

# Learning from the work of David Wasdell

The Urban Church Project  
produced two reports

*Let my people grow*      Oct. 1974

*Divide and Conquer*      June 1975

Their conclusion was ...

The Parish System is fatally flawed

# A bit strong?



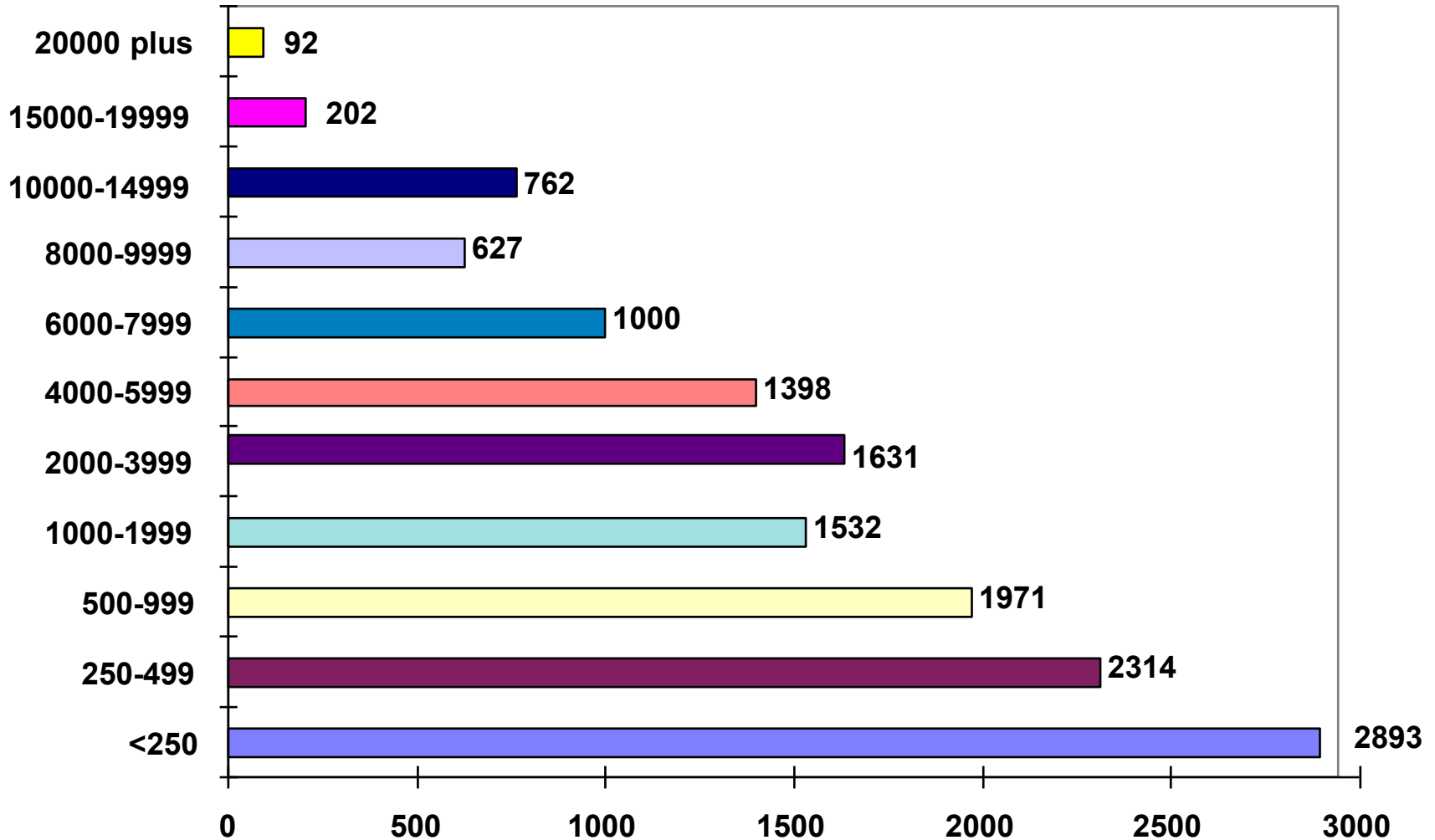
DW in 2002

‘We have become involved in the public re-enactment of heresy. We believe and proclaim a gospel of grace available to all but we operate a structure which takes the form of a club with limited membership.’

D. Wasdell, *Let My People Grow* (London: UCP, 1974) p.7.

## On what basis?

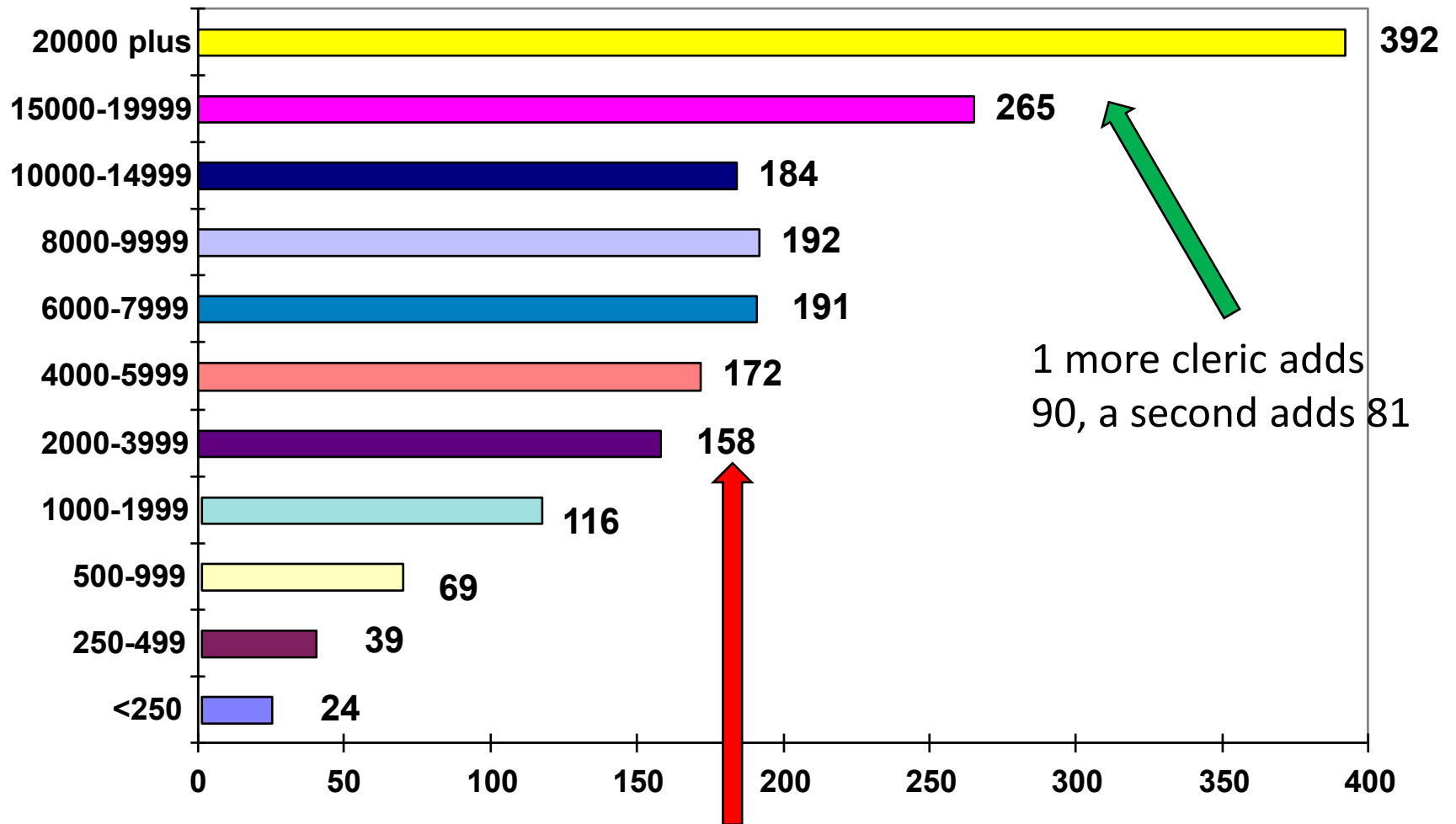
# The *Size* of C of E Parishes in 1974



## No. of parishes at that size

<250-999	1000-3999	4000-7999	8000 +
7178	3163	2398	1683

# C of E Average Attendance - by parish size 1974



1 more cleric adds 90, a second adds 81

Number of Attenders

'the single-clergy model church levels off at an average congregation of 175, regardless of parish population.'

# More clergy is not the answer

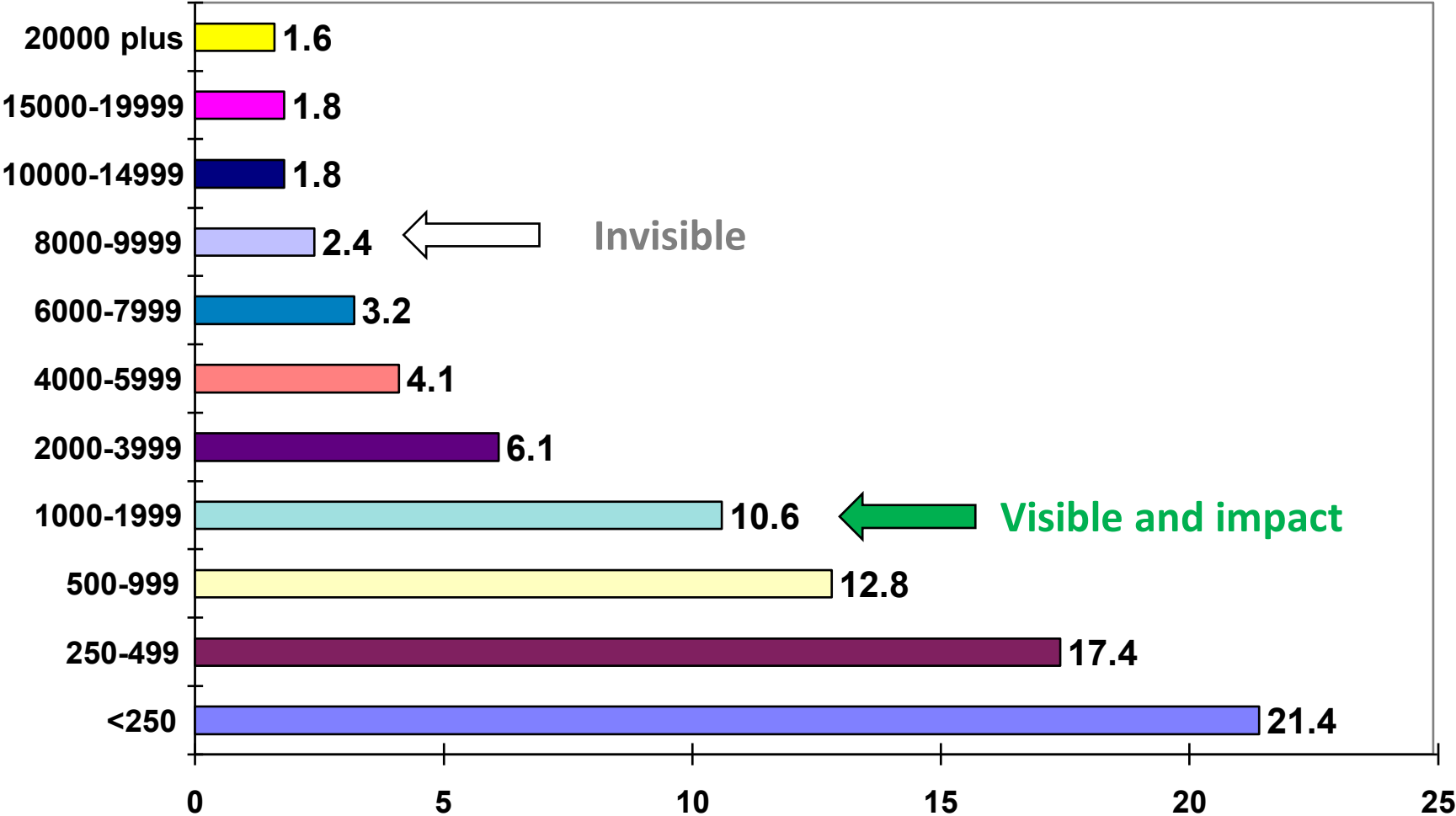
- Revd A. B. Miskin (1964)
  - If you want 10% of population attending
  - You 'll need 27,000 FT clergy
  - A parish of 15,000 will need 14 clergy



No amount of pastoral juggling and redeployment of the clergy can create the needed breakthrough.'

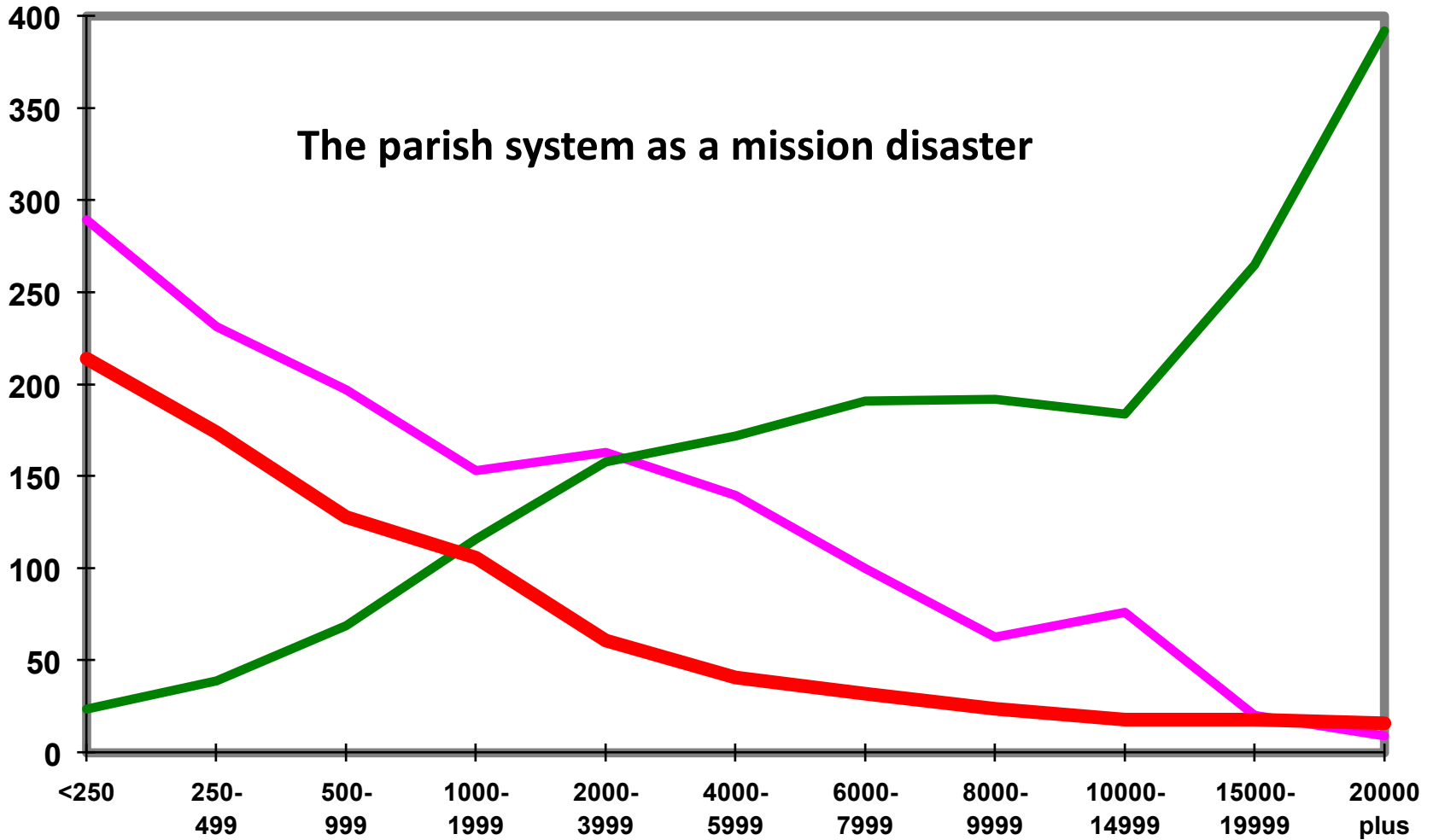
D Wasdell, *Let My People Grow* p. 8

# C of E Penetration of the Parish 1974



Percentage of the parish who are attending

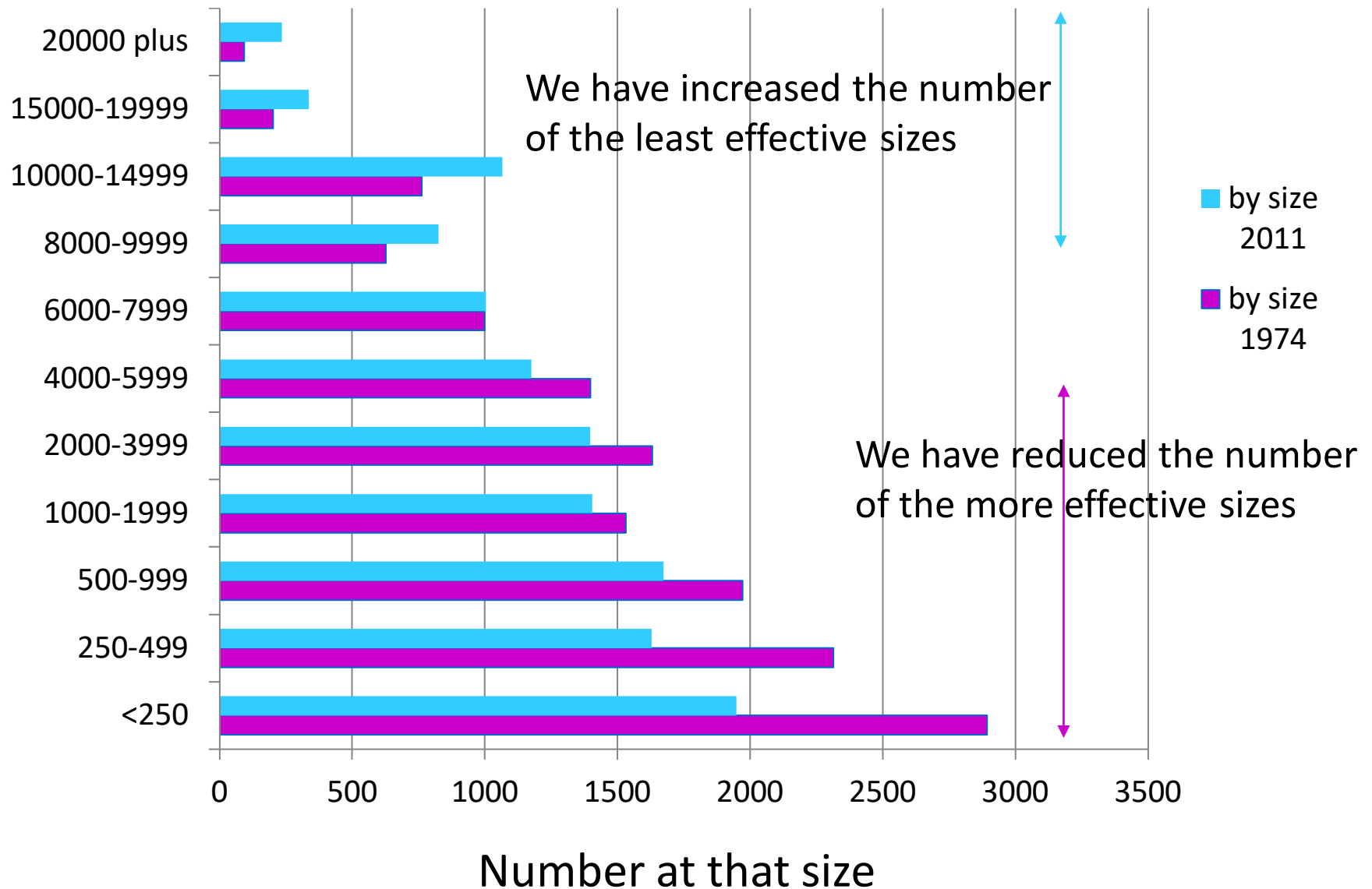
# Wasdell's research 1974: Summary



NB Vertical scale adjustments to show trends :  
The percentages are multiplied x 10 and No  
of Parishes divided by 10

**Parish sizes**

# C of E parish sizes 1974 and 2011



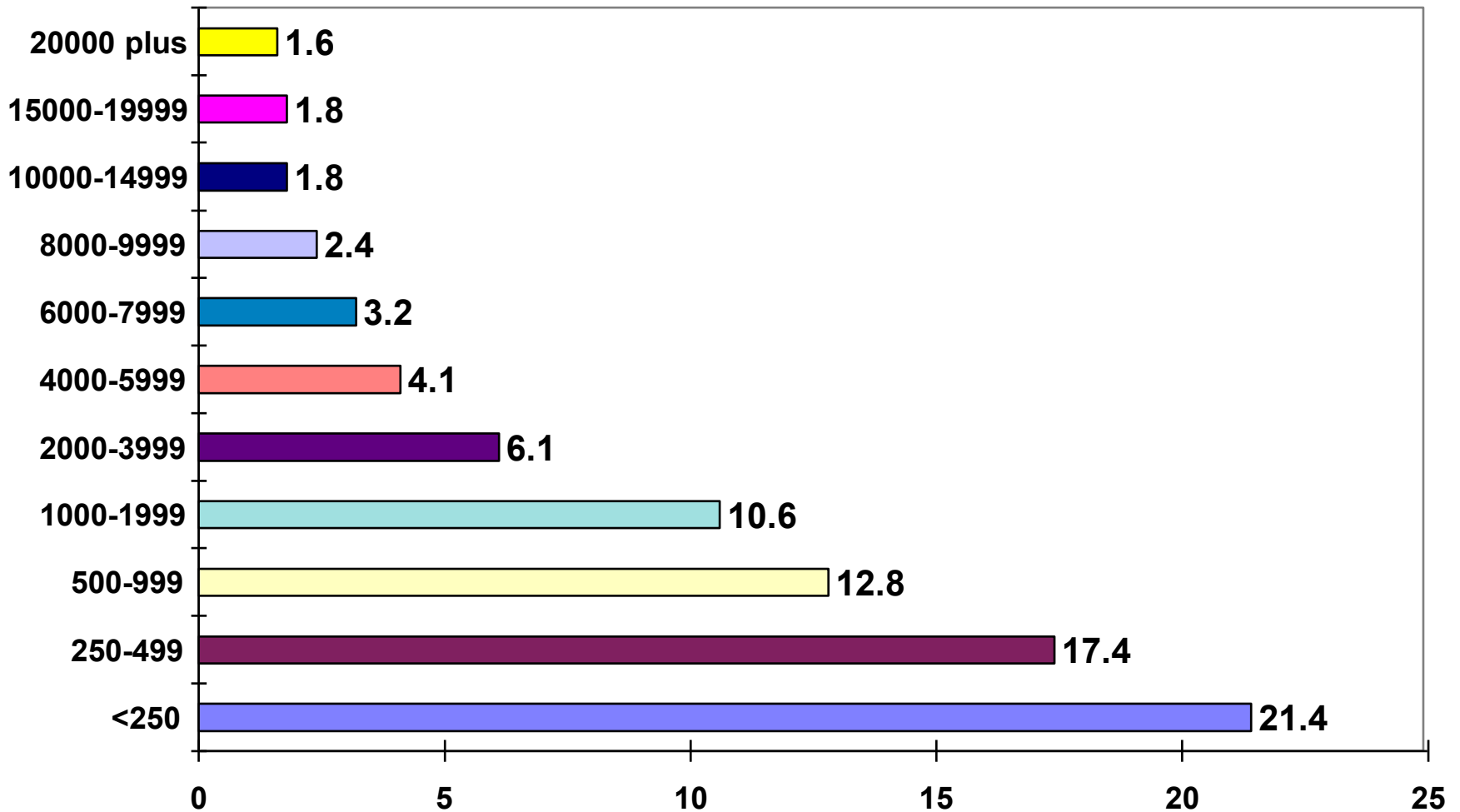


# Lack of perception – or willingness?

- We have not perceived the need to *penetrate* a parish area. We have rationalised our decline making ourselves content with fig leaf representative presence.
- We have refused the route of needing more parishes of modest size, to reach 'the pockets of 3-5000 people who are unchurched for all practical purposes'.<sup>1</sup>
- We have been unable to imagine that a church community for each micro community of 2000 people might be a valuable yardstick.
- We have also assumed that the responses to decline should be centrally initiated, and focused upon increasing numbers of clergy.

<sup>1</sup> The words of Archdeacon Eddie Shirras, 1992

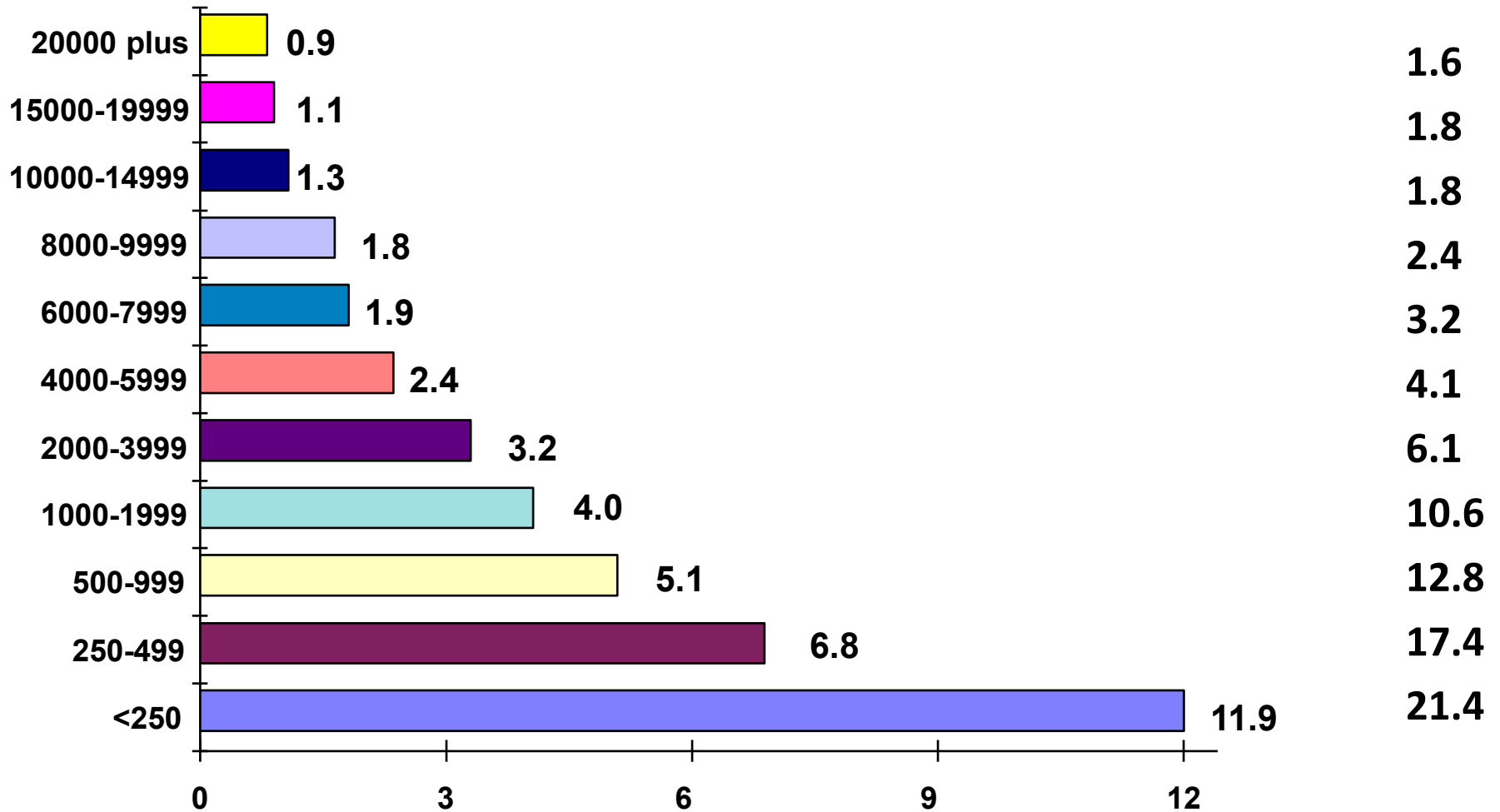
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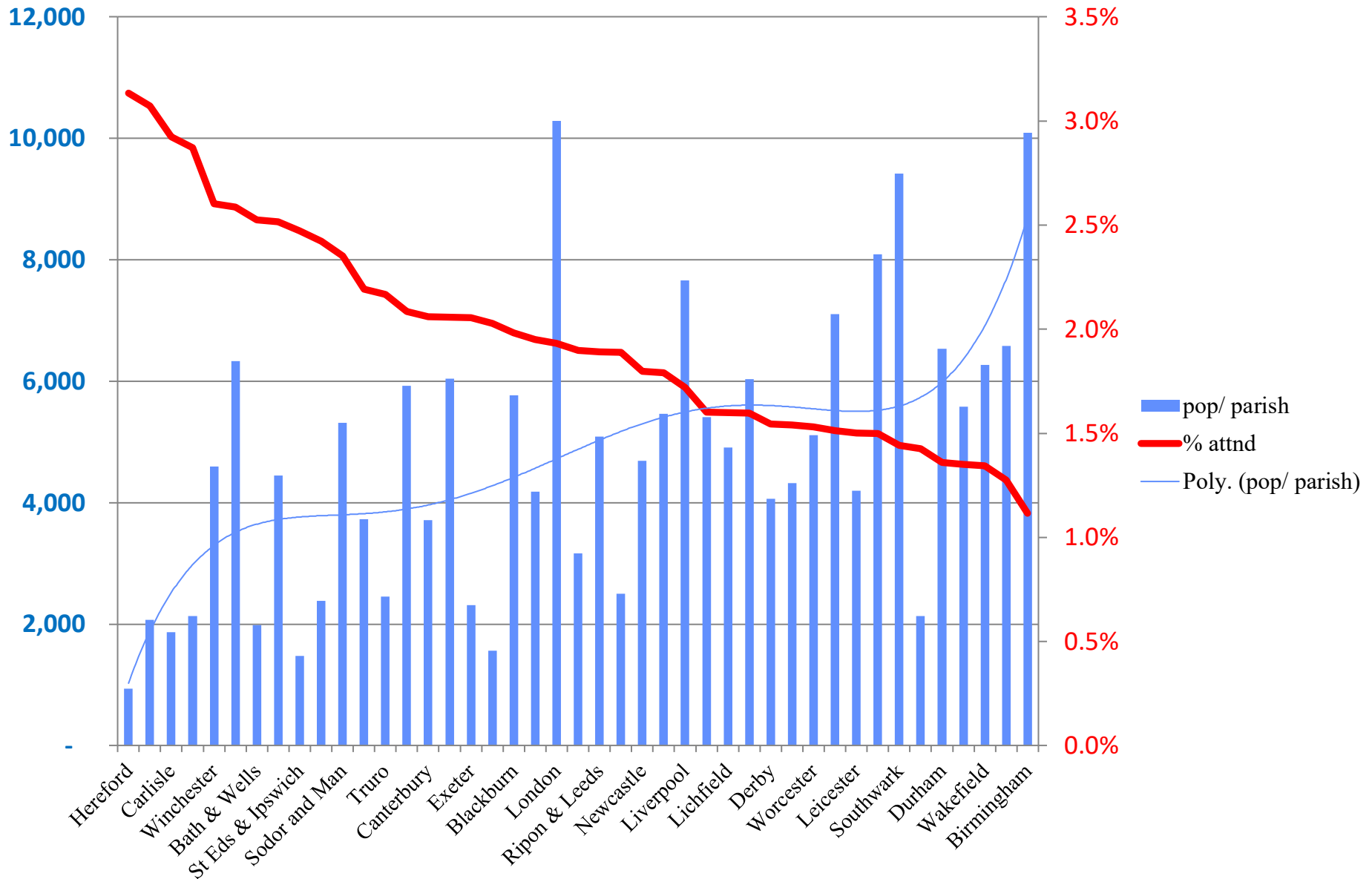
# C of E % Penetration of the Parish - 2011

1974 %



Percentage of the parish who are attending

# Population per parish & penetration – by diocese 2013



# Does London disprove the case?

- Clearly it is an outlier but...

Consider recent parish penetration in London diocese  
Divided into 4 groups from smaller to larger  
(using ER p. parish population)

	Parish Size	Electoral Roll	Penetration (%)
Quartile 1	4,054	165	4.71
Quartile 2	7,085	178	2.55
Quartile 3	10,102	148	1.48
Quartile 4	15,834	186	1.23

# Response to, and by, Wasdell

*Let my People Grow* went to GS November 1974

- it was noted
- Wasdell's contract for part 2 was terminated

'New facts and ideas are often threatening and become buried by defensive reaction – something which may well happen as we grapple with this kind of material.'

Wasdell, *Let My People Grow* p. 3

*Divide and Conquer* (June 1975)

- was unauthorised
- Citing factors of resistance<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wasdell, *Divide and Conquer*, pp 3-5

# Waddell's key messages

'It has become crystal clear that the strategy of growth by addition of new members to existing groups or congregations is *self-defeating*. As numbers increase, so the quality of life which sustains the group is destroyed. Opportunities for personal learning, participation and maturation, pastoral care, taking of responsibility and use of gifts, all begin to disappear.

Now there would appear to be only one alternative to growth by addition, and that is growth by *multiplication* ... then the most important problem to be solved is the question of what that unit looks like and what kind of leadership is required in the church to enable multiplication to take off and be sustained"<sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> D. Waddell, *Divide and Conquer* (London: UCP, 1975) p. 16.

# Anglican swansong?

'The forces sustaining the size, lifestyle, organisational form and mission of each of these working units are complex, deeply interwoven and highly resistant to change.

Moreover if breakthrough does happen and a particular congregation starts to grow, the dynamically conservative pressures in the rest of the church act in concert with those in the surrounding community to return the 'rogue' congregation to pattern.

Traditionally ministry involves running the church in its received pattern and passing it on to the next generation as little altered as possible. Changes are only made in so far as institutional survival is threatened and then the strategy of 'least possible change' to cope with the threat is followed.

The church is superbly organised for survival and brilliantly effective at perpetuating its institutional form. Tragically the form so preserved now stands firmly in the way of the effective mission and ministry of the church in modern England.'



# Has this ever happened before or since?

*Towards the Conversion of England* - 1944

John Tanburn's CPAS book *Open House* - 1970

The John Tiller report - 1983

*Mission Priority areas*: Richard Giles et al – 1992

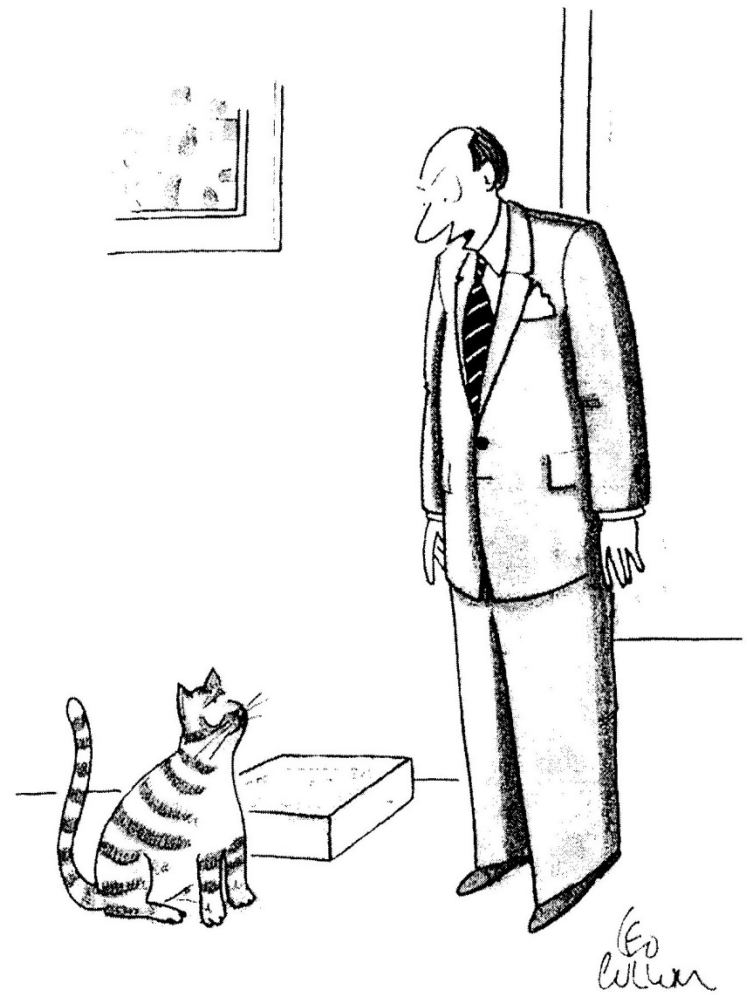
*Building Missionary Congregations*: Robert Warren, 1995

*A New Way of Working*: John Holbrook et al, 2001

Add your own

# Reasons to stay in the box

- Fear
- Loyalty to the past
- Lack of trust in the proponent of change
- Not allowed time for ideas to sink in
- Lack of vision
- Loss of position or influence



Never, ever, think  
outside the box

# What is the C of E parish based box?

Our priest

Result - Ceiling of 175 people

By the way ...  
'Come to us'  
[mission]

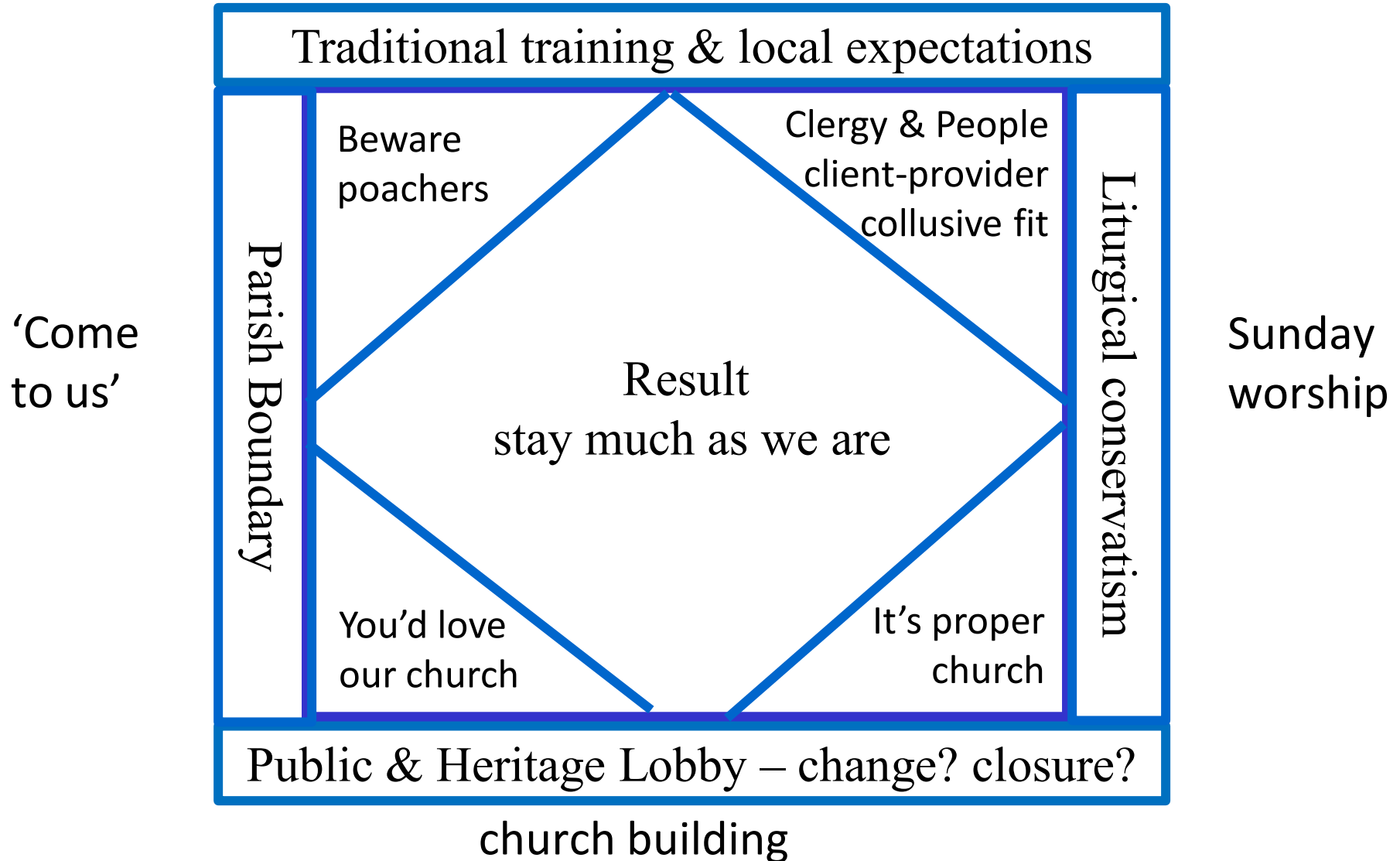
Our worship  
service –  
preferably  
Sunday

In rural and poor urban areas  
the ceiling is lower

Our church building

# How is the box strengthened?

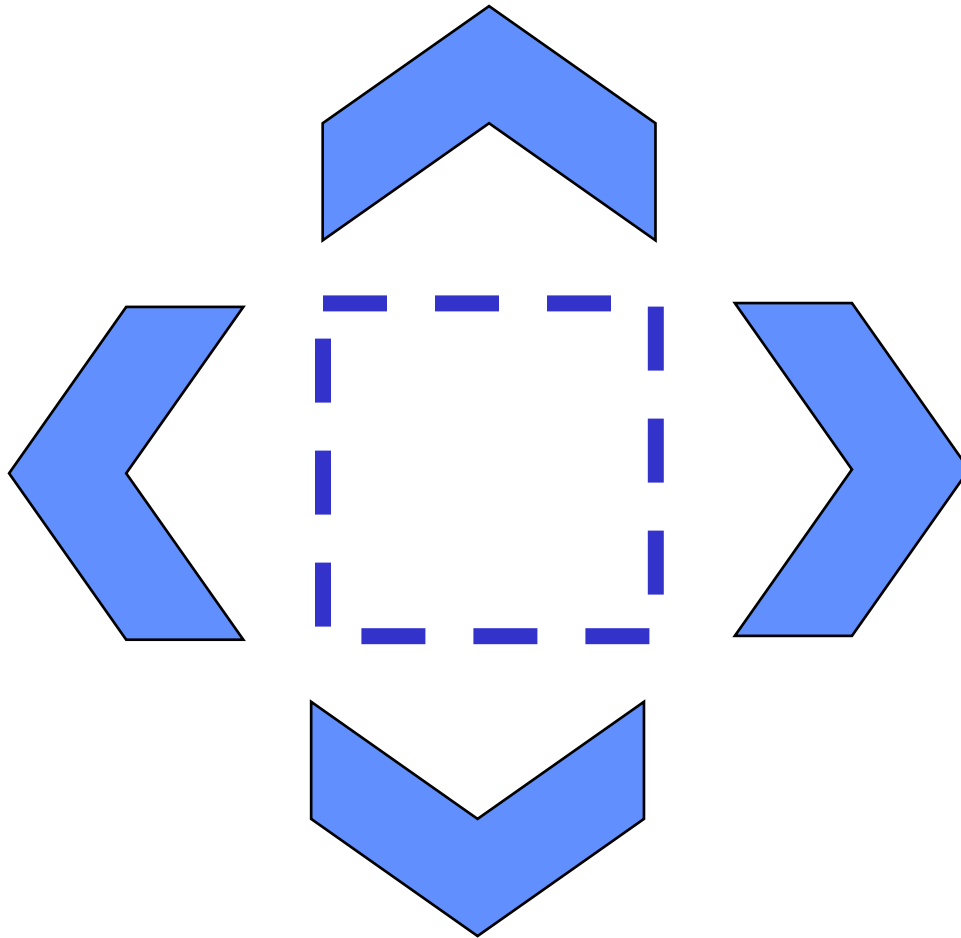
Priest



# Suppose life beyond the box

Pioneer & Lay-led

We come  
– to you



Communities  
round Jesus

Where others gather

# Questions for you

Is it true ... that parishes of over 2000 are self limiting?  
That they do not encourage diverse multiplication?

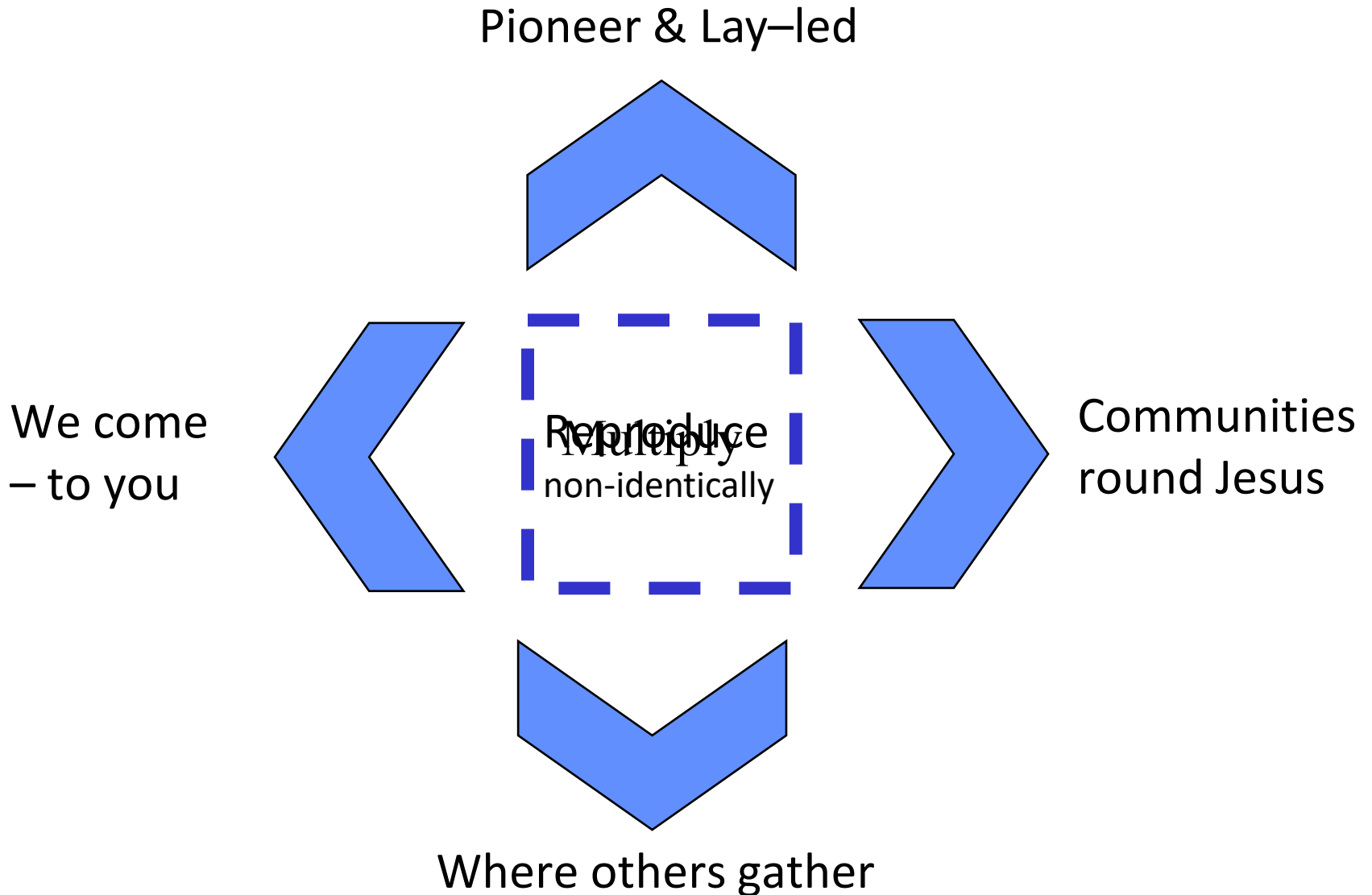
Should we allow the C of E parish box to have the last word?

# They said it

‘The desire for neatness, as much as the desire for control, is characteristic of ... those contemplating office. They are often backed up bureaucracies which are allergic to messiness. But human life and creativity are inherently messy and rebel against the uniformity that accompanies systemic constraints and universal solutions.’

House of Bishops, *Who is my neighbour?* (London: C of E, 2015) para 55.

# Suppose life beyond the box





# Questions for you

Is it true ... that parishes of over 2000 are self limiting?  
That they do not encourage diverse multiplication?

Should we allow the C of E parish box to have the last word?

Will we dare go with a messy, non-identical future to allow the creation of many more young churches?

# Questions at IDLC 3

1. If fxC have such a striking missional impact, what % of the total number of diocesan churches should they be by 2020?
2. What steps will be needed to realise such a goal?
3. If the missional and ecclesial identity of an fxC matters, who in your diocese would keep accurate records of them and their progress?
4. How could your diocese foster an Anglican view of network and neighbourhood, of cultural and territorial mission?
5. How will the lay-leaders be welcomed and encouraged, without overburdening or clericalising them?
6. How can these small vigorous young churches be welcomed and encouraged to reproduce yet again?
7. Who in the diocese is responsible for encouraging fxC to grow in ecclesial maturity, discipleship and avoid known vulnerabilities?
8. How can such desirable outcomes be delivered in practice?

# A few stats on IDLC dioceses

Dioceses A-Z	No. Chur's	Population 2013	Popul Incr 2006-2013	AWA 2006-2013	% of Pop who attend
<b>Chelmsford</b>	594	3,060,000	9.9%	-5.1%	<b>1.27%</b>
<b>Ely</b>	335	743,000	10.1%	-1.6%	<b>2.42%</b>
<b>Liverpool</b>	245	1,570,000	3.1%	-7.8%	<b>1.72%</b>
<b>London</b>	489	4,093,000	12.0%	0.6%	<b>1.93%</b>
<b>Manchester</b>	322	2,095,000	6.8%	-7.4%	<b>1.50%</b>
<b>Peterborough</b>	377	873,000	5.4%	-11.8%	<b>1.89%</b>
<b>Sheffield</b>	208	1,250,000	5.1%	-1.6%	<b>1.51%</b>
<b>Toronto</b>		<b>4,000.000</b>			<b>&lt;1%</b>