

Introduction and Sample from the Reaching and Keeping Tweenagers Work Book.

How to use this workbook

“Tweenagers are not against the Christian faith, it is church they find difficult”
(page 135)

This workbook has been created primarily for use in a local setting. It will be of value to ministers and church leaders, whatever your denomination; to those with responsibility for youth work in a local church, both paid and voluntary; and to parents of children and Tweenagers. It will also help a church look at its work with Tweenagers in the context of its wider life and ministry.

It is designed to be user-friendly and as jargon-free as possible. There are regular links to pages and sections in *Reaching and Keeping Tweenagers* (RAKT), where you will find more detailed analysis and information eg (p3) means page 3 in the book.

You can work through it section by section, or dip into the sections as they seem most appropriate to the life and work of your church. In each section there are practical activities to illustrate and help you understand some of the key research findings. There are also thought-provoking questions to stimulate discussion and action. These can be considered by individuals or teams, but we would encourage you to use them in a wider context in which the whole church is represented, such as a church meeting or leadership team. This will enable wide-ranging discussion and allow the church to benefit from some of the practical exercises.

The stories and examples of good practice are not intended to be prescriptive about how your church should respond to *Reaching and Keeping Tweenagers*. They are included to inspire you to think, pray and respond imaginatively in your local context.

The final section of the workbook lists the addresses of the planning committee, from whose organisations a range of resources are available that may be of help once you have discerned how God wants you to respond. These will get you going.

Symbols used

? = a question for the whole church ☎ an activity for the whole church

👤 for your Tweenagers 😊 for ministers/youth workers ☑ for parents

Setting the scene

2 churches in 5 in England have no children's or youth work

In 1979	1,400,000 under 15s went to church
In 1989	1,200,000 under 15s went to church
In 1998	720,000 under 15s went to church

That = 1,000 under 15s a week leaving church in the 1990s. (p3)

In 1991 there were 9,150,000 under 15s in England
In 2001 there were 9,440,000 under 15s in England
That is an increase of 300,000.

By 2011 there will be 8,830,000, down 6%.

So we can't blame population change for most of the huge drop in numbers of this

age group in church!

The English Church Attendance Survey separated children aged under 10 from Tweenagers aged 10 to 14.

Women tend to go to church more than men and girls go more than boys. (p7)

Most Tweenagers who leave church do so when they are 12 or 13, but it is when they are between 7 and 10 that many decide to leave as soon as they can. (p192,111)

Action stations

☎ In a church service ask all the 10 to 14 year olds to stand up. Then ask all the 22 to 26 year olds to stand up - they were 10 to 14 when those now 10 to 14 were born. What does this tell you about the loss of young people in your church?

😊 Can you find out for the years 1989 to 1993 how many children were born to people then coming to your church or how many babies were christened, baptised or dedicated in your church in those years? (Use a Cradle Roll, Baptismal Register, Sunday School register, your own or denominational statistics.) How many of them still come to your church, are known to be going to another church or have dropped out of church?

? What changes have there been in your youth and children's work in the past 12 years? Why did these take place? How many children do you have aged 8 to 10 who will become Tweenagers in the next few years? What provision might you need for them?

📺 "Undercover Tweenagers". Give them a video camera to show what church life is for them. ☎ Play the results to the whole church. ? Discuss your reactions.

? 😊 At what age do children leave your church? When and why do you think they decide they want to leave?

So ... how does your church compare with the national trends?

Compiled by Heather Wraight with additional ideas and material from Richard Bromley, Nick Lear and Martin Poulson