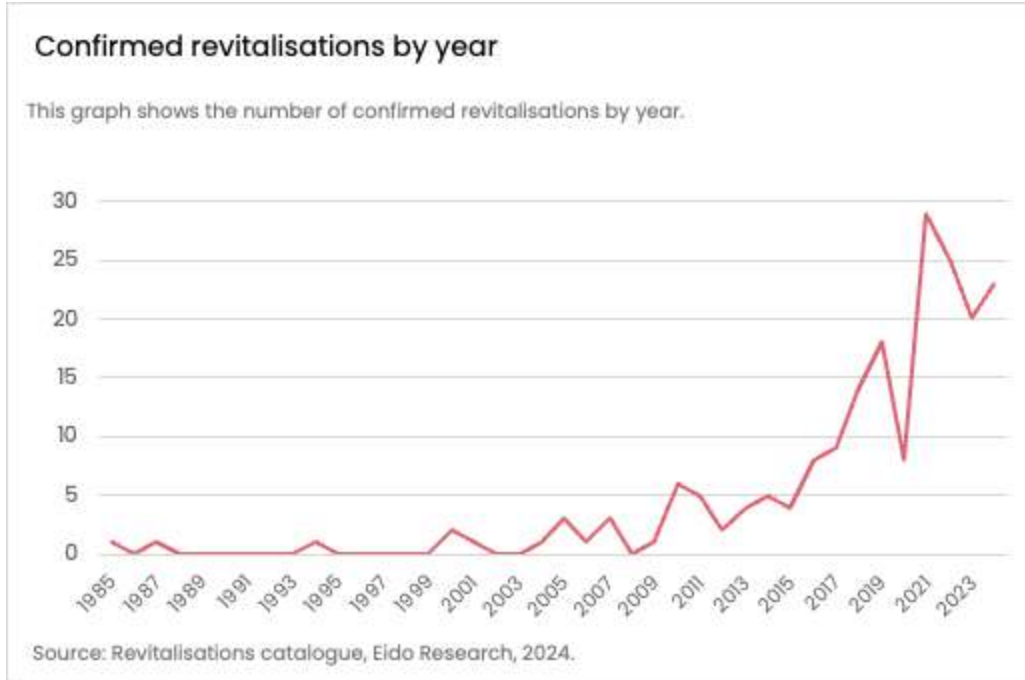
How many parish revitalisations have there been?

In total, our revitalisations catalogue has identified **221 revitalisations**. These include 194 grafts into existing congregations and 27 instances in which a closed church has been reopened.

Sending revitalising team to existing congregation	Reopening a closed church	Total
194	27	221

However, **we think this estimate is probably somewhat low**. Our desk research identified a further 84 “possible revitalisations” (defined as churches which appeared on lists of church plants, or gave other signs of being revitalisations, but which we were not able to confirm were revitalisations through survey results or other means). Furthermore, while mission enablers were a crucial source for identifying revitalisations, mission enablers from some dioceses did not respond to our efforts to contact them – so we have likely undercounted revitalisations in these dioceses.

As can be seen in the chart below, revitalisations have recently become much more common in the Church of England. **More than half (55 percent) have been planted since 2020**, 79 percent have been planted since 2015, and 89 percent since 2010.



How many people attend revitalisations?

In 2023 (the most recent year for which data is available), **26,304** people attended confirmed church revitalisations. These revitalisations had a mean weekly attendance of 138 and a median attendance of 83.

While confirmed church revitalisations therefore make up **1.5 percent** of churches in the Church of England, they represent over **4 percent** of the Church of England's average weekly attendance. This implies that a given church revitalisation has about three times the attendance of an average church.

How are revitalisations split by diocese, network, and tradition?

Diocese

The following table shows the 10 dioceses with the greatest number of revitalisations. As can be seen, **London has over three times as many revitalisations as the diocese with the next-highest number.**

Diocese	Grafts	Closed churches reopened	Total	Percent
London	45	15	60	27%
Sheffield	16	1	17	8%
Chichester	15	2	17	8%
Winchester	14	1	15	7%
Leeds	14	0	14	6%
Blackburn	10	0	10	5%
Portsmouth	8	2	10	5%
Southwark	9	0	9	4%
Chelmsford	7	0	7	3%
Exeter	5	1	6	3%

Network

Half of revitalisations (50 percent) belong to the HTB network, and just under one in five (19 percent) are affiliated with New Wine. No other network comprises a large share of revitalisations – although, interestingly, 21 percent did not report belonging to a network at all. This category consists of (a) churches which said that they were not affiliated with any network on the survey and (b) churches which did not respond to the survey and for which we could not find information on whether they belonged to a network online.

Interestingly, churches which did not belong to a network were proportionally more likely to plant grafts than to reopen closed churches – perhaps because they could not access the financial resources to do so.

Network	Grafts	Closed churches reopened	Total	Percent
HTB	92	18	110	50%
No reported network	45	1	46	21%
New Wine	37	5	42	19%
Co-Mission (Con	6	2	8	4%

Evo)				
KXC	5	0	5	2%

Which churches had planted the most revitalisations?

HTB had directly planted three times as many revitalisations as the next most prolific church.

The following table ranks the five churches which had planted the most revitalisations. Interestingly, three of the other four churches on this list were themselves directly planted by HTB – and all five of these churches are in the charismatic evangelical tradition.

The most prolific non-charismatic evangelical church was St Helen’s Bishopsgate, which had directly planted three grafts and reopened one church.

Church name	Grafts	Closed churches reopened	Total	Percent	Location	HTB network?
HTB	26	10	36	16%	London	Yes
St Peter’s, Brighton	10	0	19	5%	Brighton	Yes
SAINT	6	0	6	3%	London	Yes
St Paul’s, Shadwell	5	0	5	2%	London	Yes
KXC	5	0	5	2%	London	No

What is the church tradition of sending, receiving, and resulting churches?

On the survey, we asked leaders of revitalisations how they would describe the tradition of the sending church, the receiving church, and their church, now. We provided the following options, and (out of a desire to avoid disagreements how the categories were defined) asked respondents to select the categories which felt right to them:

- Catholic
- Evangelical

- Conservative
- Liberal
- Charismatic
- Traditional
- Modern
- Liturgical
- Middle-of-the-road
- None of these

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the trends above, most revitalisation leaders described their **sending church** as evangelical (76 percent) and charismatic (74 percent). Some also described it as modern (37 percent), or, less commonly, as conservative (17 percent).

There was much more variety in the churches **receiving** revitalisations. Most commonly, leaders described these churches as traditional (52 percent), liturgical (44 percent), and middle-of-the road (44 percent) – although large proportions had also come to receiving churches were evangelical (26 percent), catholic (24 percent), and liberal (21 percent).

In most respects, the churches which **resulted** from revitalisations resembled the sending church, and leaders described them as evangelical (77 percent), charismatic (71 percent), and modern (40 percent). However, post-revitalisation churches were much more likely than sending churches to be described as liturgical (26 percent vs. 6 percent) and traditional (17 percent vs. 5 percent).

Who leads revitalisations?

Currently, revitalisation leaders are highly likely to be white men: 92 percent of senior leaders who responded to our survey were white, and 82 percent were male.

What proportion have been funded by national funding streams?

Around three in ten revitalisations (32 percent) had received funding from the National Church Institutions. This proportion was slightly higher for reopened churches (37 percent) than for grafts (31 percent), perhaps because of the additional costs involved in reopening a church.

What proportion have a resource church as their sending church?

Just over seven in ten revitalisations (72 percent) were founded by a resource church. Once again, this proportion was higher for reopened churches (81 percent) – likely because few non-resource churches could support the cost of reopening a closed church.

How frequently do resource churches found revitalisations?

More than half of resource churches (52 percent) had founded a revitalisation, although this proportion increases over the lifespan of a resource church; almost three-quarters (74 percent) of resource churches which had been established for seven years or longer had founded a revitalisation.

What can be expected of a new revitalisation?

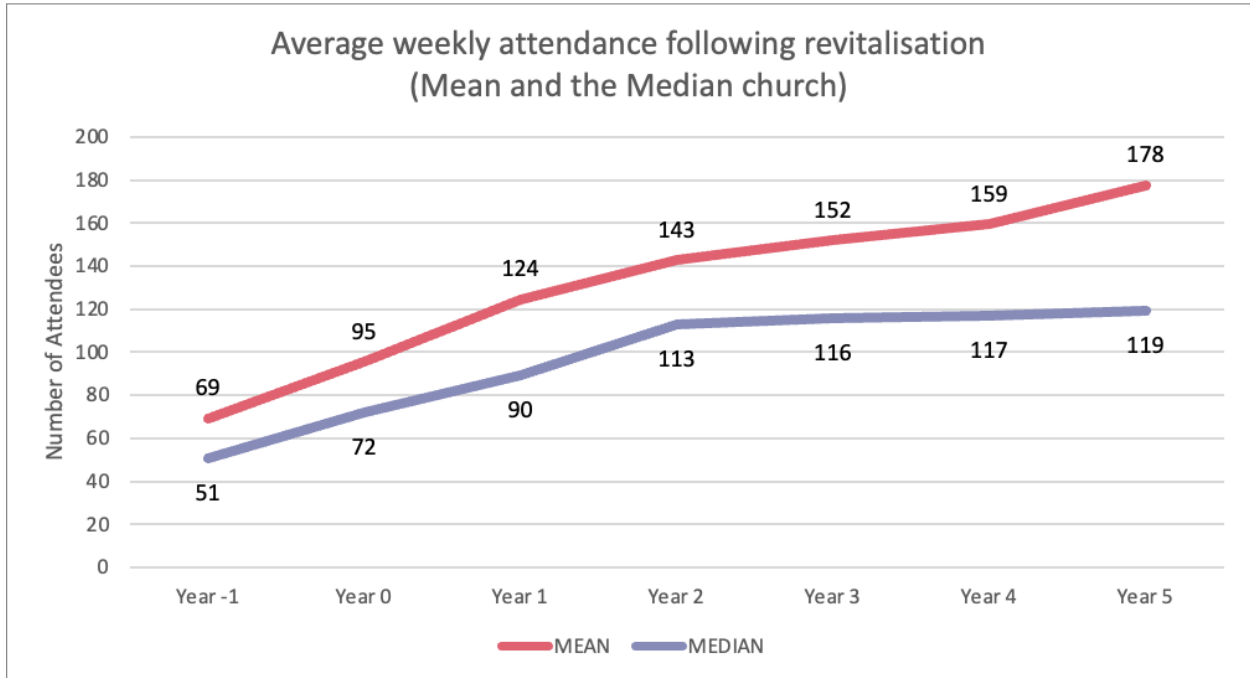
What is the range of growth trajectories?

Average weekly attendance

As can be seen in the chart below, median average weekly attendance tends to increase for the first three years following a revitalisation and then plateau. **This is the pattern that can be expected for most churches.**²

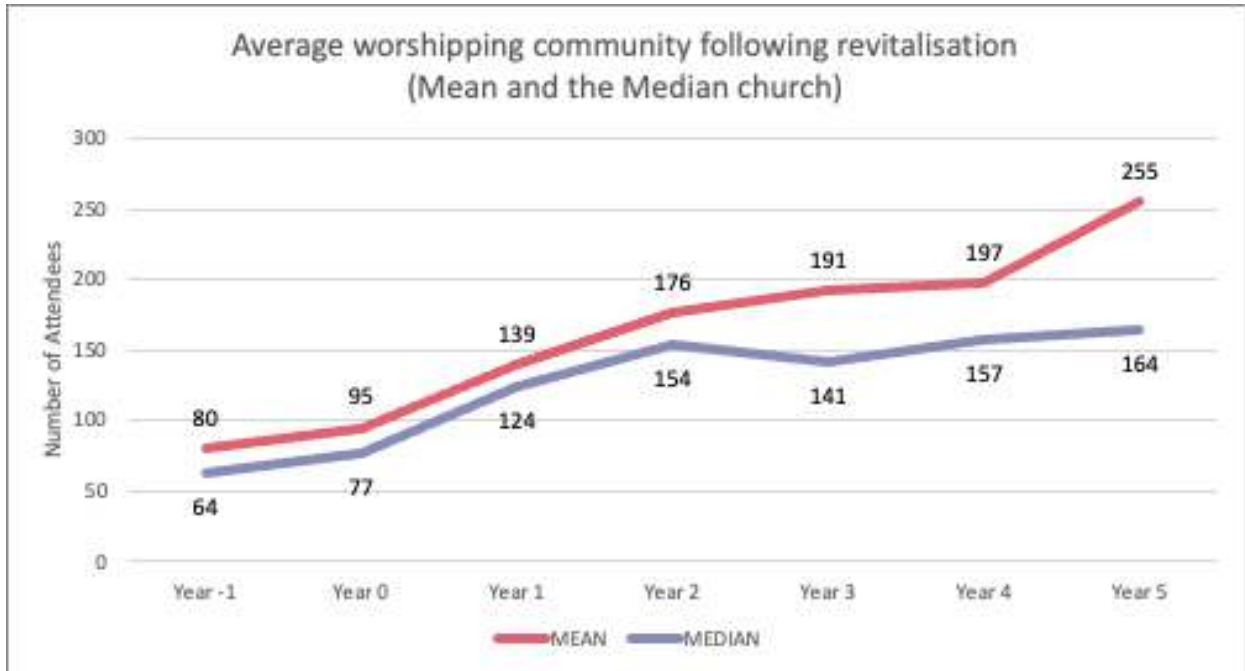
However, a minority of revitalisations continue to grow significantly after this point – explaining why mean attendance is higher than median attendance in the graph below. (At year five, for instance, the largest revitalisation had 853 people.)

² Splitting revitalisations into quartiles is helpful here. At year six, the first quartile for our dataset was 86, and the third quartile was 177 – meaning that while 75 percent of revitalisations will have more than 86 people three years after they are founded, only 25 percent will have more than 177.



Worshipping community

The pattern for worshipping community was very similar to the pattern for average weekly attendance.



At year five (the last year for which we had a large enough sample size to produce meaningful statistics), the data can be broken down as follows:

Minimum (smallest revitalisation)	First quartile	Median	Third quartile	Maximum (largest revitalisation)
0	119	164	287	1,197

As these figures imply, five years after they were founded, 75 percent of revitalisations will have a worshipping community larger than 119, and 75 percent will have a worshipping community smaller than 287.

To what extent are these people new to church or transfers from other churches?

In the survey, we asked leaders to estimate what proportion of their current congregations came from their plant team, the congregation inherited from the receiving church, unchurched or dechurched backgrounds, or any other source.

The figures below are imperfect both because of the categories chosen – there are distinctions within these categories (e.g., the proportion of congregations which came from transfer growth specifically) which we would have liked to investigate but did not think that

church leaders could reliably estimate – and because church leaders’ estimates are not perfectly reliable. (We think the figures on the percentage of congregations which came from unchurched and dechurched backgrounds, for example, should be regarded as an upper limit as church leaders have an incentive to overreport how many people came from these backgrounds.)

Eido would recommend that there is need for further research on the effects of transfer growth specifically.

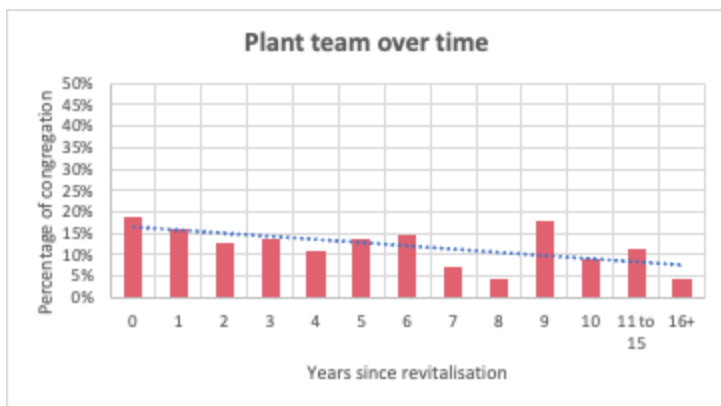
Assuming these percentages are roughly accurate, however, **two-thirds of revitalisations’ congregations (67 percent) are made up of people who joined the church after the revitalisation was planted** (the “unchurched/dechurched” and “other” categories in the table below).

Plant team	Inherited congregation	Unchurched / Dechurched	Other
13%	20%	29%	38%

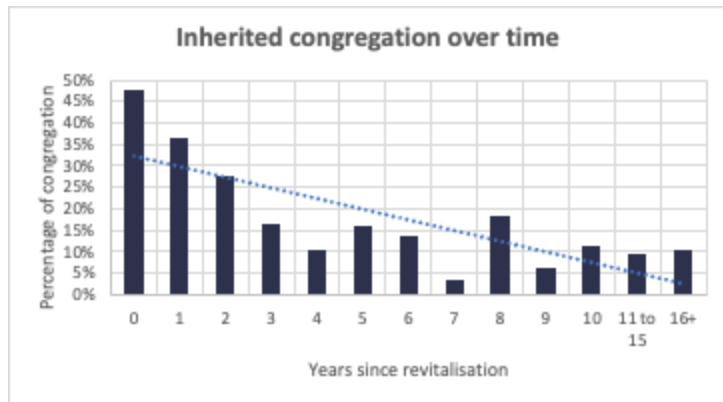
To understand how these percentages change over the lifespan of a revitalisation, we split the data by the number of years elapsed since the revitalisation was planted. The following charts model how revitalisations’ composition changes over time.

Plant team

Not surprisingly, the original plant team declines as a proportion of the congregation over time. This is what we might expect given that revitalisations are growing: since the plant team is a fixed number of people, it will make up a smaller proportion of the congregation as the congregation grows.



Inherited congregation



The inherited congregation also declines as a proportion of the congregation over time. This is partly due to churches growing, but not entirely, because **the inherited congregation declines three times as steeply as the plant team**. While the trend line for the plant team shows a yearly decline of less than one percent, the equivalent figure for the inherited congregation is more than **three percent**. The overall decrease is also dramatic: while the inherited congregation makes up nearly half of the church (48 percent) the year the revitalisation is planted, by year 10 it hovers around 10 percent. **This nearly fivefold decrease is much more marked than the twofold decrease seen for the plant team**: from around 20 percent at the time of the revitalisation to around 10 percent by year 10.³

The data does not directly indicate what is causing this decline, but it may be that:

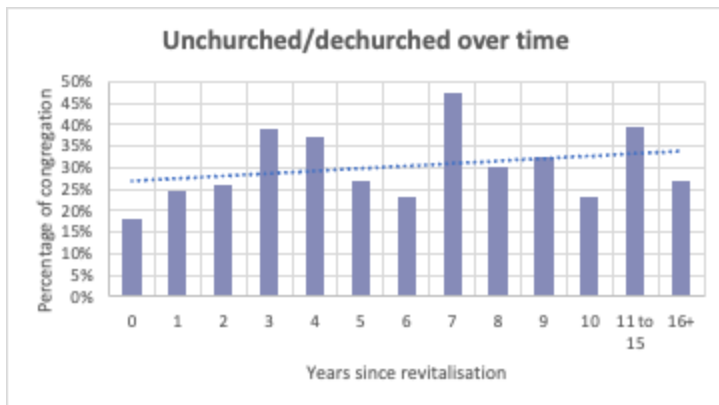
1. The inherited congregation is leaving
2. Older members of the inherited congregation are dying
3. Leaders of long-established revitalisations are better at remembering who was in their plant team than who was in the inherited congregation and are underreporting the inherited congregation

These explanations are not mutually exclusive, and two could be true in combination – or all at once. **We would suggest that further investigation of what happens to inherited congregations after revitalisations are planted might be valuable** as part of future research on working with inherited congregations.

Unchurched/dechurched

The reported proportion of unchurched and dechurched people in revitalisations is highly variable, with no clear pattern over time. This may indicate that there is a relatively constant proportion of unchurched and dechurched people in revitalisations, or that leaders are unsure how many people come from these backgrounds and are guessing wildly. (The variability could reflect the randomness of their guesses.)

³ It is true that there is more variability for the plant team, but even factoring in the low proportions given for years 7, 8, and 16+, plant teams are still averaging around 10 percent of the total congregation in the later years of a revitalisation.



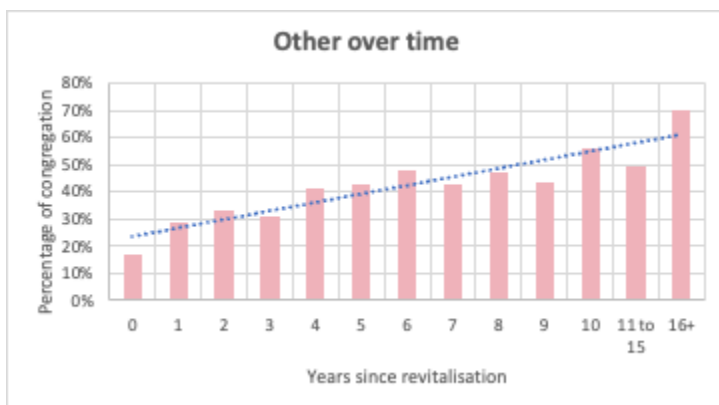
Other

The proportion of congregations in the “other” category increases steadily over time: from 17 percent the year revitalisations are planted to **70 percent** in the oldest revitalisations.

The description of this category provided in the survey was: “Any other background: moved into the area, was attending another church, attends more than one church, etc.)”.

It is not clear what is causing this increase. It may be due to transfer growth – although if so, this would need to be reconciled with the lack of evidence that revitalisations are decreasing the attendance of neighbouring Anglican churches (for which, see below). It may be that revitalisations grow through transfers from Anglican neighbouring churches **initially**, but that over time these churches’ attendance recovers. Or it could be that revitalisations are drawing new members from other, non-Anglican churches.

It is also possible that Christians who have newly moved into the area are deciding to attend the revitalisation, or that revitalisations are growing through other factors not captured here.

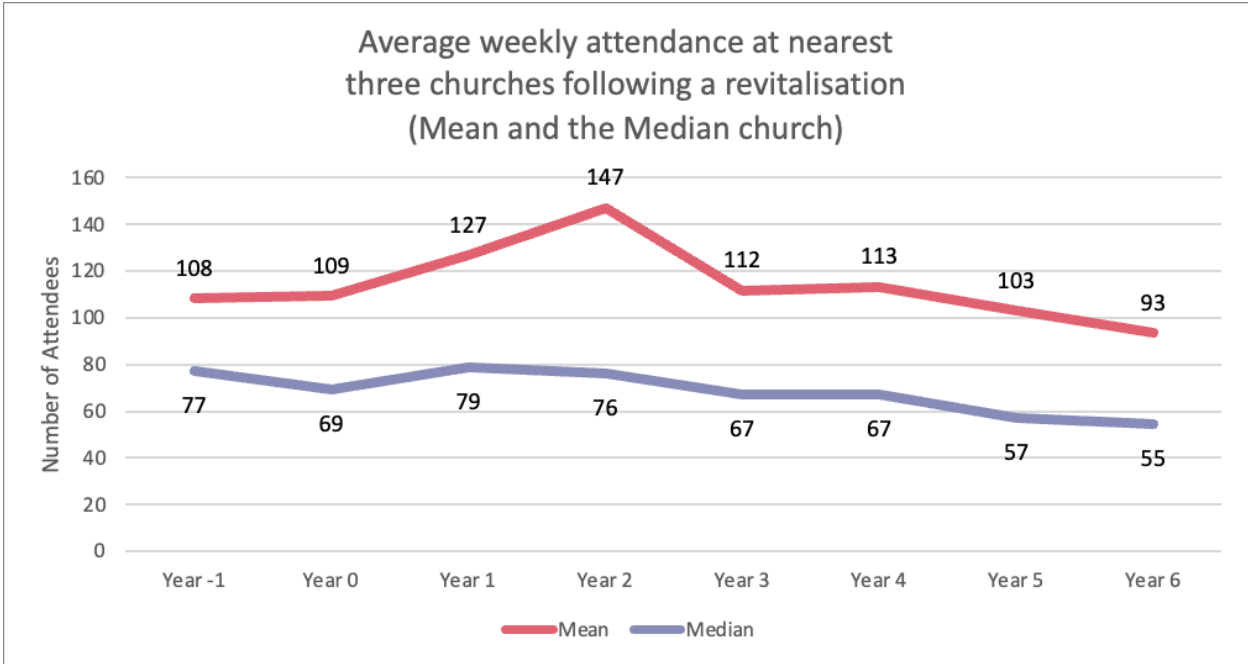


Can an estimate be made of the impact on neighbouring churches in the Church of England?

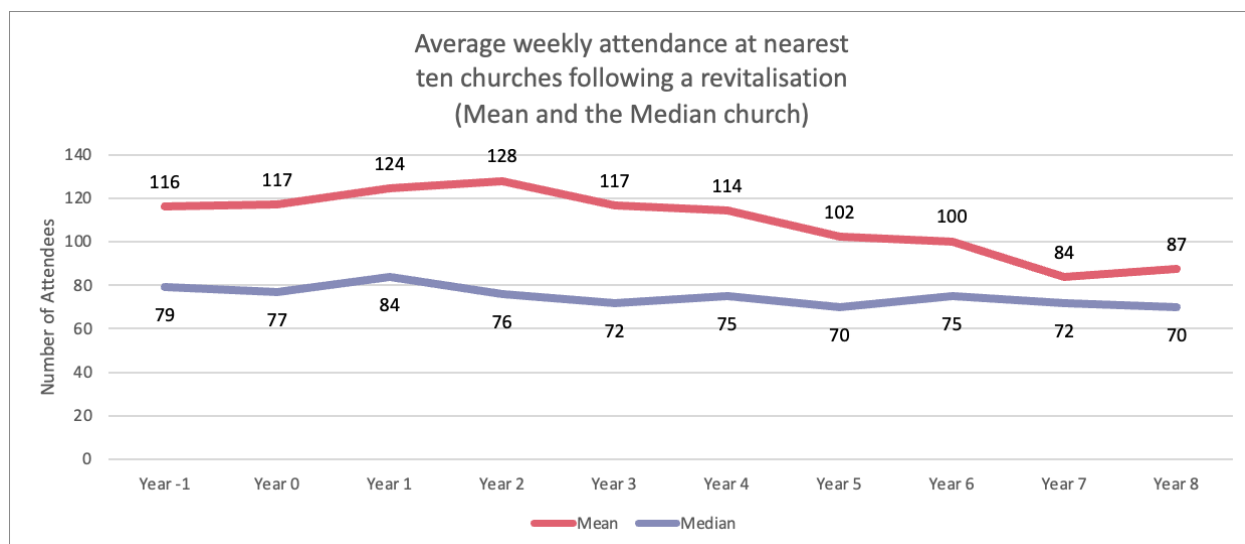
To investigate the effect of revitalisations on neighbouring churches, we compiled a list of the nearest churches to each revitalisation in our catalogue.

Nearest three churches

Interestingly, revitalisations seemed to have no effect on attendance figures for the nearest three churches. As can be seen in the chart below, there was no pattern in these churches' mean attendance, and, while there was a slight decrease in their median attendance, this decrease was in line with the overall decrease of three percent per year for the wider Church of England.



Nearest ten churches



Revitalisations also did not seem to be reducing the attendance of the nearest 10 churches. These churches' median attendance decreased at a rate comparable to the wider Church of England. Their mean attendance decreased slightly more steeply – although this decline did not begin until Year 2 (and did not fall below their starting attendance until Year 4).

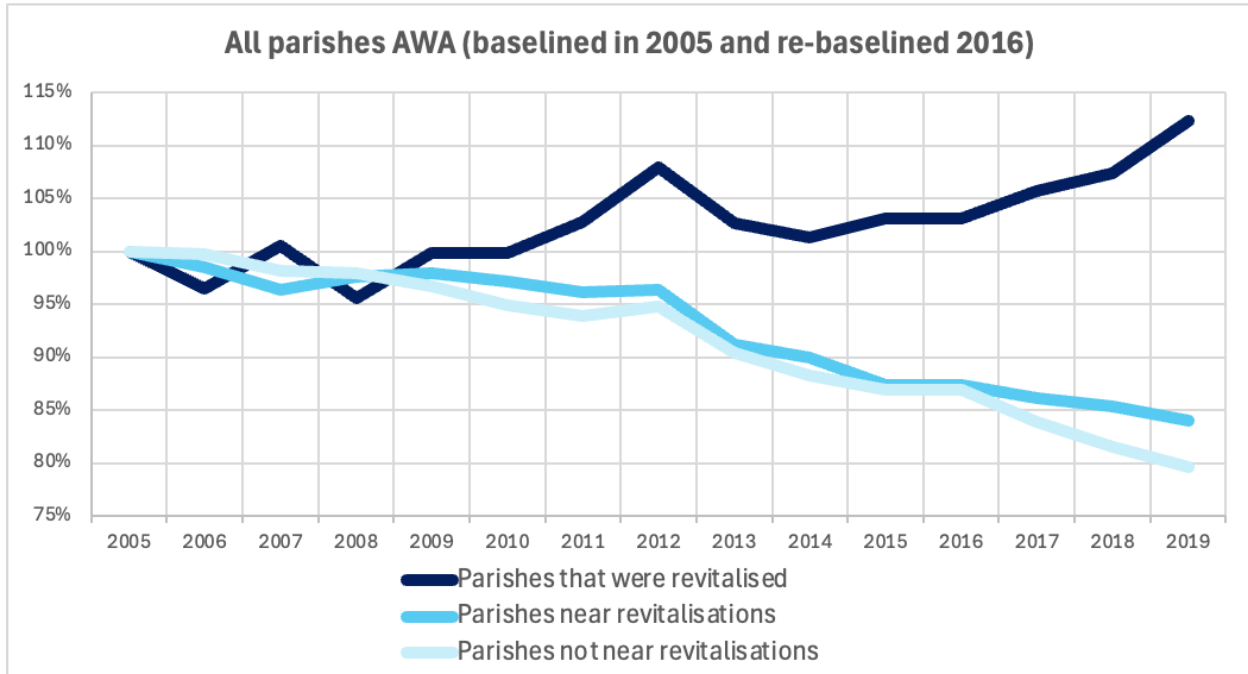
To investigate the possibility that revitalisations might be drawing members from the largest neighbouring churches (thus decreasing these churches' mean but not their median attendance), we conducted additional analysis.

The following graph shows the average weekly attendance for:

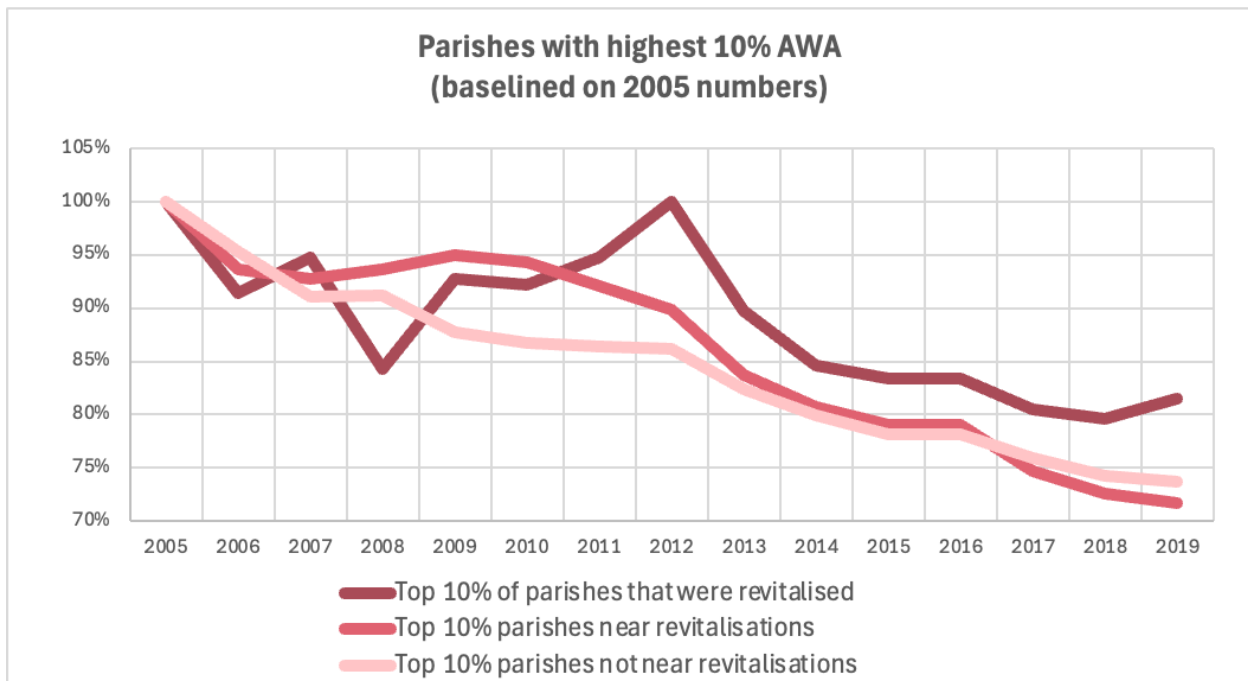
- Revitalisations
- The nearest ten parishes to revitalisations
- All other parishes in the Church of England

(We organised this data by calendar year to enable comparison with other parishes in the Church of England.)

As can be seen, **parishes near revitalisations did not decline more** than other parishes in the Church of England.

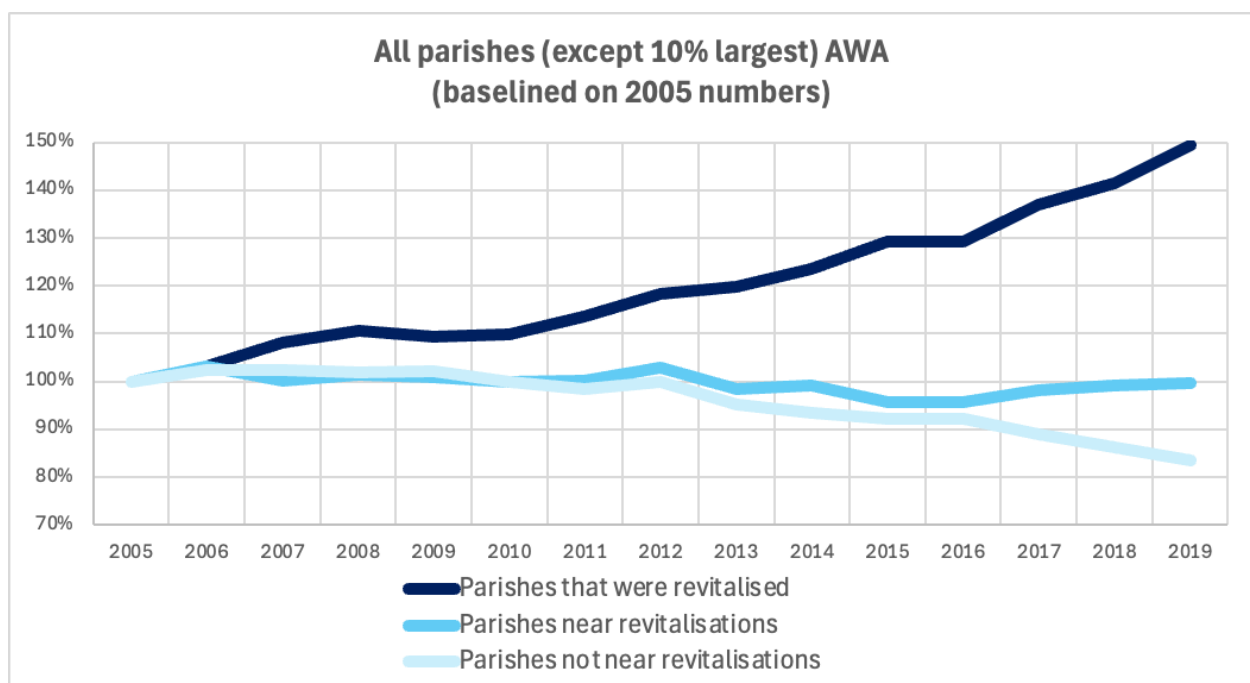


It is, however, true that **parishes with higher attendance decline more quickly, regardless of their proximity to revitalisations**. Thus, when we replicated the graph above only for large parishes (i.e., parishes that ranked in the top 10 percent of attendance in 2005), we saw the following pattern:



Crucially, **all of these larger parishes declined** – including parishes which had revitalisations. While parishes near revitalisations had declined slightly more by 2019, it is unclear whether this additional decline was due to revitalisations as (a) this difference was slight and (b) it reversed direction at certain points in the time period: between 2007 and 2016 parishes near revitalisations retained *more* of their attendance than parishes without a revitalisation in their area. Therefore, as we shall see in our regression model, the crucial factor in whether parishes decline does not seem to be whether they were near a revitalisation but something to do with their initial size.

This trend looked very different for smaller parishes which were in the bottom 90 percent of attendance in 2005:



Here, we saw a clear increase, with revitalised parishes growing to 1.5 times their 2005 attendance. Interestingly, however, **smaller parishes near revitalisations retained all of their 2005 attendance**, while smaller parishes without a revitalisation in the area saw their attendance fall to around 85 percent of 2005 levels. There is therefore strong evidence that **revitalisations therefore are not causing small nearby parishes to decline**.

Regression

To model which factors were associated with parish growth or decline, we conducted a full multiple regression using average growth in average weekly attendance per year as the dependent variable. We considered whether parishes were (1) revitalised, (2) near revitalisations, (3) in deprived contexts, (4) in urban contexts, and (5) in the largest 10 percent of parishes by attendance as possible explanatory variables.

The regression revealed that yearly change in a parish's attendance could be modelled as:

- 0.5 people (reflecting decline across the Church of England)
- + 1.6 people if the parish was revitalised
- + 0.3 people if the parish was urban
- 7.1 people if the parish was in the largest 10 percent of attendance in 2005

Thus, for example, if a church was not revitalised, in an urban area, and in the largest 10 percent of churches in 2005, its annual growth rate would be $-0.5 + 0.3 - 7.1 = -7.3$ people per year.

There was no statistically significant difference associated with whether churches were near revitalisations nor with whether they were in deprived contexts.

Effect on net attendance

To estimate revitalisations' effect on the Church of England's **net attendance** – i.e., the extent to which the Church's overall attendance increased or decreased due to revitalisations – we created a counterfactual with the following assumptions:

1. **For revitalised parishes in the bottom 90 percent of attendance in 2005:** We assumed that, had there not been a revitalisation, these parishes would have lost attendance at the rate of parishes which were (a) in the bottom 90 percent of attendance in 2005 and (b) were not near a revitalisation
2. **For small parishes (i.e., in the bottom 90 percent of attendance in 2005) near revitalisations:** We also assumed that these parishes would have lost attendance at the rate of parishes which were in the bottom 90 percent of attendance in 2005 and were not near a revitalisation
3. **For revitalised parishes in the top 10 percent of attendance in 2005:** As above, we assumed that in the absence of a revitalisation these parishes would have declined at the rate of parishes in the top 10 percent of attendance in 2005 and which were not near a revitalisation
4. **For large parishes (top 10 percent of attendance in 2005) near revitalisations:** As above, we assumed that these parishes would have declined at the rate of parishes which were in the top 10 percent of attendance in 2005 and were not near a revitalisation
5. **For both large and small parishes not near revitalisations:** We used these parishes' actual rate of decline

Since the Church of England's means of counting Average Weekly Attendance changed in 2016, we calculated the change between 2005 and 2015 and the change between 2016 and 2019 separately.

This counterfactual is, obviously, crude – most importantly, because it omits other explanatory factors beyond the size of the church and whether it was revitalised. (It does not include, for example, whether the church was located in an urban context, which our regression model suggested was also associated with church growth.) However, this rough model allows us to gauge the **direction** of the relationship (did revitalisations increase or decrease attendance in the Church of England?) and (with less confidence) to hazard a guess at the **total change in attendance** for the Church.

On the basis of this estimate, **Eido would be reasonably confident in our finding that revitalisations increased the net attendance of the Church of England, although we are much less confident in the size of the change**: the figure cited below is at best indicative, and should not be cited with any degree of certainty.

The following table shows our estimate of revitalisations’ effect on the Church of England’s net attendance:

Actual AWA 2015 (when measurement standards changed)	961,372
Counterfactual AWA 2015 (as calculated above)	954,318
Difference	7,054
Actual AWA 2019	854,298
Counterfactual AWA 2019	843,474
Difference	10,824
Total difference	17,878

That is, our estimate would suggest that over 17,000 people joined, or did not leave, the Church of England due to revitalisations between 2005 and 2019.

Do revitalisations tend to have more services?

Revitalisations have considerably more services than other churches in the Church of England. As can be seen in the data below, revitalisations are both more likely to have at least a weekly service (90 percent do, as compared to just 64 percent of churches in the Church of England), and to have two or more services per week (this was true of 59 percent of revitalisations, but only 36 percent of Church of England churches).

Number of services

	0	<1	1+	2+	3+	4+	5+
Revitalisations	9%	1%	31%	26%	13%	9%	11%
Other churches	13%	23%	28%	16%	9%	4%	7%

How likely are revitalisations to found new worshipping communities?

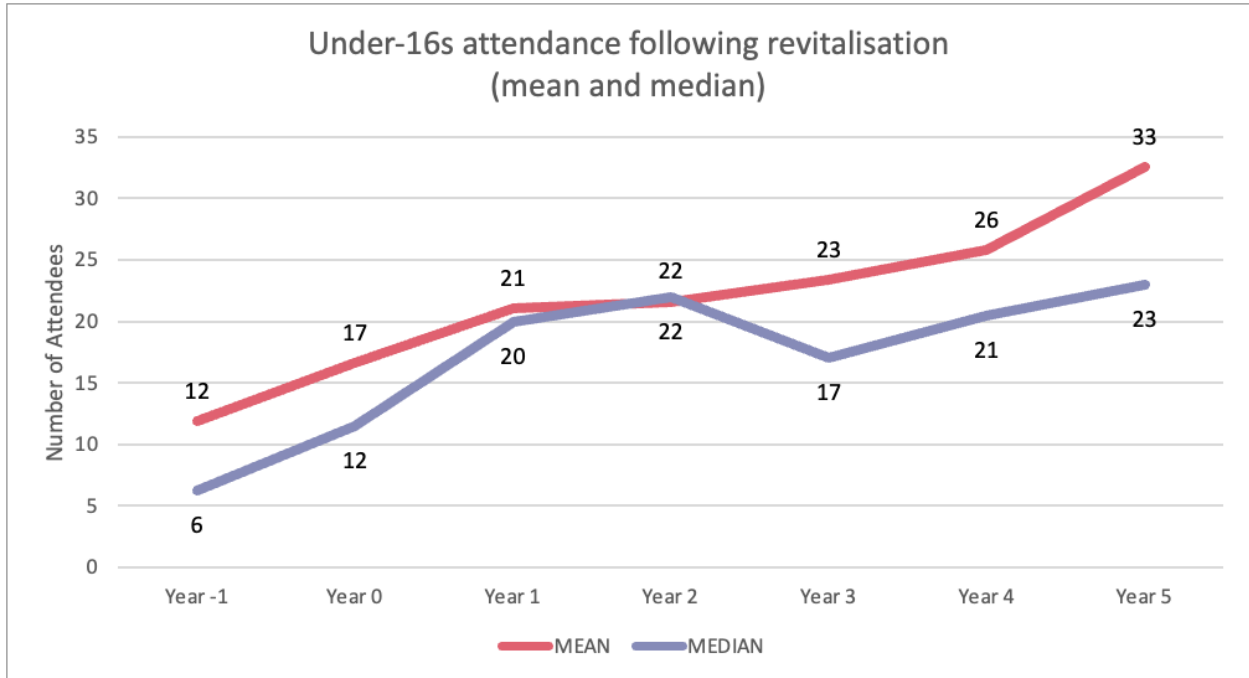
Revitalisations were also more likely to found new worshipping communities (17 percent had, as compared to 9 percent of the Church of England as a whole) and to have more people attend these worshipping communities (median of 15 for revitalisations; 9 for the wider Church of England).

	% had founded NWCs	Median attendance at NWCs
Revitalisations	17%	15
Other churches	9%	9

How many children and young people are expected in revitalisations over time?

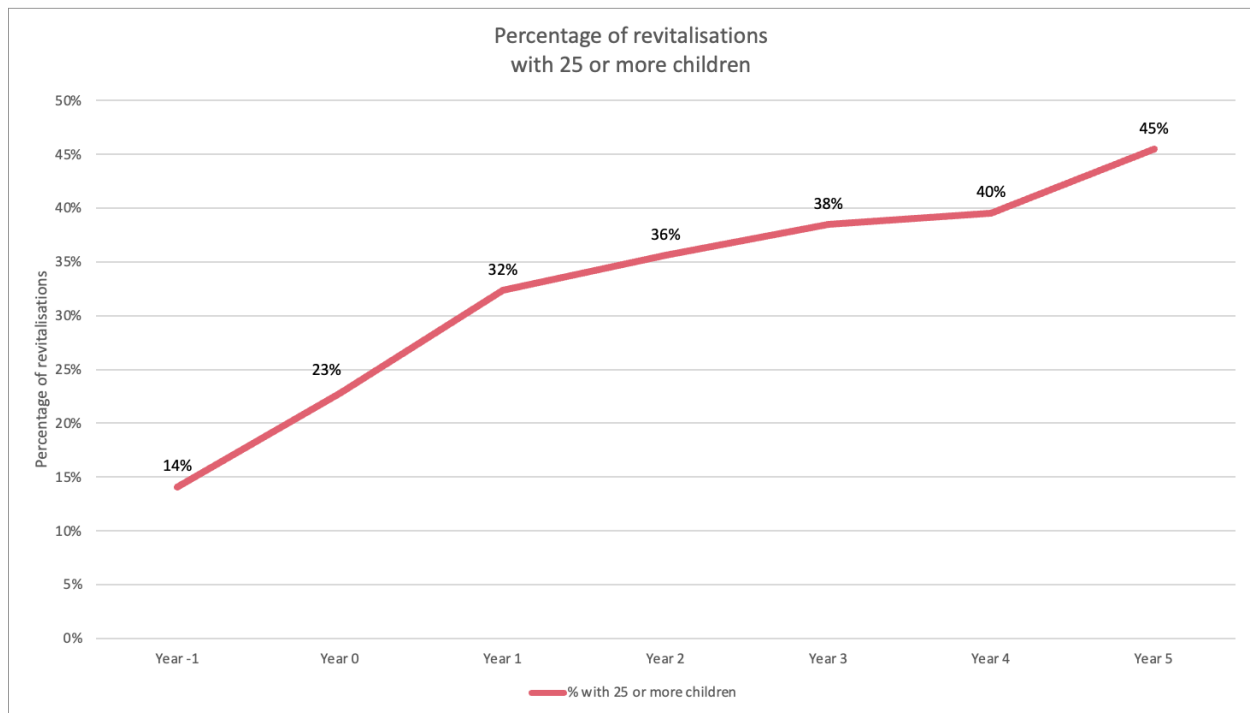
Revitalisations can expect growth in the number of under-16-year-olds in attendance over time (although this growth seems to occur primarily in the first two years after the revitalisation). By the fifth year after they were planted, 75 percent had at least 15 under-16-year-olds.⁴

⁴ And 25 percent also had more than 43 under 16s.



How likely is this figure to be large enough for a ministry to all ages?

Using these figures, we calculated what proportion of revitalisations had a ministry to all ages (defined as more than 25 under-16-year-olds). This proportion increased from 14 percent the year before revitalisations were founded to more than two in five (45 percent) by year five.



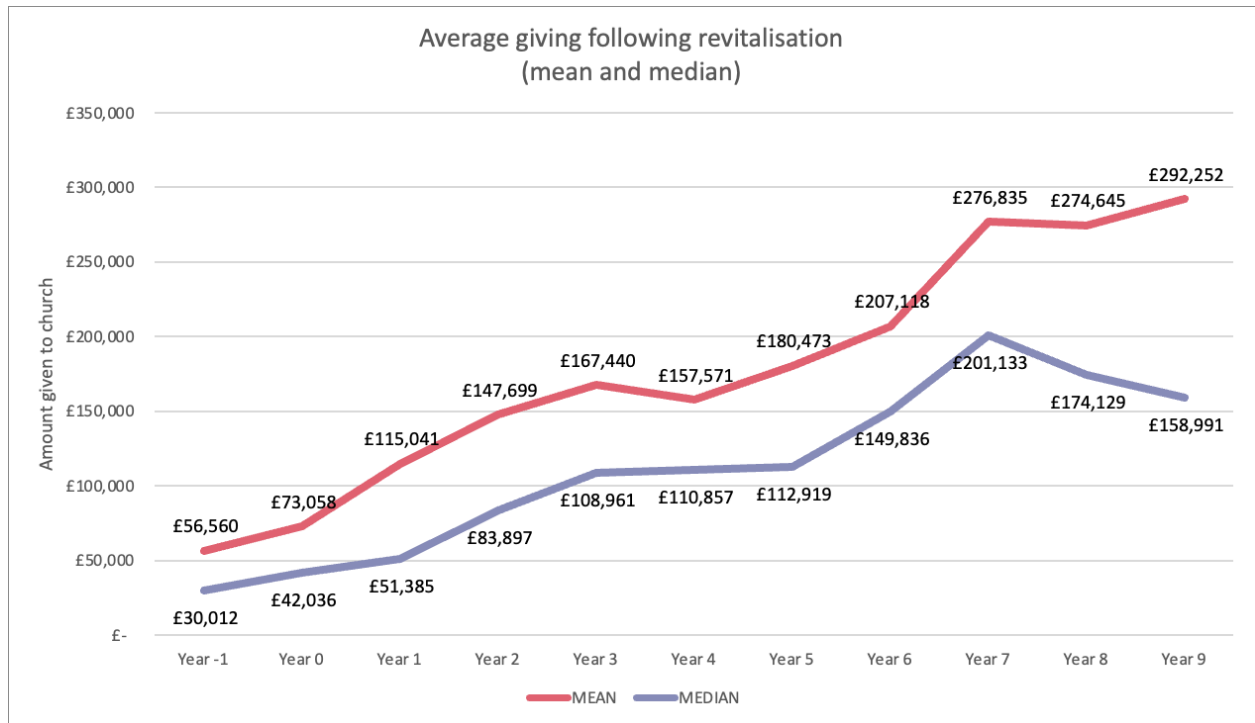
Financial impact

Giving

Revitalisations' median giving increased steadily until year seven, then slightly decreased (a larger sample size would allow us to determine whether this was a true decrease or simply yearly variability after revitalisations had reached their full giving potential).

Summary statistics on revitalisations' giving in year nine may be found below:

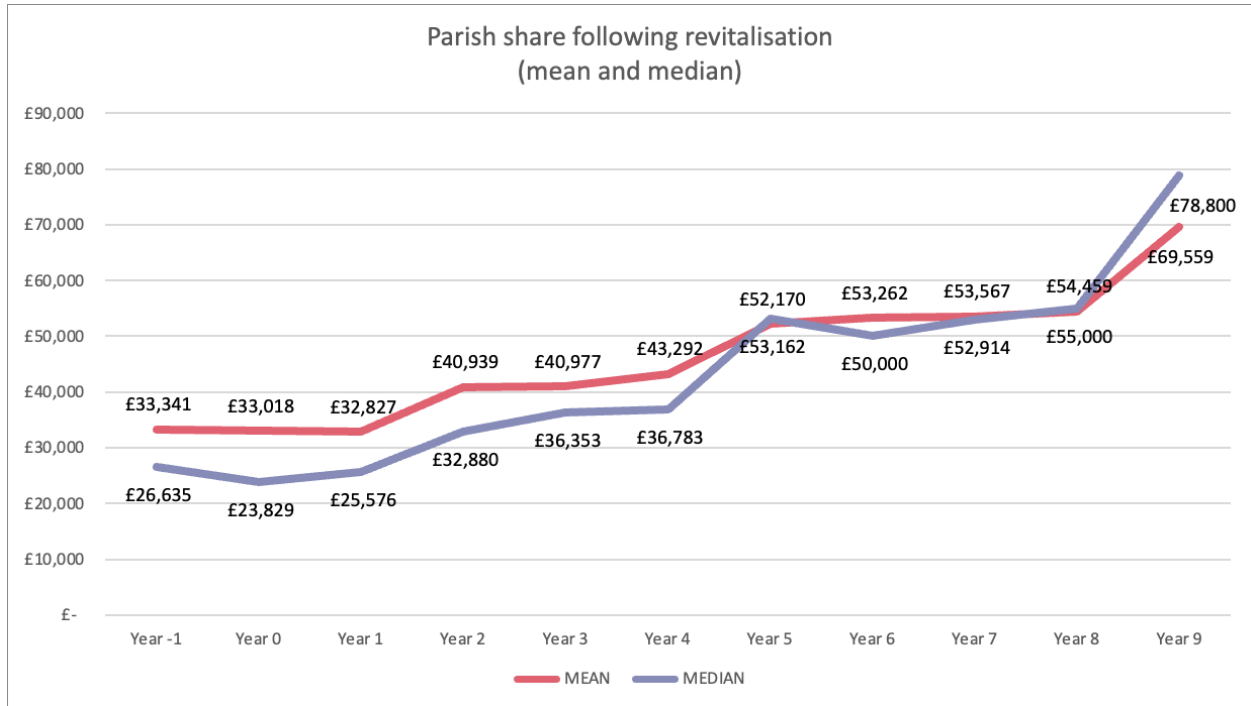
Minimum (revitalisation with least yearly giving)	First quartile	Median	Third quartile	Maximum (revitalisation with most yearly giving)
£28,887	£111,785	£158,991	£339,037	£1,267,761



Parish share

Interestingly, revitalisations' mean and median parish share closely matched each other throughout revitalisations' lifetimes. This suggests that while the wealthiest revitalisations had more giving, they were not paying additional parish share. Summary statistics for year nine may be found below:

Minimum (least parish share paid)	First quartile	Median	Third quartile	Maximum (most parish share paid)
£14,004	£44,900	£78,800	£88,002	£155,948



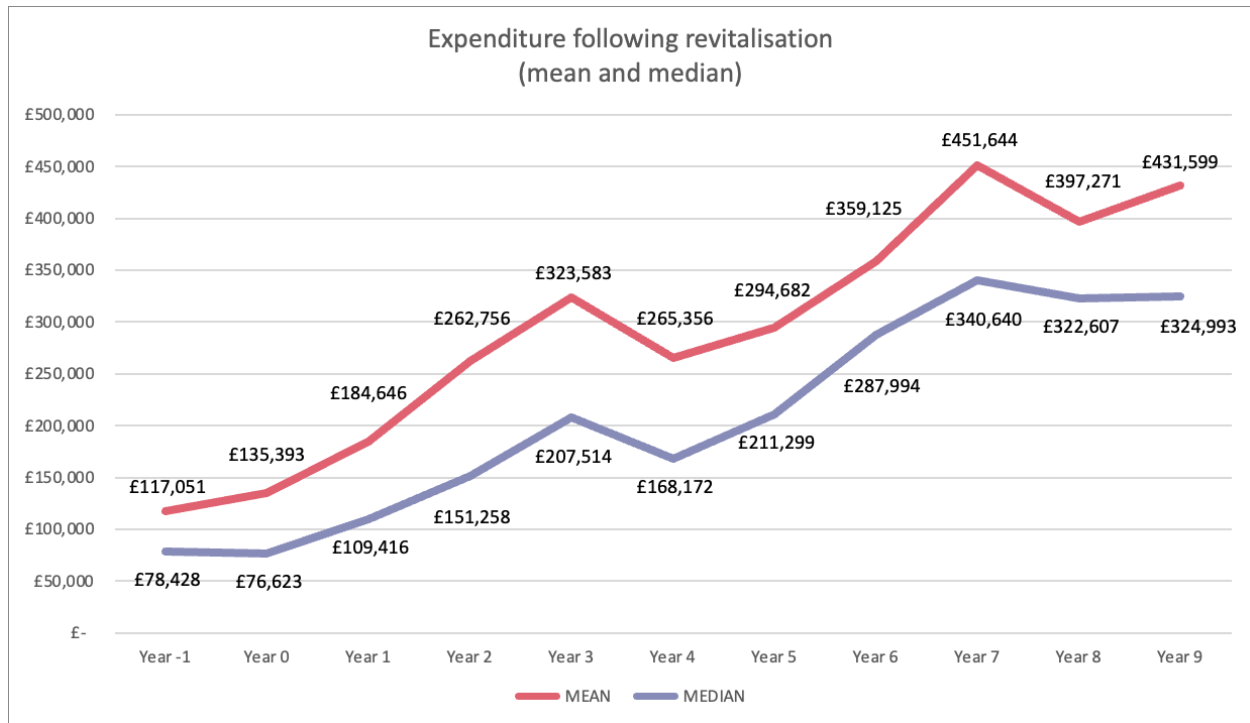
Value of increased ministry

Revitalisations' median expenditure increased until year seven, then plateaued (probably partly as a result of decreased giving). Interestingly, however, mean expenditure also stagnated after year seven, despite increased giving for the wealthiest churches. This suggests that other factors may also have affected this stagnation.

Perhaps most importantly, **revitalisations spend just under twice what they receive through giving**. This likely explains the financial stress leaders described by leaders in our **How are revitalisations experienced qualitatively?** section.

Summary statistics for year nine may be found below:

Minimum (least expenditure)	First quartile	Median	Third quartile	Maximum (most expenditure)
£110,106	£218,915	£324,993	£553,535	£1,632,283



How often do revitalised churches send planting teams to start new revitalisations?

Just under one in five revitalisations (or 18 percent) had founded another revitalisation. This proportion increases to 38 percent when we consider only revitalisations planted five or more years ago, and 42 percent when we consider only revitalisations planted ten or more years ago.

How are church revitalisations experienced qualitatively?

What worked well?

When survey and interview respondents were asked what about their revitalisations had worked well, they mentioned a need to prioritise:

1. **Mission (especially evangelism):** while few respondents spelled out why this was important, some suggested that it drove growth (as new Christians joined the church) and invigorated the existing congregation to reach the community
2. **Children's and families work:** respondents emphasised that this was a crucial source of growth

3. **Relationships with the wider community:** investing in hospitality, service, and relationships (with both individuals and community institutions, such as schools) built trust and often resulted in people joining the church
4. **Relationships with the existing congregation:** respondents spoke of the importance of listening to the receiving congregation and (as appropriate) being guided by them, the value of building relationships with and extending hospitality, and respecting existing traditions where possible
5. **Equipping laypeople to lead and serve:** drawing on laypeople's strengths reduced the burden on leaders and made churches more effective in ministry. It also helped new members commit to the church
6. **Prayer:** respondents suggested that prayer had helped them stay focused on Jesus. They also shared stories of how answered prayer (e.g., God supplying additional "workers for the harvest fields") had advanced the ministry of their church

One respondent, for example, summed up how prioritising mission, community relationships, and children's work had helped their church grow:

Through outreach initiatives, missional communities, Alpha, [and] schools links... we have made lots of community connections, increased the church's visibility and seen growth and people coming to faith.

Others emphasised the value of relationship with the receiving church, the plant team, and the wider community:

I spent a number of Sundays covering services in the receiving church. This was important in building rapport and relationship with both churches. I identified and talked through areas of disagreement with the receiving church as well as areas where my approach was different to that of my curacy church with the graft team - transparency here was vital.

An emphasis on hospitality and engagement with the community has worked really well.

What did not work well?

Conversely, leaders said that revitalisations could be hindered by:

1. **A lack of funds**, which made it difficult to cover building costs (especially when teams had planted into decrepit buildings) and to recruit and retain staff. Some respondents also struggled to replace grants with planned giving or noted that the giving ability of their congregations was limited (due to planting into a deprived area or other factors)
2. **Tension with the receiving congregation:** most often, this took the form of tension between the plant team and existing church leaders. Rather than simply resulting from a fear of change, however, these disagreements often derived from more significant issues, including:

- a. Disagreements over LGBTQ+ concerns
 - b. Lay leaders from receiving congregations sometimes not being asked to join post-revitalisation PCCs
 - c. A sense that the plant teams had not listened well to the receiving congregation or been fully transparent with them
 - d. Differences in churchmanship
3. **Issues with the building:** revitalisations often inherited dilapidated buildings, which were not always immediately functional and tended to require significant repairs
 4. **A lack of lay leadership:** in the absence of volunteers, too much responsibility often fell on church leaders. This sometimes reduced churches' ability to reach their communities. While no cause was cited by more than a single respondent, participants attributed this lack of lay leadership to having plant teams that were too small, plant teams not taking on volunteer roles after they joined the church, and burnout after Covid
 5. **Burnt-out leaders:** revitalising a church is difficult, especially when there is tension with the leadership of the receiving church, a lack of volunteers, or leaders struggle to set aside time to rest. Some leaders therefore described the work of revitalising a church as "exhausting" and themselves as tired

A selection of quotations from interviews and the survey may be found below:

With increasing diocese costs (parish share) and a growing church it has been hard to be able to sustain and invest in this growth as there was no funding to help us employ a children's worker etc or to help us grow our mid week missional activities. This has caused us to have to stop some of the ministries we were running.

[There was] no sense of coming in to learn: [they were] coming in with a new thing: "this is what we're about, we do things well, we're polished". You could have grafted people in from another church in a completely different way, which was more about relationships and listening.

Some of the hardest parts are using the space well. We inherited a cold, huge unusable space! We had a grant from SDF but a quarter went on surveys and reports for the DAC, so we have a massive shortfall in order to do the work needed to get heating, lighting and acoustics sorted - not to mention level access!

When the church leader doesn't focus on training Christians to do mission, just does things themselves [it doesn't work well]. When we arrived, we were all burning out because we were trying to do too much and not resting well.

My wife and I, and our small core team, are very tired.

Advice for leaders of revitalisations

In interviews, we asked respondents what advice they had for leaders of revitalisations. Answers to this question should be read differently from the qualitative sections above: rather than drawing on a large sample of both interviewees and survey respondents, the following sections rely on a small sample of just six interviews. Further research is needed to determine how representative these interviews were of church revitalisations more generally.

However, these interviewees suggested that leaders should:

1. **Focus on listening and learning:** respondents discussed the importance of (a) humbly listening to the receiving church in order to understand it well and (b) getting to know their neighbourhoods
2. **Avoid rushing:** proceeding at a deliberate pace gave leaders time to listen well and allowed time for congregations to adjust to changes in their church
3. **Make sure they have the right team:** healthy staff and volunteer teams often provided valuable advice, encouragement, and challenge to church leaders
4. **Identify and build up leaders from the congregation:** as one leader reflected, “**don’t just let your team who come over with you be the ones who do everything** because then it’s doing ministry to people, not appreciating the stuff going on there already, and also a little bit like imposing, saying ‘we’re the ones who know what we’re doing’”
5. **Have self-knowledge and know their own weaknesses:** respondents suggested that it was crucial for leaders to recognise and acknowledge the areas in which they still needed to grow because the health of churches and leadership teams often depended on the health of the leader

As one respondent observed:

There could be a reason things have happened for 20 years in church without changing and that the people worshipping there before you arrived appreciated that way of doing things.

Likewise, a leader planting in an estates context noted that:

[Leaders should] **go low [i.e., be humble and examine their own weaknesses], go slow, get to know the neighbourhood, then grow.** Because if you don’t do work of going low and going slow, you’re forced to do it a couple years in, and it’s too hard. You hit the limit of... transfer growth, but then you have to serve the neighbourhood... and 200 middle class Christians at the same time.

Advice for churches considering receiving a revitalisation

We also asked interviewees what advice they had for churches considering receiving a revitalisation. (As above, these findings are based on a small sample size and may not be representative of revitalisations more widely.) Interviewees suggested that churches should:

- **Be ready for a high degree of change** – and perhaps more change than the existing congregation thinks is necessary. We shall discuss this theme further below
- **Approach the revitalisation with humility:** “be willing to be flexible”, leaders said, “knowing that you’re being revitalised for a reason: the old way of doing things hasn’t worked so well”
- **Consider the decision carefully:** “know what you’re getting into”, respondents said. “Understand the intentions [of the planting team] and think ‘is this really what you want?’”

While this advice may at first sound inspirational, much of it also requires churches to submit themselves to the wisdom of planting churches and teams. One leader’s response serves well as a case study:

Count the cost and be aware that it’s going to change more than you can imagine.... [Some people have] said they were up for change, and when it came they said “that isn’t what we wanted”. [And we’ve had to say:] “No, that is how it’s going to be. This church will change more than you can imagine, but it will be worth it.”

While it would be possible to imagine a scenario in which leaders and receiving congregations determine objectives *together*, in this instance, the leader determined the objectives (after an initial period of listening) and when these objectives conflicted with some members of the receiving churches’ desires, these members had to accede to the leader’s vision.

Likewise, leaders sometimes implied that they had a better sense than the receiving congregation of how to bring about growth:

Every church wants to grow, [but] not many congregations find it easy to understand that the reason they’re not growing is that they haven’t been doing things right: it’s a humiliation in one sense, having your project taken over by someone else.

Although it may be the case that revitalising teams really do have a better sense of how to bring about church growth, responses such as these indicate that there may be limits to how much they will be guided by receiving churches’ desires. If churches are being revitalised because they “haven’t been doing things right”, there may be times when leaders think it is appropriate to override the preferences of receiving congregations in the name of growth. Churches should be aware of this possibility when considering a revitalisation.

Conclusion

This report set out to answer the question: "What can be expected of parish revitalisations?" This analysis of 221 instances demonstrates that revitalisation through planting is an effective model for growth within the Church of England – albeit one that entails considerable relational, financial, and leadership challenges.

The quantitative findings are unambiguous. A typical revitalisation can expect median weekly attendance to more than double within three years (from approximately 50 to 115) before plateauing. Child attendance shows steady growth, with 45 percent of revitalisations hosting a ministry to all ages (defined as 25 or more young people) by their fifth year. Furthermore, **this analysis finds no statistical evidence that this growth comes through reducing the attendance of neighbouring Anglican churches.**

Nonetheless, **revitalisations can be hindered by tensions between the planting team and the receiving congregation, often rooted in a "vision-casting" leadership approach.** This tension may contribute to the marked decline in revitalisations' inherited congregations discussed above.

Revitalisations also encounter significant operational pressures. In interviews, leaders mentioned financial stress – a finding supported by our quantitative data, which showed median expenditure running at nearly double the rate of congregational giving, creating a dependency on external funding. This pressure, combined with the demands of the role, contributes to a high risk of leader burnout.

In summary, while revitalisations are a proven tool for growth, they are difficult to implement in a way that respects inherited congregations and results in healthy leaders and financially sustainable churches. While Eido was not asked to provide recommendations as such, **we think that revitalisations could be done better.** Further research is needed – particularly into the experiences of receiving congregations and the nature of transfer growth – to fully understand how to build on revitalisations' potential for growth.

Recommendations for further research

Eido would suggest that further research be undertaken on:

1. **Transfer growth:** Eido would recommend that further research be commissioned on transfer growth **as reported by congregation members.** Much of the data reported here relies on national attendance data and church leaders' estimates – but what do congregation members say about their own church attendance patterns before joining the revitalisation? Are these patterns in line with what is reported here?

2. **How to work effectively with receiving churches:** This was one of the primary barriers to revitalisations' success. How might leaders and plant teams work more effectively with these congregations?
3. **How are revitalisations experienced by other groups?** Nearly all the qualitative research conducted for this report has focused on the perspectives of revitalisation leaders. Additional qualitative research could examine how revitalisations are experienced by:
 - The receiving congregation
 - The plant team
 - New people joining the revitalisation
 - Leaders and members of neighbouring churches

Appendix: Recommendations and reflection questions

Based on the findings of this report, Eido would suggest the following recommendations:

For the Vision & Strategy team

- Consider further research, as discussed above
- Review the qualitative findings in the final section on what enables and hinders revitalisations – and weigh how revitalisations which V&S is thinking about funding will be affected by these factors
- Consider revitalisations' financial stability: revitalisations' expenditure averages just under twice their giving, creating significant financial pressure on revitalisation leaders. How sustainable is this as a pattern?

For dioceses

- Review the qualitative findings in the final section on what enables and hinders revitalisations – and consider how revitalisations in your diocese will be affected by these factors
- Revitalisations may not be appropriate in all circumstances. On the basis of these findings, in which situations would your diocese consider supporting a revitalisation? In which situations might a revitalisation be counterproductive?
- Consider revitalisations' financial sustainability: revitalisations' expenditure averages just under twice their giving, creating significant financial pressure on revitalisation leaders. How willing is your diocese to provide sustained financial support to revitalisations?

For revitalisation leaders

- Revitalisation leaders have historically had two approaches:
 - Coming to the revitalised church and **"casting a vision"** (while listening to the congregation to contextualise their vision and make minor changes to it as appropriate)
 - Coming to the revitalised church and listening so as to **create a shared vision together**. In this approach, the vision derives from both the leader and the congregation – rather than primarily being the leader's vision which is adapted as necessary to fit the congregation
- We think that revitalisation leaders should consider seriously the benefits of the second approach. While there may be situations in which casting a vision is appropriate, one of the primary barriers leaders faced was tension with the receiving

congregation. While data is sketchy, inherited congregations also appear to decline steeply in the years following a revitalisation. Working together to form a genuinely shared vision may increase inherited congregations' buy-in

- Mission, children's and families work, listening well and building relationships, equipping others to lead and serve, and prayer are crucial to revitalisations. Leaders should prioritise these things
- Consider the barriers to revitalisations:
 - Financial strain is a major barrier, especially as most revitalisations will not be able to meet all their expenses through giving (which averages just under half of expenditure). How can you creatively plan to meet the remainder of expenses?
 - What is your plan for handling tension with the receiving congregation? How can you plan to listen well and make space to understand their concerns? What will you do once you have understood?
 - How can you proactively invest in developing lay leaders throughout the lifespan of the revitalisation?
 - Revitalisation leaders are at risk of burnout. How can you create good boundaries, delegate well, and prioritise times of rest?

For churches considering receiving a revitalisation

- Listen well to leaders' vision for the revitalisation. Try to ask open questions to understand this vision on its own terms, without trying to shape it in the moment
- Understand the revitalisation leader's vision for the church's governance. Are they likely to want to appoint a new PCC? To what extent will they want to handpick PCC members rather than having them elected by the church?
- Then, on the basis of this vision, consider:
 - Many revitalisation leaders operate by casting a vision, which they may then adjust slightly. Is this an approach our church is open to working with?
 - How do I feel about the particulars of this leader's vision? Is this something that I would want for my church?
 - How do I feel about the leader's approach to governance? Is this something I would want for my church?
 - What happens if my church is **not** revitalised? Is there a plausible alternative strategy that leads us into long-term growth and sustainability?