

**THE PARISH OF CHIRK**  
**St. Mary's Church, Chirk & St. David's Church, Froncysyllte**  
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At the June Diocesan Conference, the bishop quoted a visitor from Africa who spent time in our churches and then asked "But where are the children?" This quotation was reported with a strong hint of rebuke to the British church and clergy which fails to attract children into church. In fact some churches are good at getting children in – but not many of us. I would have retorted "And where are your pensioners?" – for much of the problem is demographic. I wonder how much African churchgoing is large because families are still not scattered and there are fewer pressures of life. We British might be working too hard to get to church, but at least we are not sunk into the abject poverty, including child-poverty, and high mortality rates that Africa still "enjoys".

WE are often bidden to look to Africa to see how vibrant Christianity and the Christian Church can be. I do not think this is sensible or helpful. The simplicity of African rural life stands in strong contrast to western sophistication, and Christian life is bound to be different. Similarly, levels of education are quite different, so our understanding of religion will be different. We cannot learn from a different environment or society or civilisation: we can only compare and contrast, without being judgmental either way.

But one could look at African Christianity, and be glad we do not share it. Generally, Africans have a naïve superficial understanding of the Bible, and this lead to some (mostly in east and west Africa) having an appalling attitude towards same-sex relationships and towards people of other faiths. Genocide in Rwanda, persecution of homosexuals in east Africa and crime in South Africa are unchristian.

We in Britain not only have a problem with few children in our churches – we have few people under the age of 60. Don't blame the children for not being in church: blame their parents and grandparents.

Yes, we have a problem about getting people into church, but we are not going to learn from Africa or its type of Christianity.