

Today's Local Mission for Need-orientated Evaluation

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:20-23)

The mission field is a highly complex mix of social issues for which there is no one blueprint. Each church has to recognise the uniqueness of its own mission field and come to understand the needs of the people they feel called to reach.

A Century of Change

Britain has undergone a radical, revolutionary and fundamental social change since the mid twentieth century. The changes began much earlier in the century with the First World War a watershed. More than a million young men died between 1914 and 1918 leaving an imbalance of men and women, with hundreds of thousands of women having no chance of marriage and rearing a family. The war also brought many women into the workplace doing jobs that filled the gaps left by men in the trenches in France. Many women were also more directly involved in the war driving ambulances at the front or nursing in field hospitals.

Changes for Women

The First World War served to advance the cause of the suffragette movement and the demand for political franchise of women, which was the beginning of the major social changes to take place in what was to prove to be a century of social change. The Second World War saw women actually participating in the conflict, which was a major step in the advancement towards the equality of the sexes.

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Changes for Youth

The post war boom of the 1950s created another new social phenomenon. This was the emergence of a youth culture. Traditionally Britain had been a society in which young people had never played a significant role. The emphasis was upon maturity and honouring the elderly. The Victorian adage that 'children should be seen and not heard' and that they needed strong discipline to give them the correct guidance for life, lasted well into the twentieth century. The young men who won the Battle of Britain played a significant part in changing the image of youth. But the economic boom of the 1960s with full employment and a strong demand for labour gave young people their opportunity.

Changes in the Family

The extended family that was still strong in 1900 had given way to the nuclear family by the middle of the century. Few families were economic entities and wages had become individualised. The post war boom forced wages up and gave young people economic independence for the first time in history. A capitalist economy quickly recognised a new consumer group, ripe for exploitation, with high spending power and low social responsibilities. The world of fashion, music and consumer goods was rapidly transformed to put all the emphasis upon youth. The way was prepared for the pop culture and the adulation of youth, pop stars, rock bands, sport heroes, entertainers, adventurers, yuppie city traders and even youthful millionaire entrepreneurs.

Changes in Education

Post war concepts of education also underwent a radical change from learning by rote to encouraging children to discover for themselves; from working in silence to working in groups; from rigid discipline to self expression. Thus education and child rearing practices moved away from 'spare the rod and spoil the child' to the recognition of children's rights and the limits being put on adult control, until parents are forbidden to smack their children by law. This contributed to the acceleration of the rapid social change that was set to sweep away, by the end of the century, most of the social structure, which had held Britain stable for hundreds of years.

Mission Field

angelism

Challenging Change leading to Changes in the Law

The developing youth culture of the 1950s fathered the hippie generation of the 60s with the Ban the Bomb peace protesters, the flower people, the Jesus people and the new sexual freedom of the Swinging Sixties. Legislation began to follow the new trends, legalising abortion, liberalising entertainment and allowing the publication of what previous generations had regarded as pornographic.

Liberalisation of the Church

The role of the church in these changes was significant. The publication of *Honest to God* by John Robinson the Bishop of Woolwich was a watershed in the development of the new morality that characterised the 1960s. Robinson also appeared for the defence in the prosecution of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* under the Obscene Publications Act. Its acquittal gave a vast boost to the freedom of publishers to push the boundaries of decency where in the 1990s virtually anything could be published unchallenged.

Honest to God was published in 1963 and promoted what we now know as 'situation ethics' or 'relativism', in which no universal standards of morality are recognised but each situation is judged on its own merits. Bishop Robinson advocated 'love' as the guiding principle in moral decision making. Thus there were no absolutes of right and wrong. Questions such as 'sex before marriage' or divorce were not to be regarded as wrong per se but only if they were lacking in love.

Changes in Sexual Activity

The dominant social change which occurred in the 1960s was the separation of sex from procreation. The introduction of safer contraception combined with major changes in the moral code resulted in a vast increase in sexual activity outside marriage, but despite this the illegitimacy rate remained low. In fact, throughout the 100 years from 1870 to 1970 the proportion of births outside marriage did not exceed 5% except for a short blip during World War II. The increased extra marital sexual activity in the 1960s did not affect this because the vast majority of conceptions were legitimised by marriage in time for the birth of the baby. The illegitimacy rate did not

start to rise steeply until the late 1970s. This masked the extent of the social revolution which was taking place at that time.

Changes in Morality

Marriage in the 1960s was still the social norm. Divorce rates were low. The family was seen to be stable and secure. The foundation of the whole social order was therefore undisturbed by what was seen as a healthy move away from Victorian hypocrisy to a more honest and open personal and public morality. The church gave divine approval to this openness; all was well so long as we loved one another! The whole nation basked in complacency, believing we were progressing to some kind of social Utopia with personal freedom as its watchword.

Strangely enough, although the 1960s are regarded by most people as the watershed of social change in the modern era, the most fundamental changes to affect the social structure did not begin to appear until the 1990s. In the 1960s sexual activity was separated from procreation, but marriage rates were high, divorce rates were low, the family held firm and therefore the structure of the social order appeared to be unaffected.

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Changing Values

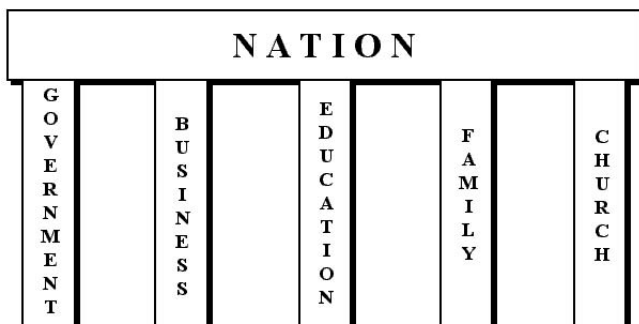
By the 1990s, changes in the divorce law making divorce easier and far reaching changes in social attitudes which undermined traditional values had taken place. These changes had the effect of eroding the foundations of family life, which were rooted in the concept of life long marriage, monogamous and faithful. In the 1960s although sexual activity was separated from procreation the family held firm. In the 1990s marriage became separated from parenthood with disastrous social consequences.

Erosion of Family Life

By the late 1990s statistics showed that 41% of marriages were expected to end in divorce. The number of first time marriages had been declining since 1970 but the number of remarriages rose throughout the 1970s indicating that marriage was still popular and was regarded as the ideal family

type. But a new social phenomenon, that of cohabitation, began to rise steeply throughout the 1970s and continue rising through the 80s and 90s.

The breakdown of the family which began in the 1970s, accelerated sharply through the 80s and 90s. This was due not only to divorce and the separation of cohabiting couples but also to the increasing number of young women choosing to live as single parents. In fact, single parents became the fastest growing social group of the 1990s. By 1998 there were 1.7 million single parents caring for nearly 3 million dependent children. This revolutionary change in family life had taken place in less than 30 years and indicates the extent of the social revolution that swept away the foundations of the social order during the second half of the twentieth century.



forty thousand children rang their helplines during the year. It was the effects of family breakdown upon the lives of children that began to get the attention of the nation focused upon the downside of divorce and separation.

An LSE Study (The Legacy of Parental Divorce, Kathleen Kiernan 1997) showed that children of divorced parents suffered multiple disadvantages, which have long term effects upon their life chances and emotional and psychological stability. It not only affects their educational attainment and employment prospects but also children of divorced parents were shown to be twice as

likely to suffer a divorce themselves in adulthood as compared with children from intact families. Thus the instability of family life is passed on from one generation to the next and there is every indication that this trend will continue well into the twenty-first century unless there is a major change in social attitudes and social values.

The extent of the breakdown of the moral code in Britain may be judged from figures published by Dr Mary White in 1998 which showed that during the previous year approximately 90,000 school girls aged 12 to 15 years had been given free contraceptives. Of these 60% were said to have been without the knowledge and consent of their parents. Despite this large scale free handout of condoms and pills to girls below the legal age of consent Britain still had the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the western world.

Rise in Crime

It was not teenage promiscuity, however, that stirred the nation but the behavioural problems of children and young people; the enormous rise in juvenile crime and above all the financial cost to the nation. A 1998 report by the Association of Chief Police Officers estimated the annual cost of youth crime to be between £5 billion and £10 billion, with more than twenty-eight million offences committed by juveniles each year and 50% of all crime being committed by young people under 21 years of age.

A major cause of juvenile crime was identified by the police report as being due to the breakdown of family life with the majority of juvenile offenders coming from broken homes. By the late 1990s nearly half of all the nation's children were expected to experience the breakdown of their home life and most of these children would only rarely, if at all, see their father. This situation looks set to continue well into the twenty-first century with attitude surveys showing that the vast majority of teenage boys and girls approved of couples living together without any intention of getting married.

The Family - A Core Unit of Society

In order to understand the significance of the social phenomena of the 1990s there needs to be a recognition of the basic sociological fact that the family is the core unit in the structure of any society and its health and stability largely determine that of the society itself. When the family breaks down all the other major social institutions are affected and the structure of that society becomes unstable.

Results of Change

Few social observers, politicians or even churchmen recognised the seriousness of the changes which were taking place in society in the 1960s and 70s. In fact, it was not until the mid 1990s that serious questions began to be asked about the direction in which society was heading in the face of rising crime rates, drug abuse, sexual assaults and some horrendous crimes committed by children.

The extent of family breakdown was revealed in the late 1990s by a series of surveys on various aspects of the family in Britain. These showed that a quarter of all unmarried men and women between the ages of 19 and 49 were cohabiting. The average duration of a cohabitation relationship was estimated to be only three years which underlined the extent of the instability of family life.

Effects on Children

Five thousand children every week were said to suffer the trauma of a broken home; three thousand from the break-up of their parents' marriage and about two thousand who were children of separating cohabiting couples.

Childline's Annual Report of 2004 said that over one hundred and



Rise of Unemployment

Unemployment, especially among young men in the 1990s, was shown to be a major factor in the accelerating trend of young women choosing to become single mothers in preference to risking living with an unemployed young man with poor socioeconomic prospects and a propensity to violence. They would rather trust the state to provide for them than such a young man. All the evidence, however, shows that children need both a mother and a father for full maturation. The behavioural problems of children, which disrupt school life and contribute to juvenile crime, is strongly related to the breakdown of family life and the lack of stable male role models.

Lack of Spiritual Foundations

The present generation of parents are the first to have had no exposure to the Bible. Until the middle of the twentieth century three-quarters of the nation's children attended Sunday Schools. The decline began in the 1950s, accelerated during the 60s and by the end of the 1970s there was hardly a Sunday School left anywhere in the country. Most churches had changed from afternoon Sunday Schools catering largely for children from families where the parents were non church attenders, to some form of 'Family Church' or 'Junior Church' connected with the morning service.

Inevitably such arrangements catered primarily for the children of church attenders and increasingly children from non believers were lost to the church. It was during this same period that day school practice changed radically in respect to religious education. Fewer teachers were available with the qualifications to teach RE and while, in former generations, all infants and junior school teachers were expected to be able to lead worship and give basic biblical teaching very few teachers, today can do either of those things.

Rise of Multi-Faith

The demographic changes in Britain's population has also been a major factor affecting education. From 1950, immigration from the new Commonwealth countries began to affect inner city schools. The 1960s saw a vast increase in immigration from non English speaking and non Christian regions such as India and Pakistan. The pressure mounted upon schools to respond to their multi-faith pupils by abandoning traditional Christian religious education and introducing a multi-faith syllabus. The present generation of parents, therefore, have little or no knowledge of the Bible, the basic beliefs of Christianity or even of the principles of biblical morality.

Rise of Behavioural Problems

It is hardly surprising that many schools experience behavioural problems with children and are powerless to exercise physical restraint upon violent pupils. Many parents do not know how to cope with the behaviour of their children. Single mothers struggling with poverty and the stress of being alone with young children are particularly vulnerable.

Rise of Loneliness

Loneliness is a major phenomenon in modern western society. In Britain, in addition to the loneliness of single parents facing the difficulties of child rearing with no one alongside them to share the burden, there is the additional loneliness of many elderly people in the population. They are often separated from other members of their family, living alone and unsupported.

A new social trend that developed during the 1980s and 90s was the increasing number of young people choosing to live alone. By the mid 1990s 28% of all households were under single occupation. Thus loneliness has become a major social phenomenon for people of all ages.

This loneliness affecting millions of people is a major part of the mission field surrounding the churches. The complexities of the mission field are legion. Inner city congregations, for example, face multi-ethnic and multi religious groups in their neighbourhood. They also face a variety of social tensions with rivalry

between ethnic groups, violence and gang warfare especially among the young unemployed. In provincial towns and rural areas the ethnic mix may not be present but loneliness and family breakdown are to be found everywhere. Thus the mission field is a highly complex mix of social issues for which there is no blueprint. Each church has to recognise the uniqueness of its own mission-field and come to

understand the needs of the people in their neighbourhood and recognise that there is no one single model for evangelistic outreach today.

Need-orientated evangelism is responding to the needs of an individual purely out of compassion

For Discussion

1. What is your community like? How many of the factors mentioned in this article are relevant to you situation?
2. Find out the statistics for your community of children living with one parent. Your local library will be the first place to find out. Explore ways that you can help these children in your church.
3. What about the needs of the young men? What is the unemployment rate for young men between 16 and 25? How many ASBOs are there in your area? Are any of the churches helping this group? What about your church?
4. How well do the members of your church understand the social issues in your community? Discuss ways to improve their knowledge and begin to implement them.



Monica Hill was formerly the Director of the British Church Growth Association and is now a Director of CCM at Moggerhanger Park, working more widely on community transformation issues.