

Bonus material: Can We Talk about Change?

Carmel Page

How can I contribute my answers to the survey?

The link is <https://forms.gle/sBn6UrBbviWfsrM38>

Can I have information on individual ecclesias and who has reported?

I have promised anonymity to everyone who fills in the survey. I have said I will not share information from individual ecclesias but I'm happy to answer general questions if I can.

Will you be updating this information?

I collate all of the information I am given. Any requests for specific information will get up-to-date figures but I don't plan to produce a new set of charts for a while.

Can I share this information?

Yes please do.

Are there only 232 UK ecclesias?

I have based my calculations on the ecclesias in the 2023 CALS diary but have not included:

- Places I believe intend to close or have just closed
- Places which are listed but do not run services
- Waterford because it is not in the UK
- Groups of Christadelphians who regularly meet to worship together, (often online) but have not opted to become formal ecclesias.

I have included Droitwich because they self-define as a Christadelphian ecclesia.

Why is there missing data?

I decided not to send my survey to every ecclesia because I know some members are upset even by discussion of this topic. I shared it amongst friends and Christadelphian Facebook groups where I felt it would not cause offence. I have also checked through the CALS diary and extracted information from there. Once I had info on 40% of UK ecclesias I decided to ask people to report on ecclesias they visit. They were often not able to say if women do the backroom work such as baptismal interviews or treasurer.

Where do you get all your data from?

As well as the survey I have been assisted by Sis Viv Brown who has been collating data from the magazine for many years.

Additional quotes from my research and survey

Quotes about discussion

” Not willing to discuss it. We left due to this.

” There is a small minority who would like a gender inclusive meeting, most would not.

” Have made suggestions to ABs regarding stewarding being done by sisters but they are reluctant to discuss it.

” I don’t attend... regularly anymore but have filled in a questionnaire on what version of the Bible can be used, nowhere near any other kind of discussion.

” Conservative meeting with a range of views but controlled by a few dominant voices.

” However, this year at our annual meeting I put a motion forward that women be allowed to read at the B of B and it passed with about 60% of votes. I was ecstatic, however, a small number of members were not happy and put a motion forward we study the topic first, which passed unanimously, we are yet to start our studies.

” Head covering I don’t feel the need to wear one but do so or probably get told off.

” Gender discussions started prior to lockdown but were met with some opposition. Talks on ‘The Social Background to Women at the time of Jesus’ then John Launchbury’s talks on Zoom. During Lockdown we subtly introduced sisters doing Bible readings at B of B on Zoom. We agreed that when we returned to the hall we would discuss the issue and vote on gender equality. It all happened very smoothly.

” It’s been a difficult conversation.

” We have come a long way but praying speaking, presiding has been blocked by one or two

” Rec.Bro. asked me to do a Bible Classes on head coverings. I did so and discussion went on a further week. It was decided sisters were free to choose. In a couple of weeks there were none in sight.

” The majority of the meeting would be happy with sisters doing more but out of respect to older members the status quo is maintained.

Quotes about change without discussion:

” Lockdown has seen less hats being worn.

” I expressed the view to everyone that the role of ‘Rec bro’ is a husband/wife partnership and that this is what in reality has always happened at [...] As yet no one had challenged us in this.

” We quietly, without discussion, allowed our head coverings to disappear around 2018.

” It was about 4 years ago that we started, driven by wanting to help out as we are only small and it was a lot of work for the brothers. We are encouraged to be involved in all roles.

” It was a gradual process of being more liberal than the surrounding ecclesias for many years, not a sudden moment at which everything changed.

” One week the speaker didn’t turn up so I offered to give a few thoughts on the reading.

” Nothing explicitly discussed – probably afraid of causing arguments.

” Falling numbers are changing our roles: e.g. I have had to become Treasurer as no one else can do it.

” Services on Zoom have encouraged sisters to read and lead preaching services. We also have a large number of visitors joining us from far and wide which is lovely. We continue to offer a hybrid service, but would like more members to attend the hall.

” Lockdown has definitely caused a more informal approach to all our services, and allowed sisters to play a greater part, although some members choose not to attend when a sister is either reading at the Breaking of Bread or giving a Bible Class talk.

” No discussion of gender roles but an influx of Iranian refugees has lead to many sisters being involved in the whole welfare/instruction/guidance areas.

Quotes about transfers

” After discussion sisters reading on a Sunday was agreed. Several members left.

” After that some people who had very different views left.

” We did lose one brother to a more traditional meeting.

Thanks

I am indebted to Sarah Joiner who has helped me with the technical side of the survey and charts, and Viv Brown for giving me access to her research. Also, to the hundreds of Christadelphians who have shared information with me.