

How can churches better include single people?

We encourage national church organisations to:

- » Survey their churches to discover if they match the population in having 1 in 3 single adults. If not – are we discouraging single people from attending our churches?
- » Commission a theological perspective and create a national action plan.
- » Train church leaders and members about singleness.

We encourage church leaders to:

- » Be intentional about welcoming, accepting and including single adults.
- » Appoint a member of the leadership team to be accountable for and support single adults in the congregation, especially the over 30s.
- » Review church programmes to ensure either blindness to marital status or have a range of events to meet the needs of all.
- » Support and promote activities of single members just as much as family based activities.
- » Encourage the sharing of meals and formation of friendships in the church through social activities.
- » Support single adult Christians as they are, but if they wish to find a partner, facilitate opportunities for meeting and dating.

We urge adult Christians to:

- » Take the results of the Christian Connection survey to their church leaders and discuss.
- » If single, connect with other single Christians, in church, your local area or through national organisations.
- » Whatever your relationship status, find and follow your talents and seek out ministry opportunities.

Further information

To find out more or to get involved, please:

- » Read the research on the website www.singlechristians.co.uk
- » Contact us on info@singlechristians.co.uk if you are interested in supporting this work
- » Let us know if you'd like more copies of this leaflet

Please get in touch whether you are single or not – we love to connect with people in ministry or those who would like to serve their single friends better.

Single Christians
www.singlechristians.co.uk

The survey and the singlechristians.co.uk website are from Christian Connection, the leading UK online dating service.



All data from the Christian Connection 2012 survey Singleness and the Church. Supporting data from Office of National Statistics, UK.

Single Christians

The Single Adult in Church

Time for new thinking

Based on the biggest survey of single adult Christians ever completed in the UK

www.singlechristians.co.uk

A survey of single adults who go to church

1 in 3 people in the UK are neither married nor cohabiting. The numbers are increasing. For every family or couple, there is a single person - some have never married, some are divorced or widowed.

Through **Christian Connection**, our dating website, we often hear single Christians say that their church doesn't support them. That could mean that the Church is not meeting the needs of a third of the population, who may stay away as a result. So we asked over 3,000 single Christians about their experiences.

"The Church is about community and discipleship, so gender or marital status should not enter into it."

What are the findings?

www.singlechristians.co.uk was launched in August 2014 to present the full results. We summarise some of the findings in this leaflet.

What do single Christians experience in their Churches?

Committed single adult Christians can feel welcomed and accepted but often do not feel included, and can even feel isolated. Protestant and evangelical churches in particular often celebrate aspects of family life in a way that can be alienating.

Those aged 30-60, an age group that includes

"Because church is so family orientated you are not invited to dinner parties, etc. I used to be before I was widowed! I really miss that and feel excluded."

the fastest growing number of single people in society, don't feel that their churches know how to include and support them. However, some churches do support single adults well and we can learn from their approach.

"Churches do not appreciate the unique challenges faced by singles: socially, emotionally, spiritually and financially."

What do single Christians say they need?

Single adults want to be included fully into the life of the church. Churches that do singleness well have been praised for:

1. Treating everyone as individual rather than as a member of a family group
2. Developing a church programme that addresses the needs of all marital status groups equally, whether married, single, divorced, parent or widowed.

Leaders modelling a well-lived Christian life while single is found helpful and nearly 2 out of every 3 single adult Christians say that a member of the church leadership should be given responsibility for singles.

Men want and need support more than women.

The survey finds that men say that they manage being single less well than women, on average.

Part of the problem for men in the church is that there are fewer of them, which leads to a lack of good role models, and not enough other men with whom to form friendships.

How are single people perceived and treated by others in the Church?

Single people can feel that others think they are immature, selfish, emotionally illiterate or burdened by childhood traumas. Yet, there is no research evidence of any difference between single and married people in these areas.

Variations between churches.

Churches vary in their approach to singleness. Those described as evangelical, charismatic, student-focused or lively often teach marrying in the faith and sexual abstinence before marriage. But they rarely provide enough help with living well as a single or with social and dating opportunities.

Black Majority Churches have devoted more resources to single members and their approaches have much to teach the wider church. Many churches don't realise that singleness is an issue for their members, nor that they are alienating people in their area who might otherwise attend.

"...endless talks on children, youth, marriage, relationships, sex, dedications, engagements... the church is set up for 'normal' life progression... if you don't go the 'normal' route, you can feel an oddity."

"I rarely hear talk about people's marital status in our church, more about their ministry, gifts and talents."

