

**Attending to God:**

Managing Change

Change has a bad press nowadays. How many people really admit to thriving on change?

In employment the inevitable re-structures and re-assignments are now a grudgingly accepted part of working life. The whole of our life is full of change, often unexpected and sometimes unwanted: unemployment, bereavement, divorce, illness, children arriving and leaving, moving home and so on. All bring their stresses for us to bear. Let's be honest, people like their comfortable rut and rather enjoy a good moan about there being too much too soon and too quick! Never admitting to seeing change as something positive, and always wanting to resist it!

Jonathan Draper in his book, 'To Love and to Serve', describes change as 'a new experience'. He describes the new experience God had when he came to live on earth as Jesus, and the new experience of the crucifixion; and that as a result of these experiences He changed. Creation is constantly changing and evolving and we are part of that creation. So change is a natural sign of life and part of God. We know we are made in the image of God, so if God has new experiences and changes then so do we. Could we really ever grow closer to God if we did not face and adapt to change?

Change is a good thing if we face it with an open mind and are prepared to accept and work through it. If we trust in God as our strength and shield we know we will be able to adapt to anything life throws at us, and so grow in knowledge and faith. Every change can be an opportunity for revelation by God and a chance to learn more about ourselves. God moves on to new things and changes us – if we let Him.

*Elizabeth Goodridge and Ian Yearsley*

**Church of England attendance increases**

On average each week in 2003 1,190,000 people attended a Church of England church. That was better than the 1,170,000 in 2002, but not quite as good as the 1,210,000 in 2001. This 'Average Weekly Attendance' includes adults and children and Sunday and weekday attendances.

It is the adult's figure which has gone down and then up again as the children's figure remained virtually unchanged during these two years. Likewise the Sunday figures have gone down and up again, while the weekday figures have increased.

The children's figures are the most interesting, though. They are declining on Sundays but growing during the week. That suggests an exodus from Sunday School and an increase in youth club-type activity during the week (to which other surveys testify).

Does it mean that children don't like getting up early on Sunday morning but are very happy to go to an evening activity instead? Does it mean that children prefer midweek because food and drink are usually available whereas they are not in most churches on Sundays?