



Embargoed until Thursday October 23rd 7am

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Results of YouGov survey of Anglican clergy released today

The findings of a new survey of 1,509 Anglican clergy, commissioned by the Westminster Faith Debates to support a new series on [the Future of the Church of England](#), are published today and available [here](#). Findings include:

Clergy are united by faith in “personal God” and the Parish system

*Anglican clergy are united by their strong belief in a “personal God” (83%) rather than in more impersonal understandings of God – like “spirit or life force.”

*The same proportion (83%) are committed to the ancient parish system, which divides all England into areas served by a priest with a free vicarage, even though the system is under pressure with falling numbers of clergy and worshippers.

Traditional Left-Wing Views

*Anglican clergy are marked out from lay Anglicans and the rest of the population by their left-wing “old Labour” views, including commitment to a generous welfare state. They are three times more likely than the general population think the welfare budget is too low.

*Similarly, less than a third of clergy think that the current welfare system creates a culture of dependency, compared with three-fifths of the population and over two-thirds of all Anglicans.

Abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriage

*43% of clergy would like to see a reduction in the 24 week time limit on abortion, and 16% support an outright ban (even though this is not official church teaching). By contrast, just 6% of all Anglicans and the same proportion of the population want a ban on abortion.

* 70% of clergy think the law on assisted dying should remain unchanged; the same proportion of lay Anglicans and the general population are in favour of relaxing the law.

* 51% of clergy agree with the Church’s official view that same-sex marriage is wrong, 39% disagree, and 10% say they don’t know.



Clergy Split

*There is a split in attitudes between the one-third of clergy who place themselves at the evangelical and end of a spectrum of “evangelical to catholic”, and the two-thirds who say they are at the middle or at the catholic end.

*On several issues, the more evangelical clergy have distinctive and pronounced views. For instance, a full 88% of evangelicals think that same-sex marriage is wrong, and 31% want to ban abortion.

*Two-thirds of the most evangelical clergy do not agree with the general view of the clergy that the CofE should maintain unity by being more tolerant of diverse views: they think it should either split or seek greater uniformity.

Profile and demographics

* When asked where they fall on spectrum from evangelical to catholic, roughly a third of clergy say they are at the evangelical end, a third at the catholic end, and a third in the middle.

*On a theologically liberal to conservative scale, 43% place themselves at the liberal end, 32% in the middle, and 24% at the conservative end.

*About a third of respondents are female, and about third are under 55.

Professor Linda Woodhead comments:

This survey of a representative sample of CofE clergy gives us a much clearer view of what a distinctive tribe they really are. In both politics and ethics they are idealistic, and very concerned with protecting the weak and the poor. But these attitudes now set them apart from most of the general population and lay Anglicans.

It's also interesting to see how different most of the more evangelical clergy are from the rest in many of their attitudes. The Church's official view that Anglicans should learn to “disagree well” seems to be undermined by the two-thirds of evangelical clergy who don't think that a goal worth pursuing.

Ends



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Notes to Editors

The debate on Thursday 23rd October is entitled 'Heritage – how can buildings, endowments and pensions become assets not burdens?' University Church, Oxford – 5:30-7pm, just as English Heritage launch their Heritage at Risk register for 2014, listing 805 CofE churches in danger of falling into ruin. The findings of English Heritage 'Heritage at Risk 2014' will be available on the English Heritage website on Thursday 23rd October.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size 1509 Anglican Clergy. Fieldwork undertaken between 14th August and 9th September 2014. The survey was carried out online. Figures for lay Anglicans and the general population from a survey carried out by YouGov for Westminster Faith Debates in July 2013.

For more information, see <http://faithdebates.org.uk/research/>

The survey was designed by Professor Linda Woodhead with advice from a reference group drawn from across the Church. It was completed by a random sample of clergy aged 70 and under.

The [Westminster Faith Debates](#) are funded by Lancaster University, the AHRC and ESRC. Additional support for the debate series on the [Future of the Church of England](#) and clergy survey has been provided by The Community of Sisters at Ripon College Cuddesdon, Allchurches Trust Ltd owners of Ecclesiastical Insurance Group and the Governors of Ripon College Cuddesdon.