

## **The Social and Demographic Context for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne**

### **Introduction**

Melbourne and Geelong have seen huge changes in the past few years both in terms of their demographics and their social composition. One of the most obvious changes is the increase in the population. Melbourne grew from 3.4 million people in 2001 to 4.0 million in 2011, an increase of 18 per cent. Geelong also grew: 154,000 to 172,000, an increase of 12 per cent.

The changes are not just in population size. The make-up of the population and the ways people make a living and see the world have also changed. Many of those changes are reflected in the changes of the religious profile which is one of the best indicators of how the overall culture is changing. Hence, this paper will begin by discussing the changes in the religious profile of Melbourne and Geelong and then proceed to look at other aspects of change: immigration, ethnic background, family life and occupations. It will conclude by looking at what might be some of these implications for the shape of Christian communities in the future.

The major source of describing these changes is the Australian Census, our most thorough and reliable set of statistics about local areas in Australia. In examining change, comparisons will be mostly between the 2001 and 2011 census figures<sup>1</sup>. (Another census may occur in 2016 and the data is likely to be available in 2017.) However, in explaining the changes found in the census data, surveys will be used, particularly the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), which has been conducted bi-annually in Australia since 1989.

### **Religious Changes**

While the population of Melbourne expanded between 2001 and 2011, the number of Anglicans decreased from 467,824 to 427,291. This is a decrease of 40,533 people, and represents a decline of 8.7 per cent. This decline was not experienced by the Christian community as a whole which grew by 4 per cent to 2.2 million people. Overall, in Melbourne, those identifying with a Christian denomination made up 56 per cent of the population. The Anglican community retained its position as the second largest of all religious communities in Melbourne with 19 per cent of the population.

Some other religious communities grew strongly, particularly the Hindus and the Sikhs. There was also significant growth in the Moslem and Buddhist communities. Indeed, the proportion of people belonging to a religion other than Christianity grew strongly from 272,856 to 470,854, an increase of 73 per cent. The largest of these communities is Buddhist, followed by the Islamic, and then the Hindu and Jewish communities. Together these communities constitute about 12 per cent of the population of Melbourne.

Some Christian communities also grew rapidly between 2001 and 2011. Numerically, the greatest growth was in the Catholic (88,000), Eastern Orthodox (12,541), Pentecostal (10,557), and Baptist (8,239) communities. However, in terms of percentage growth, the greatest growth was in the Oriental Christians, which include such groups as the Coptic Orthodox and the Armenians, who grew by almost 60 per cent, followed by the Pentecostals who grew by 41 per cent, the Latter-day Saints by 30 per cent and the Seventh-day Adventists by 26 per cent. Another group that grew significantly by 87 per cent between 2001 and 2011 was those who simply wrote on the Census form 'Christian'. The Catholic community remained by far the largest Christian community in Melbourne and Geelong, with 27 per cent of the population.

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<sup>1</sup> The data has been taken primarily from two Community Profiles: TSP\_20302.xlsx (for the Geelong area) and TSP\_2GMEL.xlsx (for the greater Melbourne area). Both have been prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. These sources of data have been supplemented by customised tables of Census data for the Christian Research Association.

The other major growth in Melbourne was in the proportion of the population describing themselves as having 'no religion'. The numbers in this group grew by more than 60 per cent, from 581,000 to 933,000. Nearly one quarter of the population identified themselves as having 'no religion' in 2011, making it almost as large as the Catholic population and considerably larger than the Anglican community. Another 9 per cent of the population did not complete the religion question on the census, some because they did not complete a Census form at all and others because they chose not to answer the question about religion<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 1. People Identifying as Anglicans in 2001 and 2011 and Anglican Immigrants Settling in Melbourne by Age Group**

Age in 2001	Numbers Identifying as Anglicans in 2001	Age in 2011	Numbers Identifying as Anglican in 2011	Anglican Immigrants (included in identifying)	Numbers 'Missing'
		0 to 9	35,301	2,203	-
0 to 14	66,845	10 to 24	61,107	4,618	-10,356
15 to 24	48,106	25 to 34	39,624	4,152	-12,634
25 to 34	61,618	35 to 44	61,458	5,060	-5,220
35 to 44	70,390	45 to 54	67,701	2,726	-5,415
45 to 54	73,038	55 to 64	65,679	780	-8,139
55 to 64	56,207	65 to 74	47,404	478	-9,281
65 to 74	42,809	75 to 84	32,398	217	-10,628
75 and over	48,811	85 and over	16,619	72	-32,264
Total	467,824		427,291	20,306	-93,937

Source: Various tables from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses from Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Table 1 shows that those who identify as Anglican are well spread throughout all age groups. However, a higher proportion of them are in the older brackets compared with the remainder of the population. Nearly 100,000 are aged 65 or older, constituting 23 per cent of the Anglican community. In comparison, just 13 per cent of the population are in that age bracket.

Table 1 provides some cohort analysis. By comparing the numbers of people identifying in 2001 and the same cohort ten years older in 2011, one can obtain a better picture of the changes occurring. Most of the 43,000 'missing' who were aged 65 and over in 2001 and 75 and older in 2011 will have died. However, it is likely that many of the 23,000 people aged between 10 and 34 in 2011 have ceased to identify as Anglicans. Most of them will have moved to 'no religion'.

In Geelong, a higher proportion of the population describe themselves as Christian than in Melbourne: about 64 per cent. The Christians grew by about 25,000 or 2.4 per cent between 2001 and 2011, somewhat less than the population growth overall. Again, however, there was considerable variation in the rates of growth among the different Christian denominations. Baptists grew by 18 per cent and the Seventh-day Adventists by 17 per cent. The Catholics grew by 9 per cent. On the other hand, the Uniting Church declined by 16 per cent, the Salvation Army by 15 per cent, the Presbyterian and Reformed by 10 per cent, the Anglicans by 5 per cent, and the

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the identity and religious orientation of those who did not respond to the question on religious identity in the 2011 Census see Philip Hughes, 'How Many Christians Are There Really in Australia? And Who Does Not Answer the Religion Question on the Census?' *Pointers*, Vol.24, no.1, March 2014, pp.7-11.

Pentecostals by 4 per cent.

There was also considerably growth in Geelong in the numbers of people identifying with other religions, doubling from 2,500 to 5,000 in those ten years. The Hindu community grew most rapidly, followed by the Buddhist and the Islamic community. The small Jewish community declined slightly. However, the other religions make up a much smaller proportion of the population in Geelong: a little less than 3 per cent.

In Geelong, as in Melbourne, the proportion of the population describing themselves as having 'no religion' grew rapidly between 2001 and 2011: from 17 per cent to 24 per cent of the population. Another 8 per cent of the population did not complete the religion question. Many of these people did not complete a census form at all. Others answered other questions but chose not to answer the religion question on the census form.

**Table 2. People Identifying as Anglicans in 2001 and 2011 and Anglican Immigrants Settling in Geelong by Age Group**

Age in 2001	Numbers Identifying as Anglicans in 2001	Age in 2011	Numbers Identifying as Anglican in 2011	Anglican Immigrants (included in identifying)	Numbers 'Missing'
		0 to 9	1,815	54	-
0 to 14	3,595	10 to 24	3,150	154	-599
15 to 24	2,810	25 to 34	2,030	81	-861
25 to 34	2,889	35 to 44	3,132	139	104
35 to 44	3,463	45 to 54	3,622	70	89
45 to 54	3,730	55 to 64	3,582	25	-173
55 to 64	2,864	65 to 74	2,618	16	-262
65 to 74	2,451	75 to 84	2,045	13	-419
75 and over	2,543	85 and over	930	3	-1,616
Total	24,345		22,924	555	-3,737

Source: Various tables from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses from Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Table 2 shows some cohort analysis for Geelong, similar to that in Table 1. As in Melbourne, many of the 2,300 people in the 65 and over age category in 2011 in the 'missing' column would have died. As in Melbourne, the age profile of Anglicans is considerably older than the population as a whole with 24 per cent of them aged 65 and older, compared with 16 per cent of the total population.

However, there are close to 1,500 Anglicans aged 10 to 34 in 2011 who are 'missing'. It is possible that some of these people have moved out of the Geelong area, perhaps for study or for employment. It is also likely that some of these, who were identified as Anglican in 2001, would have decided to identify themselves as 'no religion' in 2011.

### **Immigration**

The major factor influencing changes in the religious profile and changing the social and demographic shape of Melbourne and Geelong is immigration. Between 2001 and 2011, a total of 433,632 immigrants arrived from overseas and settled in Melbourne. The rate of immigration was higher than it had been in some previous decades and the immigrants came from different countries

than in previous decades. By far the largest source of immigrants coming to Melbourne was India with 77,400 arriving in the decade. The second largest source was from China with 56,000 arrivals. A significant number of these Indian and Chinese immigrants were students and some of them will return to their countries of birth. However, others came as a result of particular occupational opportunities in Australia and they expect to spend a life-time in Australia.

Around 28,000 immigrants came from England and a similar number from New Zealand. But the other major sources of immigration to Melbourne were from different parts of Asia: Sri Lanka (19,000), Malaysia (17,000), Philippines (14,000) and Vietnam (14,000). A little further down the list in terms of the sources of immigrants were Indonesia, Singapore, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Thailand and Hong Kong. The only non-Asian countries were South Africa (8,900), United States (6,700) and Sudan (4,100). Immigration is continuing to add to the great diversity of the population in Melbourne, both in cultural and religious terms.

While many Indian immigrants are Hindu, there were also significant numbers of Indians who are Christian, Sikh and Muslim. Likewise, immigrants from China, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia bring a range of religious traditions with them including Christianity.

Of the immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2011, 20,850 described themselves as Anglicans in the 2011 Census. Most of them would have been Anglican before coming to Australia. While many of them came from the traditional sources of the Anglican community in Australia: England (10,145) and New Zealand (2,545), there were significant groups from South Africa (1,169), Sudan (712), China and Hong Kong (660), other parts of the United Kingdom (581), India (573), Malaysia (434), Sri Lanka (407), Burma (336), United States (325), Thailand (301), Singapore (276), Zimbabwe (258), Kenya (237), South Sudan (226), Canada (139) and Germany (117), plus smaller groups from a great range of other countries around the world. Altogether, among the Anglican immigrants to Melbourne between 2001 and 2011, were people from 108 different countries. These people contributed to a higher level of multiculturalism in the Anglican denomination in Melbourne.

Seven thousand immigrants arrived from overseas between 2001 and 2011 and were living in Geelong in 2011 when the census occurred. While the numbers were not as great, the patterns of countries in which most were born were similar. Thus, the largest group was from India (852), followed by England (810), China (554), Philippines (474), New Zealand (435), Thailand (244), and Burma (234). There were smaller groups from Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Iran and Sudan, as well as from South Africa and the United States of America. A total of 112 countries were represented in the immigration to Geelong between 2001 and 2011. While the proportion from English-speaking countries was higher in Geelong than in Melbourne, there were considerable numbers from Asia, bringing with them a variety of cultures and religions.

Among the immigrants who settled in Geelong, 555 identified themselves as Anglicans in the 2011 Census. Another 1,357 were Catholic, and there were large groups of Muslims (666), Hindus (520), Buddhists (492), Baptists (365), Sikhs (207) and Eastern Orthodox (191). The largest group of 1,429 said they had no religion.

Of the Anglican immigrants, the largest group were from England (315), along with some from New Zealand (58), Burma (50), Thailand (24), other parts of the United Kingdom (21), South Africa (20), China and Hong Kong (12), United States of America (8), Malaysia (8) and Zimbabwe (7) and small numbers from several other countries.

Surveys indicate that migrants attend churches at approximately double the rate of other

Australians<sup>3</sup> (Hughes, 2012b). Hence, it is likely that many of these migrants have become active in churches in the Diocese. The continuing vitality of many churches depends on welcoming migrants, on building community among them, and providing places where they feel they can worship God in ways they feel are appropriate.

### **Changing Society and Religion**

While immigration is changing the demography of Melbourne and Geelong, and changing its religious profile, it does not explain the decline in numbers identifying themselves as Anglican and particularly the 23,000 younger people in Melbourne and 1,500 in Geelong who have moved from Anglicanism to 'no religion'.

This dis-identification is not unique to Melbourne Anglicans. Across Australia, the number of Anglicans fell by 201,255 between 2001 and 2011, a decline of 5.2 per cent. The decline occurred in every capital city and every State and Territory with the exception of Queensland, Western Australia and Perth, where there were small increases due to large increases in the population. The declines were greatest in Tasmania, followed by South Australia, and then in Sydney. The number of people identifying as Anglican in Sydney declined by 11.3 per cent between 2001 and 2011, compared with the decline in Melbourne Anglicans of 8.7 per cent.

'No religion' does not mean a rejection of all sense of transcendence as assumed in the theory of secularisation. It is a rejection of identification with religious organisations. The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009) showed that approximately one-third of the people who say they have no religion (32%) describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, and half of them (54%) describe themselves as neither religious nor spiritual. Another 12 per cent of them say they cannot choose whether they are religious or spiritual or not.

The census forms are generally completed by one member of the family. Parents usually complete the forms for their children. It is likely that a large proportion of the young people between the ages of 0 and 14 who were identified as Anglican in the 2001 census were so described by their parents. Ten years later, some of them would have completed the census form themselves, and then described themselves as having 'no religion'.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, most Australians have grown up with a strong sense that they could choose their religion, or choose not to be associated with a religion at all. It was not something into which they were born, but a personal choice, similar to many other life-style choices. Religion became, then, a life-style choice rather than an (ethnically-related) heritage that was handed down the generations<sup>4</sup>.

The change in the nature of religion came about because of changes in the ways children were raised. With the smaller families of the 1960s and 1970s (partly because of the availability of reliable contraceptives, and partly because children became an economic burden rather than an economic benefit) came a different way of raising children. Rather than parents expecting to make all the decisions for the family, parents sought to meet the interests of each individual child. Even from an early age, children would be asked what they would like to eat, what they wanted to play with, or watch on television. Thus, children began to see the world much more in terms of their personal choices rather than roles and duties given to them by their parents, or laid down for them by society by reason of their birth. This change occurred throughout the Western world and has

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3 Philip Hughes, 'The Impact of Recent Immigration on Religious Groups in Australia', *Pointers*, Vol. 22, no. 4, December 2012.

4 Philip Hughes, *Putting Life Together: Findings from Australian Youth Spirituality Research*, (Melbourne: Fairfield Press, 2007), pp.126-128.

been described as the great 'subjective turn' in Western culture<sup>5</sup>.

Since that time, the idea that one would automatically belong to the Church of England (or Anglican Church) because one had been brought up in a family which had had that identification gradually became increasingly problematic for young people. They would make up their own minds.

There are still many people for whom the label 'Anglican' is one that has historical or family roots. It does not mean that they are active in an Anglican Church. Nationally, just 11 per cent of those who identify as Anglican attend a service of worship at least once a month. However, one would expect that the 89 per cent who are not involved will gradually drop the label 'Anglican' over time. This will mean that the Anglican Church will appear much smaller in the Census than it is now.

The result of this change is that religious denominations which have been associated with a specific ethnic heritage have tended to decline, while others which emphasised the personal choice made by the individual in relation to religion have tended to grow. Thus, we have seen continuing decline since the 1970s in the Anglican, Uniting Church, Presbyterian and Lutheran Churches.

There has also been a decline among Anglo-Celtic people identifying with the Catholic Church, although this has been masked to a large extent by the huge immigration of Catholics from non-Western countries where the sense of ethnic tradition and family authority remains strong.

On the other hand, we have seen growth in those denominations which have emphasised personal commitment to faith, as exemplified often in adult baptism, such as the Baptists, the Pentecostals, and the Seventh-day Adventists. The emphasis on making a personal decision is not the only factor in the decline or growth of denominations, but it is a significant one.

#### *Making a Personal Decision about Faith: Pros and Cons*

If the adoption of faith has become a personal decision rather than the acceptance of a heritage, how is that decision made? Analysis of the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009), which asked a random sample of 1712 adult Australians a range of questions about religious faith, provides some indications how people are thinking about religion and what are some of the influential factors in decision-making about faith<sup>6</sup>.

It should first be noted that many Australians do not make a decision about religion at all. Approximately half of all Australians do not think very much about religious faith at all. Many people live their lives without it ever becoming an issue. They feel no more need to make a decision as to whether Jesus was truly God than whether the Buddha was truly Enlightened. There is some evidence for this in the fact that when the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009) asked people about the existence of God, only 41 per cent had a definite opinion: with 25 per cent affirming God's existence, and 16 per cent rejecting it. The remaining 59 per cent of Australians expressed various degrees of uncertainty. Most Australians live comfortably with that uncertainty. Many young people encapsulate such thinking in 'whateverism'. 'Whatever is good for you, whatever works for you is fine', they say<sup>7</sup>.

Sometimes people do begin thinking about God in times of personal difficulty or trauma, such as the death of someone close to them or a personal illness. Parents sometimes think about the issue in relation to bringing up their children and giving them good values to live by. Less frequently, people

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5 Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

6 For further analysis see Philip Hughes, 'Belief in God: Is the 'New Atheism' Influencing Australians?' *Pointers*, Vol. 22, no. 1, March 2012, pp. 1-7.

7 Philip Hughes, *Putting Life Together: Findings from Australian Youth Spirituality Research*, p.148.

are motivated by curiosity as they reflect on the nature of the world in which we live. Mostly, people think about religious faith because it is important in the lives of their parents. Most people who attend church in Australia today do so because their parents have been involved. However, there are many people, whose parents have been involved, who have seen no need to follow their parents into involvement.

In the extent to which there is an openness to an experience of God or the possibility that God might assist in life, confidence in science is a factor. Most people are not concerned with the intricacies in the science / religion debate. However, the fact that science generally provides ways of understanding the world, and often provides ways of dealing with problems such as physical illnesses, discourages people from thinking about religion. People with great confidence in science often, but not always, have less confidence or interest in religion<sup>8</sup>.

Other major factors that have been shown to have an impact on Australian's thinking about religious faith include the following.

### **A. The Cons**

*1. Confidence in religious organisations.* Few Australians have much confidence in religious organisations<sup>9</sup>. They see them largely as existing for their own good rather than the good of those they serve. The media coverage detailing the paedophilia cases has strengthened that opinion. However, such an opinion has also been reinforced by many people who have experienced in schools or in the wider culture the proselytising attempts by some people who appear to them to be interested only in 'getting people in' rather than 'serving the wider community'.

In the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009), just 22 per cent said they had a great deal of confidence in churches and religious organisations. This can be compared with 39 per cent who have a great deal of confidence in the charities. There is also some evidence for the fact that increasingly people in Melbourne (and in other parts of Australia) prefer to describe themselves simply as 'Christian' in the Census rather than identify with a specific denomination. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of such people increased by 87 per cent. To some extent, the rise in the number of people describing themselves as 'no religion' in the Census is also a protest against religious organisations rather than a rejection of all religiosity or spirituality.

*2. Religion is seen as contributing more to conflict than peace.* Australians place great value on having a peaceful world. War is seen as one of the greatest threats to our way of living, to enjoying a good life. Religion is seen by 75 per cent of Australians as contributing to conflict. Of the remaining 25 per cent, half are not sure what to think, and just 13 per cent disagree. The extremism among some Islamic people associated with Jihadist movements has contributed to that thinking. Some have seen the appeal to religious motivations as the United States went to war in Iraq, and to a lesser extent in Afghanistan, as providing confirmation for such an opinion. Recent conflicts in the Balkans, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and Nigeria have all had a religious component. Most Australians see history as full of religious wars<sup>10</sup>.

*3. The churches' attitude to a range of moral values.* Many Australians find the moral values the churches hold as barriers to church involvement. They feel that their personal actions and values do not accord with those accepted by the churches. There are two particular areas of such values. The first issue is that of sexuality. Most people believe that if they are engaging in sex outside marriage,

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8 Philip Hughes, 'Belief in God: Is the 'New Atheism' Influencing Australians?' *Pointers*, Vol.22, no.1, March 2012. p.5.

9 Philip Hughes and Lachlan Fraser, *Life, Ethics and Faith in Australian Society: Facts and Figures*, (Melbourne: Christian Research Association, 2014), p.116.

10 Philip Hughes, 'Belief in God: Is the 'New Atheism' Influencing Australians?' *Pointers*, p.6.

they will not be 'accepted' within the Christian churches<sup>11</sup>. According to the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009), 21 per cent of people who were married attended a church, compared with just 3 per cent of those in a de facto relationship. The same survey found that no people who identified themselves as bisexual, gay or transgendered attended a church, compared with 16 per cent of all those who described themselves as heterosexual or straight.

The second barrier has to do with the anti-materialistic values of the churches. Churches generally place greater importance on spiritual and non-material values such as one's relationship to God, the inner sense of meaning, and one's relationships to others, and discourages the embracing of material goods and financial gain. Over the past fifty years, there has been a quiet exiting of that part of the community whose wellbeing focusses on the manufacture of material goods, the use of skilled trades, and financial dealing. It seems that they have increasingly felt uncomfortable with the emphases in values in the churches<sup>12</sup>. People whose lives revolve around technology, such as people working in information technology, often find religious faith irrelevant to their daily lives.

### ***B. The Pros***

There are potentially positive gains to involvement in churches.

*1. Affirmation of family and people-oriented moral values.* While the churches' values discourage some people from attending, they attract others. Some churches are growing on the outer edges of Melbourne where young families find in the churches confirmation of the values which lie at the base of family life. They appreciate the emphasis that churches give to personal relationships, to compassion and care. They appreciate the way that the commitment of marriage and of parenthood is strongly affirmed within the churches. They hope that through their families' involvement in the church, their children will absorb those values<sup>13</sup>.

It is also noteworthy that people whose occupations revolve around people, such as teachers, health and community workers, are more likely to be church attenders than business or trades people<sup>14</sup>.

*2. The sense of community.* Churches offer supportive community. This is particularly important for migrants and for people who find themselves on the edge of society. People look to churches to find a community of people who affirm similar values to themselves, and sometimes people who speak a similar language.

*3. Access to God.* Many young people speak of God as someone they can turn to for help when they need it. Smith and Denton in a study of the Christian faith in the United States have described the way that young people treat God as a 'divine butler'<sup>15</sup>. Many young Australians, and probably many older Australians, treat God as a divine parent, always ready to help out when needed<sup>16</sup>.

The issue of openness to the churches is not primarily one of belief in God and the Christian story. The question is much more one of relevance. The average person asks, implicitly or explicitly, does the Christian faith actually offer anything that might be helpful to me, that might contribute to my life and the life of my family? The sense that the churches may offer assistance in affirming one's values, providing community, or facilitating access to a loving God who will provide assistance when needed are major starting points. For older people who have grown up within the churches, who find their identity in specific denominations, the details of doctrine will be far more important

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11 Philip Hughes, 'Values and local church mission', *Australian Journal of Mission Studies*, Vol.5, no.2, December 2011, pp.47 - 54.

12 Philip Hughes, 'Values and local church mission'.

13 Philip Hughes, 'Values and local church mission'.

14 Philip Hughes and Lachlan Fraser, *Life, Ethics and Faith in Australian Society: Facts and Figures*, p.50.

15 Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: the Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.129.

16 Philip Hughes, *Putting Life Together*, p.160.

than for most young people in Australian society. Over time, the sense of a call to discipleship may also grow, but this is rarely the initial point of attraction. Nor is a sense of guilt about sin or concern about what may happen after death.

### ***Summary of Factors in Dis-Identification***

Many older Australians feel a loyalty to the Anglican Church because it was the denomination of their family heritage with its roots in England, the Church they entered through baptism as children and the Church in which they were married. Many of them continue to attend because the Church has provided them with a strong sense of community over the years, has reinforced their values, and provided a sense that God has ultimate control over life and the world despite the disturbances they experience in God's 'order'<sup>17</sup>.

For Australians raised since the 1960s, whether one identifies with the Anglican Church is a personal decision, and one that is not dictated by one's family or ethnic heritage. Many feel no need of God, and most are uncertain about whether there is truly a God or not. Nor do they feel a need for the church to provide them with a community. They are uncomfortable with some of the values the churches espouse in the name of the Christian faith. Hence, many who previously described themselves as Anglican are ceasing to identify.

It is likely that many of those who dis-identified with the Anglican Church between 2001 and 2011 were not attending an Anglican Church prior to that. Hence, the rate of dis-identification may not be identical to the change in the levels of church attendance.

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2009) asked people for the denomination with which they identified at the age of 11. It then asked what were they at the time of the survey. It found that of all who grew up as Anglican:

- ▲ 44% continued to identify as Anglican;
- ▲ 10% identified with another denomination; and
- ▲ 41% identified themselves as having 'no religion'.

The remaining 5 per cent did not respond to the question about their present religious identification. That rate of dis-identification was similar to that in the Lutheran Church, but greater than in most other churches<sup>18</sup>.

### **Changes in the Nature of Community Life: from Local to Global Communities**

Another major change in the context of the Anglican Church has been in the nature of community life. Until the 1970s, most people lived predominantly in local communities, within the area in which they could walk. They did their shopping in that area. They played sport in that area. Children went to schools in the local community. People found many of their leisure activities in that area.

Until the 1970s, it made sense to build a church in each local community, within walking distance of each other. Hence, scores of Anglican churches were built across the suburbs of Melbourne. Many churches were built in the various suburbs of the larger cities such as Ballarat, Bendigo, and even smaller cities such as Wangaratta.

The first regional shopping centre in Melbourne was Chadstone and it was opened in 1960. It signalled the movement away from local suburban shopping. Its growth was possible because increasing numbers of people had a car. Indeed, as women entered the workforce, increasingly

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17 Philip Hughes, 'A Maze or a System? Changes in the Worldview of Australian People', *Research Paper No.2*, Christian Research Association, 1994.

18 Philip Hughes, 'Are Australians 'Losing their Religion'? *Pointers*, Vol. 20, no.2, June 2010, p.2.

families had two or more cars. Individual access to a motor vehicle gave people the chance to draw from resources further afield. They could participate in sporting activities which were not offered in the local area. They could enjoy leisure and social activities outside their local area<sup>19</sup>.

One result of this increased ability to travel was that people had greater choice in the activities in which they became involved. Travel opened up choice not only in terms of sporting, leisure and shopping activities, but also in terms of schools and employment opportunities. It also made it possible for people to choose a church that was further afield. As 'consumer attitudes' developed in relation to churches, people looked increasingly for larger churches that could offer a greater range of high quality facilities and activities for themselves and for the members of their families.

As the Pentecostal movement grew, they built churches to serve large regions. Indeed, a number of Pentecostal denominations argued that there should be just one church for the whole city. These churches tended to be larger than the typical Protestant local suburban church. But because they were larger, they could offer a wider range of activities, and sometimes higher quality activities for the people who attended. For example, a number of them employed professional musicians, youth leaders, counsellors, and other personnel who became part of the church team.

There has been an increasing tendency for younger people, in particular, to attend these larger churches. In 2008, it was calculated that there were about 25 Protestant and Anglican churches in Melbourne which had more than 500 people attending on a typical Sunday. Nine or ten of these churches had attendances of 1,000 or more people per week. In a survey of these larger churches, 22 of them indicated that, collectively, they had:

- 29,500 weekly attenders,
- 370 equivalent full-time staff,
- 224 pastors and
- 1,732 cell groups or small groups of various types<sup>20</sup>.

It was calculated at that time that about 20 per cent of all people attending a Protestant or Anglican church in Melbourne attended one of the larger regional churches. Thus, 20 per cent of Protestant and Anglican attenders were attending less than 2 per cent of Melbourne's Protestant and Anglican churches. Many of the large churches have grown around leaders with strong personalities and a sense of vision. However, in general, the Anglican Church has not encouraged that charismatic style of leadership, focussing more on 'positional' forms of leadership.

Increased opportunities for travel were complemented by increased connection with other people using electronic means, such as the telephone. Through the telephone, people could keep in touch with those who lived at some distance from them. Electronic communications have developed exponentially since 1980 with the availability and increasing power of mobile phones and with the internet and social media which have added visual dimensions to communication.

With sophisticated electronic connections through the internet, a number of electronic churches have been established. While these attract some people, for a significant number, they are experienced as complementary to, rather than alternatives to, face-to-face church communities<sup>21</sup>.

However, the immediate facilities for contact via Facebook and mobile phone has meant that many people only make decisions as to what they will do and where they will connect with their friends at the last minute. The idea of having regular commitments to meet with others is less common.

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19 Philip Hughes, Alan Black, Peter Kaldor, John Bellamy, and Keith Castle, *Building Stronger Communities*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp.21, 24.

20 Philip Hughes and Stephen Reid, *All Melbourne Matters*, (Melbourne: Transforming Melbourne, 2009), p.41.

21 Tim Hutchings, 'Online Christian Churches: Three Case Studies', *Australian Religion Studies Review*, Vol. 23.3, December 2010.

Indeed, people will make up their minds as to whether they will go to church on a particular week or not often at the last minute. They are also more likely to 'visit' other places. Thus, in the United Kingdom, it has been found that attendances at cathedrals and large churches have grown significantly in the past decade, mostly from people who attend occasionally and from visitors, and many at weekday services<sup>22</sup>.

Hence, it has become increasingly important that churches use electronic media to keep in touch with those people who have some association with them. Newsletters need to be emailed. Facebook pages and websites need to be kept up-to-date with the details of activities and times of services.

If someone is looking for a church, they may be invited by a friend to a particular church. However, frequently, they will look up the internet to look at the details of the church and what activities are on offer, just as they will look up the details of restaurants or other service providers.

### **Changes in Family Life**

There have been significant changes in family life since the 1970s. With the rejection of tradition in the 1970s, there was widespread questioning of the relevance of the marriage. Many people moved into de facto relationships rather than registering their marriage. Marriage has not disappeared, although the majority of Australians now live together before they get married. Marriage has become the public commitment which takes that 'living together' to a new level. When asked in a survey in 2005 whether marriage was an outdated institution, just 18 per cent of adult Australians agreed and 82 per cent disagreed<sup>23</sup>.

With changes in the law in 1975, a legal divorce became much easier to obtain. In contemporary Australian society, many people now move through several partnership and have more than one registered marriages in their life-time. Many families are 'blended' in that they contain children from different relationships.

In the adult population (aged 18 years or over), the Census in 2011 found that:

- 51% were in a registered marriage,
- 3% were separated from their partners but not divorced,
- 9% were divorced,
- 6% were widowed, and
- 31% had never married.

It also found that 9 per cent of the adult population were in a de facto relationship (and could also be in a registered marriage, separated, divorced, widowed or had never married)<sup>24</sup>. It is noteworthy that people in a de facto relationship are much less likely to attend a church than other people. Also there is evidence that people often leave church when they experience separation in their marriage, and many never return. Those who are most likely to be in church are those who fulfil or have fulfilled the ideal of Christian marriage: either being in their first married relationship or being widowed.

People are moving into marriage later in life than was the case even a few years ago. Thus, in Melbourne, of all adults 25 to 29 years old in 2001, 32 per cent were married. In 2011, 29 per cent of that same cohort were married.

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22 Church of England, *From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013*, (London: Church Growth Research Programme, 2014), p.19.

23 Philip Hughes and Lachlan Fraser, *Life, Ethics and Faith in Australian Society: Facts and Figures*, p.97.

24 Philip Hughes and Lachlan Fraser, *Life, Ethics and Faith in Australian Society: Facts and Figures*, p.35.

In 2001, of all Melbourne residents 35 to 39 years old, just 22 per cent had never married. In 2011, among people of that age group, 29 per cent had not married.

At the same time, there is some evidence that when people are married, there is an increasing value placed on loyalty to their spouses. The rates of separation and divorce have decreased a little. In 2001, of all adults aged 35 to 39 years living in Melbourne, 5 per cent were separated and an additional 8 per cent were divorced. In 2011, of that same age group, just 3 per cent are separated and 6 per cent divorced.

Roles within the family have also changed. In 2009, Australians were asked whether they agreed with the statement: 'The husband earns the money, the wife's job is the family'. Just 16 per cent of adult Australians affirmed that division of roles. However, there remained a significant difference in relation to age. Thus, 22 per cent of people aged 50 and older affirmed that division, compared with just 8 per cent of those aged under 30<sup>25</sup>. The survey found that church attenders were twice as likely to affirm the division of roles than non-church attenders (27 per cent to 13 per cent). The fact is that most married women are involved in the work-force although most spend some time away from employment when their children are young.

The changes in family, and in particular, the entry of married women into the work-force, has had a significant impact on the education, health and welfare organisations of the Anglican Church. It has had some impact on the nature of services that have been requested. Increasingly, for example, schools are required to take responsibility for multiple dimensions of the development of children and young people, apart from cognitive development. The family services offered by welfare organisations have become increasingly complex in order to cope with the complexity of family life in contemporary society. It has also meant there are fewer volunteers available to assist in these organisations and that the time and energy that volunteers are able to offer is more constrained.

Changes in the patterns of family life have had a great impact on church involvement. When married women were home during the day in the 1950s, many of them found their social life through the local churches. They also found ways of making contributions to the wider society through their involvement in the churches and in their welfare and charitable activities. Indeed, the core membership of some Anglican churches remains people who first became part of that local community in the 1950s.

Subsequent generations of married women have been involved in the workforce and have found much of their social life there. They have not looked for social activities in the local communities. The demands of work has meant that there has been less time for church. Sunday is often seen as a time for family rather than for church. Although Sunday is also a day for sport, shopping and many other activities which cannot be fitted into the rest of the week.

At the same time, the issue of time is ultimately an issue of priorities. When asked about the reasons for not attending a church in a large survey of Australian adults in 1998,

- 15% said 'not enough time because of work', but
- 21% said 'too many other commitments' and
- 31% said 'prefer to do other things', with
- 34% saying 'no need to go to church'<sup>26</sup>.

Certainly, then, time and competition with other activities is a factor, but part of the problem is that church involvement is not high on the list of priorities for many people.

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25 Philip Hughes and Lachlan Fraser, *Life, Ethics and Faith in Australian Society: Facts and Figures*, p.96.

26 John Bellamy, Alan Black, Keith Castle, Philip Hughes and Peter Kaldor, *Why People Don't Go to Church*, (Adelaide: Openbook, 2002), p.14.

Again, competition for time affects all churches, not just the Anglican Church. However, it is likely that fewer people raised in the Anglican Church than people raised in some other denominations have been convinced that church involvement should be a priority. As previously noted, how the priorities are seen depends partly on how faith, and in particular God, are seen in relation to human life. Most of those who have continued to attend a church are those who have seen church attendance as vital to a continuing relationship with a God who is seen as active in human lives. On the other hand, people who have seen God as more distant, perhaps as giving values to live by, but who does not intervene in the events of daily life, have not seen church involvement as having a high priority.

### **Education and Occupation**

The people of Geelong are very aware of the change in the work that is available. Geelong has been a major manufacturing centre. In 2001, 18 per cent of the workforce were employed in manufacturing. In 2011, just 12 per cent of the workforce were in manufacturing. The change has been exacerbated since then as Ford gradually closes its production of vehicles and as the Alcoa plant has closed. The wholesale trade is also employing fewer people.

There is growth in some other industry sectors. The most significant growth has occurred in Geelong in the health care and social assistance sector. From employing 11 per cent of the workforce in 2001, it employed 14 per cent of the workforce in Geelong in 2011. Employment in construction increased between 2001 and 2011. Whether that will be a long-term trend, or whether it is a short-term result of the changing industry profile is not clear. The other increase has been in the public administration and safety area, which employed 4 per cent of the workforce in 2001 and in 2011, employed 6 per cent.

The changes in Melbourne are similar. The major change has been in a decline in the manufacturing sector. In 2001, it employed 16 per cent of the workforce. It now employs 11 per cent. The wholesale trade is also employing fewer people. On the other hand, the greatest increases in employment are in health care and social assistance, construction and in public administration and safety.

Moving from one industry to another is challenging for most people. People once employed in manufacturing do not necessarily have the skills or even the background education which allows them to move from manufacturing into areas such as health care and social assistance, or, for that matter administration and safety.

The changes in the occupational profile in the Diocese of Melbourne certainly raises issues of pastoral concern for the churches. In some ways, it probably encourages the perspective that life is an evolving biography, in which one takes on a variety of roles and occupations. That, in turn, may encourage people to see themselves as drawing on various religious resources as individuals rather than making life-time commitments to religious communities. It is not clear that the changes in the occupational profile in Melbourne and Geelong have a direct impact on religious faith.

### **The Significance of the Changing Context for Vitality in Anglican Churches**

This brief review has highlighted changes in the context of the Diocese of Melbourne that have come through the flows of immigration in Australia and the decline in local community life as people have become more mobile and as electronic communications have enhanced people's capacity to communicate with each other on a global basis. However, the major change has been the cultural change, sometimes referred to as the development of post-modernity, in which traditions have been critiqued and individuals have focussed on what benefits them and those close to them. The following are proposed as potential inhibitors and possibilities for growth in church vitality.

## ***Inhibitors of Growth in Church Vitality***

*1. Focus on church structures and traditions rather than on spiritual nurture and wellbeing of people.* The analysis of the census figures has highlighted the fact that many people move through a range of relationships and occupations during their life-times. As sociologists such as Anthony Giddens have observed, biographies are formed reflexively and developed over the life-time<sup>27</sup>. For many people, connection with traditions of religious faith and with religious communities may also evolve and most people feel little commitment because of being raised by parents who were part of a particular religious tradition. Rather, people make on-going decisions about religious involvement according to what they see as meeting their needs, providing meaning, community and nurture for themselves as their families. Heelas and Woodhead found in their study of churches in the United Kingdom that those churches which were most focussed on the maintenance of traditions were least likely to grow in numbers or engage people<sup>28</sup>. People looked for churches through which they and their families would find nurture and sustenance for what Heelas and Woodhead referred to as 'the subjective life'. It is likely that that finding is also relevant to the Australian situation.

To what extent do Anglican churches respond to the pastoral and personal needs and interests of their members, and to what extent are they focussed on the maintenance of their structures and traditions? Local Anglican churches vary in this regard. However, it is worth asking whether the training of clergy has focussed on learning the history, the Biblical roots and the theological ruminations of the church at the expense of fully understanding the spirituality, needs and interests of contemporary church members or people in the wider society?

In some parts of the Anglican Church, the focus has been on trying to reinterpret the traditions and beliefs of the Christian faith for our contemporary context. While this has been a valid preoccupation of some of the more intellectual people in the Anglican Church, it has not always addressed the spiritual nurture and wellbeing of many church attenders and members of the community who look for direction and encouragement in facing the practical realities of the coming week. The problem is not one of 'evangelical' or 'high-church' theology, but rather how theology is employed in supporting the lives of people. It is noteworthy that the research in the Church of England in the United Kingdom found no correlation between theology and church growth<sup>29</sup>.

The focus on the maintenance of a particular structure of church as involving a building dedicated for worship and an employed professional clergy person in leadership has often caused churches to amalgamate in the attempt to maintain that sort of structure. However, such amalgamations usually lead to decline, as the research on the Church of England has found<sup>30</sup>. They lead to a diminution of the sense of identity with a particular group. They also 'prop up' patterns of church life which have become irrelevant to most people. Contemporary faith communities need to be able to flourish today in a wide variety of forms – from discussion or meditation groups which meet in homes to the large gathering of people for city-wide festivals.

*2. Costly Institutional Structures.* Australians have become suspicious of the value of maintaining many voluntary institutions and have looked for 'light-weight' institutional forms. The leadership of the denomination, the dioceses and the local churches has been placed in the hands of councils. There are expensive institutional hierarchies to be maintained which have absorbed large amounts of energy and finance and have probably sapped the church's energy in terms of achieving outcomes both in relation to church vitality, social justice and other forms of mission. The hierarchical structures have also meant that transparency and accountability have not always been visible to the average person.

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27 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991).

28 Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spirituality Revolution*.

29 Church of England, *From Anecdote to Evidence*. p.31.

30 Church of England, *From Anecdote to Evidence*. p.27.

Local church clergy must be freed to give leadership and to motivate and empower others through their leadership. New patterns of ministry must be evolved to cater for the needs of the increasing number of small congregations. One such pattern is through 'enabler supported ministry' patterns whereby the focus of clergy is in resourcing and supporting lay leadership and providing expert pastoral care for challenging personal situations, similar to that that has been developed in some rural situations<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless, 'clergy enablers' should also be expected and empowered to initiate new groups and activities, rather than simply facilitate lay leadership.

*3. Inappropriate Buildings.* Many church buildings are now inappropriate for the forms of community and worship which appeal to most people in the Australian community. Many buildings convey a hierarchical theology and the 'awesomeness' of God that was appropriate in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. They were appropriate for the static, clergy dominated expressions of dogma, when values and the heritage could be encapsulated in stained-glass windows and 'unworthy' parishioners were content to sit on uncomfortable wooden pews. However, they are inappropriate to express the sense of a gathered group of people sharing their lives, passions and values with each other in the twenty-first century who learn through participation rather than simply listening to a lecture, who communicate with each through moving imagery rather than reflecting on static stained-glass, and who experience their sense of community through high quality coffee (and decaffeinated substitutes). It was noted in the study of the churches in England that half of all churches saw the maintenance of their buildings as a significant burden<sup>32</sup>

These people express their faith and nurture each other in a great variety of ways rather than simply through hour-long services of music, prayers, sermon and Eucharist. They do it through meditation, counselling sessions, being out in and reflecting on nature, pilgrimage, discussion of films and books, eating together, making banners, artistic works, drama, professional development sessions, discussion groups, and even games. Hence, the spaces which are needed to help people nurture their own spirituality and that of others need to be flexible, comfortable, of varying sizes and furnishings, with a capacity for using electronic forms of communication (such as LCD screens) as well as face-to-face communication.

Many church buildings have become burdensome remnants of the past which are extremely expensive to maintain as well as being inappropriate for the growth of the church of the future, even though they are sometimes seen by the wider community as significant parts of the past architectural heritage. It will be important to find ways of releasing church communities from those burdens and developing new buildings that are suitable for the diverse ways in which people will explore faith in the future.

### **Possibilities for Growth in Church Vitality**

Most denominations in Australia are finding growth difficult, although only in some denominations is decline occurring, and it is occurring at very different rates in the different denominations. Factors contributing to growth include the following.

*1. Immigration.* Churches which are welcoming many immigrants are growing much faster than churches which are welcoming few new immigrants. Many of these immigrants become incorporated into their own congregations which speak their own language. However, it becomes necessary to develop English-language alternatives for the children of immigrants and to develop ways in which they can transfer into the English-language environment. The Anglican Church in Melbourne is likely to continue to grow through immigration from countries such as India, China, Sudan and other countries. However, it will need to be sensitive to the different understanding of faith of many immigrants. This may mean allowing immigrant congregations some independence in expressing their faith and values in their own ways.

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31 Philip Hughes and Audra Kunciuonas, 'Models of Leadership and Organisation in Anglican Churches in Rural Australia', *Occasional Paper*, No.9. (Melbourne: Christian Research Association, 2009).

32 Church of England, *From Anecdote to Evidence*, p.30.

2. *Regional Churches*. Large regional churches (including, in England, cathedrals<sup>33</sup>) are growing in many places. They are attractive to people because of the high quality of the preaching and music in worship and because of the wide range of activities, including small groups, they offer for people of all age groups and with various interests. Many of them have large teams of staff often with distinctive professional qualifications such as in music, in children's and family work and in counselling, who conduct many of the activities and ensure their high quality. Some attract people because of their music programs. Many of them are growing largely through increasing numbers of people who come occasionally or who are visitors.

These churches need to make extensive use of electronic means of communication including websites and Facebook pages with people associated with them. The development of regional churches needs to be considered strategically and initiatives taken at a regional level. It cannot be accomplished simply by merging several congregations any more than one can build a regional shopping centre simply by amalgamating a number of small suburban shops.

3. *Focus on Nurturing the Subjective Life of Individuals*. The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne will find new life and vitality as it re-focusses on serving the broad population in their wellbeing and, particularly, their spirituality. It will find new life and vitality as it listens carefully to people and engages them in dialogue, as it seeks to journey with people. It will need to change its structures and reallocate its resources so that it can engage people in their search for a meaningful life.

If it is to engage the large number of Australians who do not wish to identify with a particular religious group and especially the large number who describe themselves as 'spiritual but not religious', then it must engage them in forms which are very 'light-weight' institutionally, such as through a home discussion group or through forms of chaplaincy rather than expecting these people to take up membership in a highly institutionalised professionally-led church congregation.

There are a number of synergies between the people in the Australian community who describe themselves as 'spiritual but not religious' and the traditions out of which the Anglican Church has emerged<sup>34</sup>. It will be necessary to build on these synergies. Among them are:

1. The world is not best viewed only in material terms, but includes a spiritual dimension. At the heart of human life lies the mystery of love. At the heart of the universe lies the mystery of being. These mysteries are not reducible to the findings of empirical science, but continue to affect how we live life and see the universe.
2. A respect for the natural world as an expression of the mystery of life and the universe, which is also found in some parts of the Scripture and in many parts of the historical tradition of the Church.
3. A focus on personal experience rather than dogma as a source of truth, which fits especially with the nineteenth century Anglo-Catholic traditions, but which also has parallels with the mystical traditions of Christianity.
4. Personally-owned sense of the meaning of life rather than the inheritance of a community identity, which has parallels with those traditions of the church that have emphasised personal commitment of faith.

One component of the 'spiritual but not religious' movement in Australia and in other Western countries<sup>35</sup> today is that it is a protest against religious traditions which have become highly

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33 Church of England, *From Anecdote to Evidence*, p.21-22.

34 Antoon Geels, "Glocal Spirituality for a Brave New World." In *Postmodern Spirituality*, edited by Tore Ahlback and Bjorn Dahla. (Abo, Finland: Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, 2009).

35 Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity after Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2012).

professionalised, hierarchical and institutionally heavy. Many aspects of this protest parallel the Protestant protest of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries against the hierarchical clericalism and institutionalism of the Church. The Anglican Church might recognise that some aspects of these protests are relevant again today.

How might the Anglican Church seek to engage the wider population in its search for meaning and spiritual wellbeing? One possibility is to explore how churches can work with schools, welfare and health organisations to engage with the wider public, bringing the capacity for community-building and spiritual nurture to all parts of the population. Churches, schools, welfare and health organisations will need to enter into respectful dialogue in order for this to occur. All dimensions of the Anglican Church need to use electronic forms of communication much more extensively to engage with a population which no longer exists in local communities but finds community in a mosaic of ways through common interests and experiences.

Opportunities for training both for people who will be in paid employment and those who will act in volunteer capacities for serving the population spirituality and in their search for meaning and wellbeing should be offered. There must be a much greater focus on understanding people and contemporary society, rather than focussing almost exclusively on understanding the roots and traditions of the Church. It is possible that, in the future, most activities for the nurture of the spirit will be offered in 'user-pays' contexts. Future employees of churches will not be able to depend on the faithful donations of people to support all their activities. Some employees will be employed in administrative roles organising different community activities. Some employees may act as 'tutors' in meditation, as counsellors or chaplains, and as community educators.

Within this context, it is appropriate to integrate more the work of the schools, welfare and health organisations with the churches. This means welcoming the organisations into the decision-making and engaging in meaningful dialogue about how the spiritual and communal dimensions of life can be enhanced through them as through the churches, and where churches and other organisations can work together for the sake of the holistic provision of services to the wider population. It may also mean opening up appropriate professional development opportunities through which leaders and other employees in these organisations may be encouraged to reflect on what it means to be part of the Church<sup>36</sup>.

As the Anglican Church engages the population in its search for meaning, there is a risk that the Church will lose touch with the essence of its faith and its own story of the divine. As new structures evolve, it is important that the essence of the faith of the Anglican Church is not lost, but is applied in new and vital ways as the Church seeks to engage with people in their diverse journeys. This needs to occur through the education, not only of those who would be leaders in the church and congregational activities, but leaders in all aspects of the churches' life, including schools, welfare and health organisations. In educating its leaders, its focus must be on the application of the essence of faith to various expressions of the churches' life. Fresh expressions of faith will emerge as a culture of innovation is encouraged in all parts of the church, and where innovative leaders are given permission to experiment in applying faith in new ways.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that a large proportion of Anglican Church people are elderly. They do not have the energy or the capacity for innovative activity. They need the pastoral care of the church. There is no need to destroy their communities in order to build fresh expressions, although there may be times when the facilities they are using may provide the basis for fresh expressions. There may also be occasions when it is more appropriate for existing congregations to worship in small chapels and homes rather than trying to maintain expensive,

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36 Philip Hughes, *Shaping Australia's Spirituality: A Review of Christian Ministry in the Australian Context*, (Melbourne: Mosaic Press, 2010), pp. 145-6.

burdensome buildings. New forms of Christian community must be built alongside the old.

The new models of nurturing the spirit are not likely to lead to more people into traditional church services on a Sunday morning. But that is not the aim. The mission of the church lies in engagement with people of all ages, all ethnic and religious backgrounds, taking them seriously as people, and seeking with them to experience and to express love for God and for neighbour, and such experiences and expressions can take many forms. As the Anglican Church seeks to be faithful to its calling, it must seek to nurture the spirit of the people of Australia wherever and whenever it has the opportunity, and to do so in communal and incarnational ways. While there must be experimentation, there must also be carefully planned forms of evaluation and accountability. Theologically, it is inconceivable that there is a diminishing of God's activity among human beings. Rather, the challenge is finding how the Church can better work with God in the lives of people in Melbourne and Geelong.