

Support for People in Developing Countries by Australian Churches in 2016

The Australian churches' support of people/ministries overseas

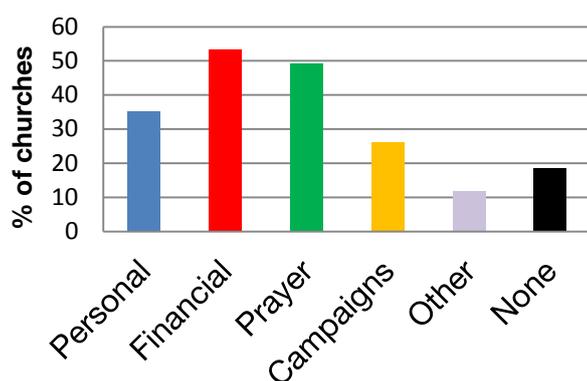
This fact sheet examines the support of Australian churches for people in developing countries, through various means. There is a long tradition of churches supporting the work of 'service' and 'proclamation' in the local community, elsewhere in the country or overseas. Focusing on support in developing countries, what are the levels for different kinds of support, and how much does such support really amount to? Are there large differences between denominational groups?

Churches that support people/ministries in developing countries

The following question was asked in the 2016 National Church Life Survey Operations Survey¹.

"Over the past 12 months, has this local church² had a specific commitment to people in developing countries?"³

Figure 1: Support for people in developing countries



Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,289 churches).

¹ This is a one-per-church survey used as an audit of objective information such as activities each church runs or supports.

² "...this parish" in the Catholic versions of the Operations Survey.

³ 'Yes, personal relationships with individuals/groups'; 'Yes, a regular financial commitment'; 'Yes a regular prayer commitment'; 'Yes, through campaigns which tackle poverty or injustice'; 'Yes, another kind of link'; 'No links of this kind'. Churches could mark all options.

Figure 1 shows that financial support is the most common (53% of all churches indicated they had a regular form of financial support). The second highest form was 'Prayer' (49% of churches) followed by 'Personal' (35%). Approximately a quarter of churches (26%) indicated they have regular support for poverty and injustice campaigns. Such campaigns would include Micah Challenge, TEAR, Act for Peace, or denominationally affiliated groups such as Baptist World Aid, Caritas, Catholic Mission, and Uniting World. Eighteen percent of churches indicated having no supportive link of any kind.

Denominational group differences

The results have also been divided into major denominational groups, and shown below in table 1.

Table 1: Support for people in developing countries, by denominational groups

	Personal	Financial	Prayer	Campaigns	Other	None
Total	35	53	49	26	12	18
	% of churches					
Anglican	29	49	54	15	11	25
Baptist	58	72	65	34	16	7
Catholic	21	40	30	44	9	21
Lutheran	17	35	38	17	17	31
Pentecostal ⁴	61	79	62	22	10	6
Presbyterian	40	59	65	14	13	18
Salvation Army	19	67	39	37	14	7
Uniting	28	40	38	34	12	22

Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,289 churches).

While support is widespread across all denominations, there are considerable denominational differences evident in table 1. Pentecostal churches had the highest proportion giving financial (62%) and personal (61%) support, while Baptist churches were the second

⁴ 'Pentecostal' includes Australian Christian Churches, C3 Church, CRC International, and International Network of Churches.

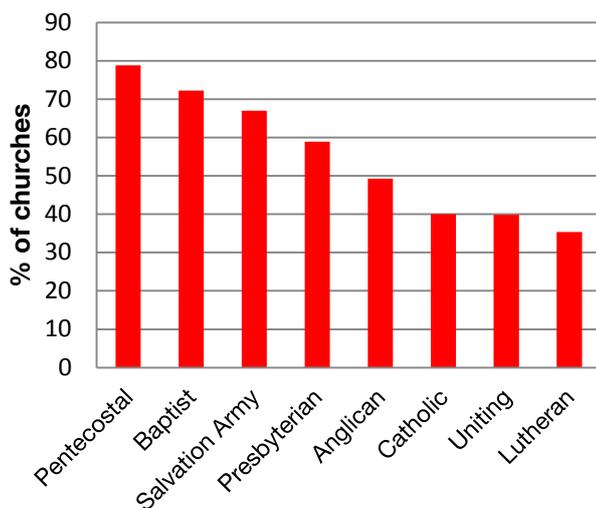
highest denomination for these two categories. Almost two thirds of Baptist and Presbyterian churches offered prayer support for people in developing countries, with 65% of churches each.

The degrees of support for poverty and injustice campaigns follow a very different pattern, with strongest supporters being the Catholic, Salvation Army, Baptist and Uniting movements. This perhaps reflects strong and successful denominational agencies for these movements.

The real financial contribution?

Examining these results can reveal something about both the internal culture of each denominational group, and the real contribution. This is because there is a vast difference in the size of these movements. To illustrate this, figure 2 below graphs the financial support figures (as a percentage) from table 1.

Figure 2: Percent of local churches giving financial support for people in developing countries - by denominational groups



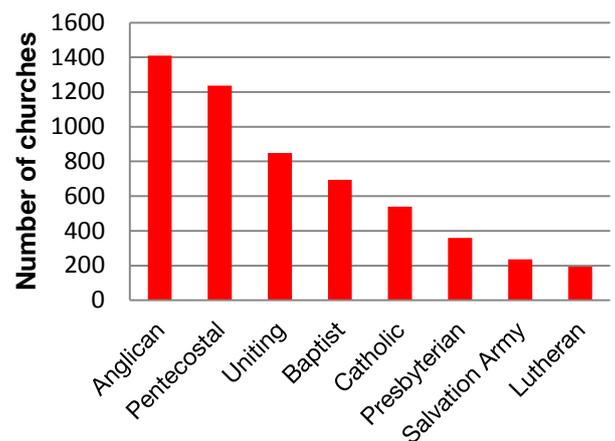
Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,289 churches).

Figure 2 shows important information about the different internal cultures of support that exist in the denominational groups. A further step is to take into account the different sizes of these groups. If the actual number of churches who give financial support were shown in each movement, the order of largest to smallest is quite different, as figure 3 shows.

Comparing figures 2 and 3, some of the groups that have less churches proportionally giving support are

nevertheless large movements, and therefore make up a large portion of the total churches in Australia providing support (e.g. Anglican, Uniting, Catholic). Some of the 'high percentage groups' correspond to high numbers of churches if they are of sufficient size as movements (e.g. Pentecostal, Baptist), but not if they are smaller groups (e.g. Salvation Army).

Figure 3: Numbers of local churches* giving financial support for people in developing countries - by denominational groups



Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,289 churches). Results are weighted by denomination and region to estimate national totals. *Catholic results in this graph show the number of parishes rather than local churches because of the method of surveying used.

These results provide a glimpse into how support for developing countries is distributed among the Australian churches in 2016. If it were possible to take into account other factors such as institutional differences the picture might change somewhat. Specific information about the dollar-value of churches' support would give the most detailed picture of all.

Data sources

Powell, R., (2016) [computer file], 2016 NCLS Operations Survey. Sydney, Australia: NCLS Research.

Citation

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