



Results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey



2016 National
Church Life
Survey

The integration of faith and work in Australian churches

Occasional Paper 41

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Executive summary

One of the primary ways in which Christians interact with the world is through their work. This report aims to support efforts for the greater integration of faith and matters related to work, by addressing the following topics:

- Demographic and denominational profiles of church attenders in paid employment.
- Ways in which local churches support church attenders to address matters of faith in their working lives.
- The integration of faith and work among church attenders and the factors that are associated with this integration.

This study draws primarily on results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey (attender, operations and leader surveys) and is supplemented by interview-based case studies from three pastors who have a particular ministry focus on bringing faith and work closer together.

The main findings are as follows:

1. Attenders in employment have distinctive characteristics

- Employed attenders are older than counterparts in the Australian community.
- Pentecostals and evangelicals comprise a growing proportion of employed attenders.

2. Churches offer support in diverse ways but there is room for improvement

Churches support attenders in diverse ways to link their faith with issues that concern them in their paid employment. While a majority of attenders feel supported, there is room for stronger or more effective support, particularly in the Mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches.

3. The average attender experiences and practises moderate levels of faith-work integration, according to the measures used in this research.

Faith-work integration was measured by

- *Vocation* (attenders' sense that they have been called to their work and that their work is meaningful),
- *Devotion* (the practice and deepening of faith in the workplace),
- *Influence* (the extent to which faith impacts on how the individual conducts their work),
- *Separation* (a disconnect between faith and the workplace).

Vocation, Devotion and Influence scores were moderately high. Separation scores were close to neutral.

5. There are small differences in faith-work integration between attenders in different denominations.

6. Feeling supported by their church is positively related to attenders' faith-work integration.

7. How religious a church attender is strongly predicts how well faith and work is integrated for them.

The main influence on the integration of faith and work is religiousness –regular personal devotions, the importance of God in a Christian's life, and a growing faith. Support from churches does make a difference to faith-work integration.

8. The average church attender agrees that it is important to them to have a job where they can be creative and help others and is neutral about the importance of a highly paid job.

9. Faith-work integration is strongly expressed in valuing work that helps others

The value of helping others is in line with Christian norms of love and care of neighbour. Integration is moderately expressed in valuing creativity, and not expressed in valuing highly paid work.

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The purpose of this study is to support the greater integration of faith and matters related to work.

Faith



Work



1 Introduction

One of the primary ways in which people interact with the world is through their work. The concept of vocation, the calling to Christian living in diverse ways that enable the expression and development of passions and gifts and that contribute to God's kingdom, has a long pedigree in Christian thought and practice related to work. The workplace is also a context in which Christians interact with others on a daily basis, with many opportunities to practise and develop fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Moreover, the workplace provides opportunities for evangelism or evangelisation.

Yet, many workers in the Western world struggle to integrate their religious beliefs and practices with their lives and responsibilities within the workplace community. There may be conflicts between organisational expectations and personal practices, if, for example, work is scheduled when the employee usually attends religious worship). The workplace may prioritise very different goals, such as material profit versus community service. There may also be a clash between organisational and personal values, such as productivity versus caring relationships.

Encouragement and support from churches and other networks is critical in this context, not only in relation to questions such as choice of occupation, but also to help Christians to address issues that concern them in their daily work.

One organisation that aims to encourage Christians in the workplace is Reventure Ltd, a non-profit venture which has 'engaging believers' as one of its aims: 'Help believers to have the best impact in their workplaces in how they lead and how they work. Engage them directly. And reach them through their churches. It is about seeing the "Church scattered" through the emerging Faith & Work movement.'

Given limited research in Australia, Reventure commissioned NCLS Research to prepare a report on faith and work integration for church attenders in paid employment, based on responses to the 2016 National Church Life Survey (NCLS).

The research questions addressed in this report are:

1. What is the **demographic profile** of church attenders in paid employment?
2. What is the **denominational profile** of church attenders in paid employment?
3. How do **local churches support** church attenders to address matters of faith in their working lives?
4. How is **faith and work integrated** for church attenders and **what factors are associated** with faith-work integration?
5. What **job qualities are important** and **what factors are associated** with different qualities?

2 Study methodology

This study draws primarily on results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey and is supplemented by interview-based case studies from three pastors.



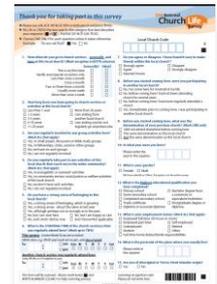
2.1 National Church Life Survey

The Australian National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is a project of NCLS Research, which has taken place every five years since 1991. Participating local churches complete three types of survey forms. First, all church attenders aged 15 years and older are requested to fill out a paper NCLS Attender Survey form, usually during or after a service of worship. Second, a single leader/administrator in each church completes an NCLS Operations Survey form about the activities and operations of the local church. Third, the NCLS Leader Survey is available to local church leaders, including clergy and pastors, elders, church councillors and other leaders.



This report presents Attender Survey, Operations Survey and Leader Survey results from the 2016 NCLS for questions that concern the integration of faith and work.

Attender Surveys were used to build a profile of attenders in paid employment. The 2016 NCLS Main Attender Survey was completed by church attenders aged 15+ in around 3,000 participating local churches in 20 denominations. Some 78,034 attenders completed a question about employment question, which was one of around 50 questions.

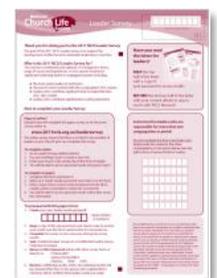


Extra questions about the integration of faith and work were answered by a small sample of 890 church attenders from across the nation who were in paid employment (Attender Survey F).



Operations Survey: Some 2,268 local churches from across the nation completed questions about activities and operations, including ways local churches support attenders to link faith and employment.

Leader Survey: This report presents results for 1002 senior local church leaders who are also staff from across the nation. These respondents are mostly clergy or a senior principal lay leader and they answered questions about the frequency of preaching on issues related to paid employment.



Weights: Regional/denominational weights used to estimate for the populations of attenders, churches and leaders as closely as possible.

Denominations: Participating denominations have been combined into larger groups as follows:

1. Catholic
2. Mainstream Protestant (Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Uniting Church)

3. Pentecostal (Australian Christian Churches, C3 Church, International Network of Churches, Christian Revival Crusade)
4. Other Protestant (Baptist, Churches of Christ, Christian Reformed, Salvation Army, and in attender data also includes CityLife Church)

Pentecostal and Other Protestant are combined into a single group in Attender Sample Survey F, due to small numbers of Pentecostal respondents.

More detailed information about the surveys, the question wording and the samples can be found in the 'Faith and Work Integration: Technical Report'. Appendix 1 also contains more statistical notes for this report.

2.2 Case study interviews

Three pastors from churches were recommended as leading the way in encouraging and supporting attenders in their working lives:

- Jo Wilton, Senior Pastor, C3 Church Miranda
- Paul Bartlett, Lead Pastor, Lighthouse Church, Wollongong
- Tim Blencowe, Senior Pastor, Macquarie Baptist Church.

Interviews with these three leaders were based on the following three questions:

- How do you understand 'work' in the life of a Christian?
- What do you do at your church to integrate faith and work for your people? Can you give examples?
- How effective do you think those practices have been?

3 Attenders in employment

Key finding: Attenders in employment have distinctive characteristics:

- **Employed attenders are older than counterparts in the Australian community.**
- **Pentecostals and evangelicals comprise a growing proportion of employed attenders.**



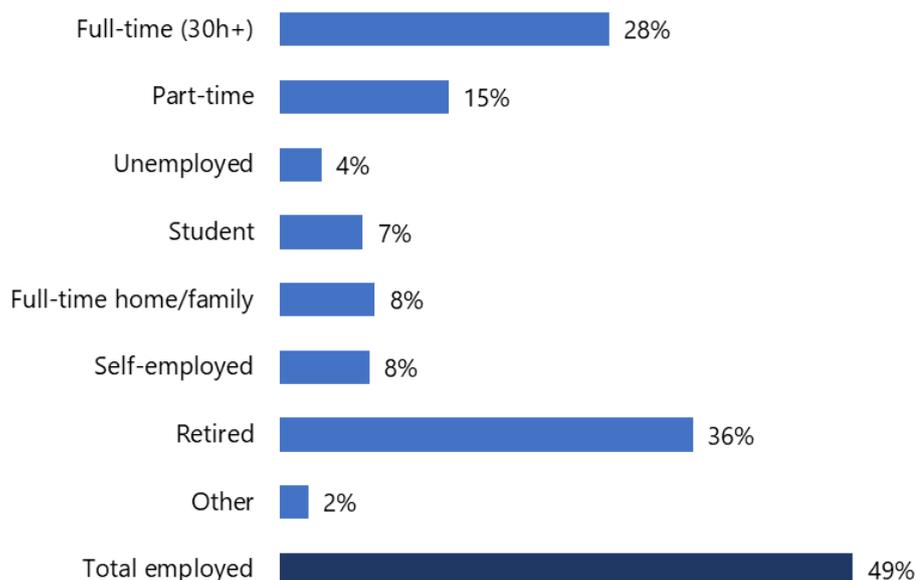
3.1 Employment status

Employed attenders are those who indicated that they were ‘employed full-time (30 hours or more)’, ‘employed part-time’ or ‘self-employed’ when asked their employment status. Almost a half of church attenders in 2016 were employed (49%) (Figure 1). This is a smaller proportion than the six in 10 Australians aged 15 years and older who were employed on census night (ABS, 2017). A majority of employed attenders were working full-time (57%), while approximately three in 10 were working part-time (29%), and 16% were self-employed (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

3.2 Occupation

Approximately a third (35%) of attenders in 2016 in paid employment worked in people-focused professions (e.g. teacher, lawyer, social worker, nurse). Some 15% worked in technological fields (e.g. engineer, surveyor, accountant) while 11% were employed in administrative, clerical, or sales occupations (Table 2).

Figure 1: Employment status of Australian church attenders



Source: 2016 NCLS All attenders (n=158,012).

Table 1: Employment status of Australian church attenders (employed versus all)

	Employed Attenders	All attenders
Full-time (30h+)	57%	28%
Part-time	29%	15%
Unemployed	0.3%	4%
Student	4%	7%
Full-time home/family	2%	8%
Self-employed	16%	8%
Retired	1%	36%
Other	0.3%	2%
Total employed	100%	49%

Source: 2016 NCLS Employed attenders (n=78,034), 2016 NCLS All attenders (n=158,012).

Note: Respondents could mark all that applied so totals may not add to 100%.

Table 2: Occupation of attenders in paid employment

	Attenders
Professional working mainly with people	34.6%
Professional working primarily in technological fields	14.7%
Employer or small business owner	6.6%
Administrative/clerical/sales worker	11.0%
Skilled trades or craft worker	5.2%
Semi-skilled or manual worker	5.4%
Farmer or farm manager	2.6%
Other occupation	20.0%

Source: 2016 NCLS Employed attenders (n=776). Note: Missing=12.8%.

3.3 Demographic profile

As shown in Table 3, some features of employed church attenders are that they were:

- More to be male (46%) than all attenders (40%).
- Much younger than attenders at large.
- More likely to hold a university degree (51%) than all attenders (37%).
- More likely to be born in a country in which English is not the main language spoken (31%) than attenders at large (27%).

These are all reflective of broader patterns in the church and in society. (See McAleese, Pepper and Powell, 2018 for a comparison of the demographic profile of church attenders and the wider Australian community).

Table 3: Demographic profile of Australians (employed attenders, all attenders, employed census)

	Employed attenders	All attenders	Employed census
Gender			
Female	54.3%	60.5%	47.5%
Male	45.7%	39.5%	52.5%
Age			
15-19 years	3.2%	4.5%	5.0%
20-29 years	12.2%	8.2%	20.5%
30-39 years	17.2%	10.6%	22.6%
40-49 years	23.2%	13.5%	22.3%
50-59 years	24.1%	14.9%	19.4%
60-69 years	15.3%	18.7%	8.7%
70-79 years	3.8%	18.7%	1.3%
80+ years	0.8%	10.8%	0.2%
Education			
School	22.7%	38.1%	35.2%
Trade certificate/diploma/associate diploma	26.3%	25.0%	32.8%
Degree	51.0%	36.9%	32.0%
Country of birth - self			
Born in Australia	60.2%	64.4%	69.4%
Born in other English-speaking country	8.7%	9.1%	10.6%
Born in non English-speaking country	31.1%	26.6%	20.0%

Source: 2016 NCLS Employed attenders (n=78,034), 2016 NCLS All attenders (n=193,809), ABS 2016 (Employment, Income and Unpaid Work table; Selected Person Characteristics table; Cultural and Language Diversity table).

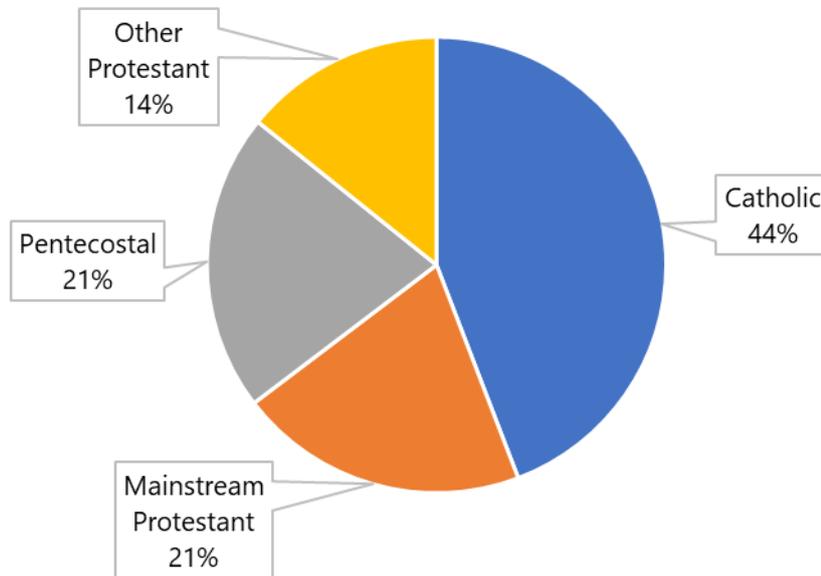
3.4 Denominational profile

The denominational profile of employed attenders is given in Figure 2. Employed attenders were:

- Less likely to attend Catholic parishes and Mainstream Protestant churches than all attenders (**Error! Reference source not found.**).
- More likely to attend Pentecostal churches and a little more likely to attend Other Protestant churches.

These differences reflect the younger age distributions of Pentecostal and Other Protestant churches.

Figure 2: Denominational profile of employed church attenders



Source: Denomination: 2016 NCLS Employed attenders (n=78,034).

Table 4: Denominational profile of Australian church attenders (employed versus all)

	Employed attenders	All attenders
Denomination		
Catholic	44.2%	48.5%
Mainstream Protestant	20.4%	23.4%
Pentecostal	21.2%	15.0%
Other Protestant	14.2%	13.0%

Source: Denomination: 2016 NCLS Employed attenders (n=78,034), 2016 NCLS All attenders (n=191,777).

4 Support from churches for integrating faith and work

Key finding: Churches offer support in diverse ways but there is room for improvement.

Churches support attenders in diverse ways to link their faith with issues that concern them in their paid employment. While a majority of attenders feel supported, there is room for stronger or more effective support, particularly in the Mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches.



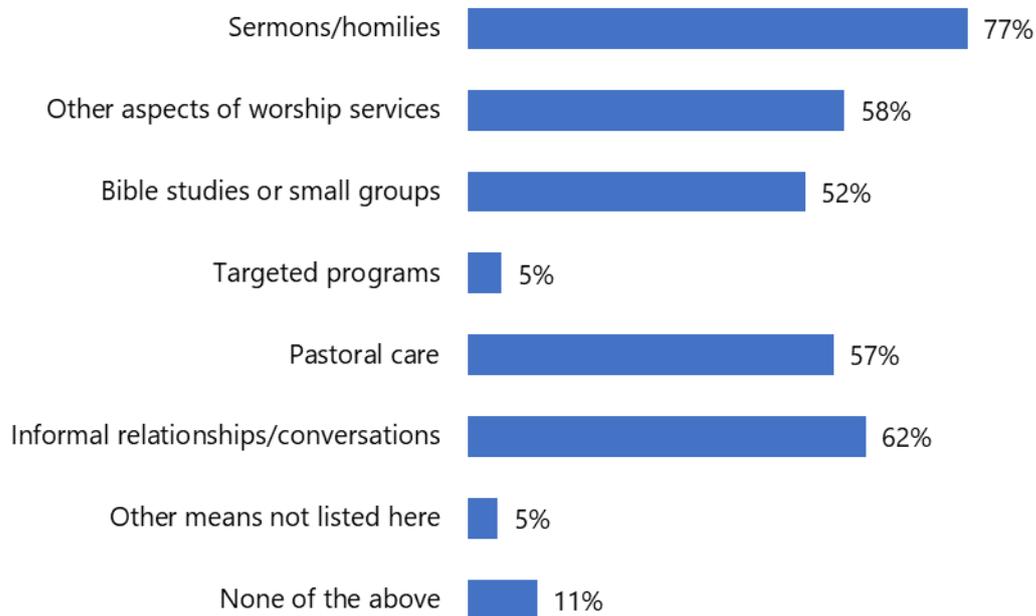
4.1 Support from local churches

Nine in 10 churches (91%) reported that they support attenders to link faith with issues that concern them in their paid employment. The most common way was through sermons or homilies. A majority also offered support through other aspects of worship services, Bible studies or small groups, pastoral care or information relationships and conversations. Very few churches ran targeted programs such as seminars for professionals. (See Figure 3).

The presence of support and its various forms differed across the denominations (See Table 5). Mainstream Protestant churches were less likely to offer support than other churches. Addressing issues via the pulpit was the most common means across all denominational groups, and preachers at more than eight in 10 Protestant churches did so. Pastoral care, Bible studies or small groups and informal relationships and conversations featured heavily in Pentecostal and Other Protestant churches, whereas Catholic parishes were the most likely to address issues of faith and work through aspects of worship services such as prayers of the faithful. Targeted programs were most likely in Pentecostal churches, but were still uncommon (13% of Pentecostal churches).

Leaders with preaching responsibilities were asked to indicate how often they would touch on the topic of issues related to paid employment in their preaching over the course of a year. Six in 10 senior local church leaders indicated that they did so at least occasionally, with 6% doing so often and 19% sometimes. Some 11% never addressed this topic (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The results did not differ by denomination.

Figure 3: Ways local churches support attenders to link faith and employment



Source: 2016 Operations Survey (n=2,268 local churches).

Table 5: Ways local churches support attenders to link faith and employment by denomination

Church support for attenders in paid employment	Catholic	Mainstream Protestant	Pentecostal	Other Protestant	All churches
Sermons/homilies	82%	72%	82%	86%	77%
Other aspects of worship services	74%	55%	62%	55%	58%
Bible studies or small groups	23%	47%	70%	75%	52%
Targeted programs	2%	4%	13%	4%	5%
Pastoral care	47%	50%	79%	67%	57%
Informal relationships/conversations	55%	57%	72%	71%	62%
Other means not listed here	11%	4%	5%	3%	5%
None of the above	7%	16%	4%	3%	11%

Source: 2016 Operations Survey (n=2,268 local churches).

Table 6: Frequency of preaching by senior leaders on issues related to paid employment

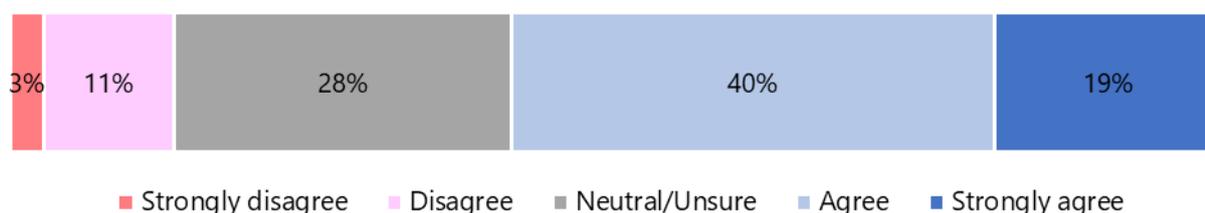
	Leaders
Often	6.0%
Sometimes	19.4%
Occasionally	34.2%
Rarely	29.7%
Never	10.7%

Source: 2016 Leader Survey (n=1,002 senior leaders).

4.2 Attenders' evaluation of support

Attenders who were currently in paid employment were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: 'I feel supported by my local church in being a Christian in my workplace'. A majority agreed or strongly agreed (59%), while 28% were neutral or unsure and 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure 4). The results differed by denominational group (Table 7). Pentecostal and Other Protestant attenders were the most likely to feel supported by their local church, followed by Mainstream Protestants, then Catholics. Those who identified as charismatic or Pentecostal were more likely than those who didn't to feel supported.

Figure 4: Attenders' sense of support from their local church in being a Christian in the workplace



Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey F Attenders in paid employment (n=809).

Table 7: Attenders' sense of support from their local church by denomination and faith identity

	Denomination			Faith identity		All attenders
	Catholic	Mainstream Protestant	Non-mainstream Protestant	Charismatic/Pentecostal	Not charismatic/Pentecostal	
Strongly agree	12.4%	18.2%	27.3%	27.4%	15.6%	18.8%
Agree	40.3%	35.1%	41.9%	43.8%	38.2%	39.8%
Neutral/Unsure	28.8%	32.8%	24.0%	24.2%	29.0%	27.9%
Disagree	14.6%	12.3%	4.9%	3.5%	13.8%	10.7%
Strongly disagree	4.0%	1.6%	1.9%	1.1%	3.5%	2.8%

Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey F Attenders in paid employment (n=809).

4.3 Case studies

The following case studies are based on interviews with three pastors who are leading the way in encouraging, supporting and challenging attenders to live out their faith in their working lives. Two leaders are Pentecostals, while the third is Baptist. These examples show the diversity of ways in which this can be done. Common across the three is an emphasis on bridging the divide between Sundays and the working week, breaking down the duality between 'ministry' roles and other occupations, an attention to openness to God in the everyday experience of work, and peer-to-peer learning and support such as through small groups.

Bridging the work-faith divide

Jo Wilton, Senior Pastor, C3 Church Miranda

Jo Wilton's journey towards the integration of her faith and work began in an interview room at the Sydney Police Centre when she was 20.

Back then she kept her faith private and there was a clear demarcation between her beliefs and her working life.

As a young constable with the Federal Police, she was interviewing a man who'd committed fraud and had spent much of the money overseas. He'd become a Christian and turned himself in so he could pay back the money and 'face the music'.

Every time Jo's sergeant left the room, the man pummelled her with questions. Finally, she relented and admitted she was a Christian.

'He got me thinking.'

Jo left the police force and began studying law part-time.

She'd always wanted to be a corporate lawyer and, as a mature-aged law student, the path to her goal seemed clear. However, the Christianity she'd embraced came with a social conscience, and the road branched.

'It was really a dual pathway of developing my Christian faith and also figuring out, "What did work look like for me?"'

As an investigator with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, Jo worked with Christians who'd formed a weekly fellowship group in the workplace, and joined them in their outreach.

'I then started to look for this integration wherever I went, so I didn't see faith and work as separate parts of my life.'

Until two years ago, Jo was a practising solicitor working for Anti-Slavery Australia and the NSW Bar Association. She has also run a voiceover business for more than 20 years.

'I don't see these roles as separate from who I am as a Christian but rather as part of my life in which I use my skills within the church and our society as a whole.'

Jo has been the pastor of a small C3 church in the Sutherland Shire in New South Wales for the last eight-and-a-half years but doesn't believe the ultimate goal for a Christian is to be in Christian ministry.

In the second half of 2019, she will offer church members the opportunity to share their thoughts about 'God in my week' – a title she chose over 'Faith and work' and 'God in my workplace' to ensure people's discussion of 'work' is not limited to paid employment. The series aims to draw out a variety of ways of working and their worth – to help her congregation appreciate the value of everybody's contribution.

'I think the healthiest churches are full of people with diverse backgrounds, multi-generational, multi-skilled, and flourishing in their different giftings.'

Jo says it's also important for Christians to be in the 'real world' in workplaces emulating Christ's love and responding to challenges with the fruits of the spirit.

She encourages people, including people who feel stuck in their roles, to see each day as a new chance to pursue the plans God for them and to make changes in their world and work.

'If we're spirit-led people, if we're listening and following the voice of God, we can get direction for our work and for our businesses and for every aspect of our life that's going to help us walk into a flourishing life.'

She says it is critical to support people in their work because the faith-work divide can be crippling. 'If people are feeling as though they come to church on a Sunday and they hear about the Word and, on Monday morning, they head in to work and they feel lost, or they feel alone – I think that's the worst possible thing really.'

The church's Connect Groups are helping to bridge the divide, she explains, drawing smaller groups of people together to pray and talk through challenges – many of them work-related.

'It's important to know that at lunchtime you can pick up the phone to someone in your Connect Group or someone else in the church and say, "Oh my gosh, I've just had the worst morning," or send a text to someone and say, "Hey, can you pray for me because this day's gone pear-shaped?"'

She's committed to showing ordinary people how their seemingly small actions, like prayerfulness and kindness in the workplace, can contribute to God's purposes.

'This person's contribution to the body of Christ, and to society as a whole, is just as important as somebody who is working for a Christian NGO and travelling the world.'

Jo says people often think God is asking them to change their life, leave their job, or to go overseas, when God is really whispering that they should call someone, have coffee with them or pray for them.

'Because I don't segment Sunday from the rest of the week, I feel I'm living a life of purpose no matter what I'm doing because, at any given time, I have the sense there could be a divine appointment.'

She says we're all searching for purpose in our lives and most people in the prime of their working life are going to spend 40-plus hours a week involved in their work.

'If people can sense the calling of God in their work, just as much as in their prayer life, or their spiritual development, then holistically, and I know this personally, I have more hope in my life that I am living for God.'

'If we're really living our lives in God's will, He's got you in your job to bless someone or to pray for someone and to plant a seed in their life that we might never find out about this side of Heaven. If we can have that revelation about our work, it really gives us a sense of living on purpose, for God, every day. And that helps on the really dreary days when you're asking, "What am I doing?"'

Thank God it's Monday

Paul Bartlett, Lead Pastor, Lighthouse Church, Wollongong

Christians who sideline their faith at work and bank on getting to a church service on Sunday are missing out on a huge part of the purpose of God for their life, says Pastor Paul Bartlett, founder of the #TGIM movement.

Paul is a senior leader of Lighthouse in Wollongong, New South Wales, state leader of Australian Christian Churches (ACC) in NSW, and national leader of ACC's Community Engagement – a role in which he hopes to equip around 1,100 churches to think and act differently regarding community transformation.

#TGIM stands for Thank God it's Monday. It was born from a desire to help individuals see that their faith and purpose can be worked out every day of the week and to equip leaders of faith organisations to think differently about how to engage their community.

The movement has spread to five countries in Europe and recently launched in Canada, where Paul conducted TV and radio interviews, and spoke at conferences.

#TGIM the book was a bestseller in Australia and has been an important catalyst for the contagion.

'The book is firstly about the story of the Lighthouse church,' says Paul, 'and how we turned from an inward church to an outward church. Our main focus was to teach our church that their work is their calling.'

The Lighthouse now has over 1,000 people, 70 per cent of whom were not Christians when Paul and his wife Annette took over the church's leadership 18 years ago. On any given week, Lighthouse connects with six times the number of people that attend Sunday gatherings.

Paul says many pastors *unintentionally* infer that Sunday is the most spiritual day – so Christians go to work thinking, 'Don't worry, Sunday's coming where I'll encounter God and feel spiritual.'

'The number one thing we've done at Lighthouse is we've made Monday spiritual again.

'We've also taught people you don't have to get on a plane for a two-week mission trip to another country to reach people for Christ. You just need to walk across the road to your neighbour or to the office cubicle next to yours.

'The most important ministry at Lighthouse is the everyday ministry of work.'

Paul says demystifying notions of 'calling' and 'place of calling' has been central to changing people's perception of their day-to-day purpose.

'People at Lighthouse now understand that only a handful of them will be called to missionary work and that everyone else will find their mission field right in front of them in whatever they're doing now.'

Leaders train, equip and inspire people to go into their Mondays guided by the phrase in Ephesians 2:10 that says, 'God has prepared something good for you to do.'

The church's Connect Groups are also often work-centric, with leaders trained to ask relevant questions like, 'How do you handle a difficult boss?' or 'How do you handle it when your boss asks you to do something that's unethical and you could get the sack if you don't do it?'

Paul says people are finding God's purpose in their work and it's exciting.

'We discovered that little things in the workplace confirm that God has prepared something for you to do if you go to work like you know this is true.

'People began to tell stories of the little things happening at work they never thought possible.

'The little encounters with people, the conversations around faith, the person that needed somebody to pray for them. All these things began to emerge and it strengthened the idea that whatever the person does today, God's in it.'

Paul says the statistics show that churches must stop trying to make Sundays the only pathway to bring people to Christ because it's not working.

'We've got to go deeper because the world is sick of us caring with our agenda attached.'

Lighthouse leaders recognise it's important to have a different set of KPIs that don't just measure the number of people in seats on Sundays, but also gauge influence in the community. They measure its impact through its partnerships, which range from local eatery [Grill'd](#) burgers to local fitness centres that train the 40 or so homeless young people assisted each year by Lighthouse. There's also a weekly community kitchen where volunteers from businesses and the community help cook and wash dishes to assist the Lighthouse to feed 150 people off the street.

'What we've found is that, as we immerse ourselves and get to know our community and start to value what they value, they love us.'

Eight years ago, Lighthouse hired a research company that found that, if the church were to shut down, the outside community would be genuinely disappointed.

'What happened was people started to get to know us as the church that has extraordinary ideas around how to love people.

'We set up the Jerry the Giraffe Award for people and organisations in our community that stick their neck out for others – and people are genuinely excited about winning the award and taking selfies with him. 'Churches buy red glasses as part of the *Thank God it's Monday* Community Engagement Training bundles – and they're for people who see their Mondays differently.

'I carry these glasses with me and if I go to a restaurant and get good service I say to the person, "Hey, I don't know if you know, but we love people who love doing their work, and I'd love to get a selfie with you. If it's okay, I'd love to post it." It's just a fun way to connect people.

'We're trying to do as many things as we can to make Christianity a bit normal in society and make it about loving, honouring, and making people feel special, as opposed to just trying to preach at them the first moment we see them.'

Made in the image of God the worker

**Tim Blencowe, Baptist Chaplain, Macquarie University
and Senior Pastor, Macquarie Baptist Church**

Get Tim Blencowe talking about the importance of integrating faith and work he's frank.

'The workplace is where we spend most of our life, all of our best energy. We train for it for years. We exhaust ourselves into it, and if we don't help people join the dots between Jesus and their work, we're inviting all sorts of disconnection.

'People cope with it either by compartmentalising their two lives or by eventually seeing their faith shrivel because it does not correlate at all to their day-to-day experience.

'I want our people to understand the privilege of being made in the image of a worker God whose work continues each day and the privilege of becoming a co-worker with God.'

As Senior Pastor at Macquarie Baptist Church and Baptist Chaplain to Macquarie University, Tim ministers to two diverse and quite transient populations: students and staff of the university, and workers at Macquarie Park, which is a hub for economically significant global businesses and one of the strongest growing employment centres in Sydney.

Tim credits a friend at his previous church for helping him see God's vision for work, which in turn led him to help organise some conferences for young workers. These meetings exposed a huge spiritual need and ignited Tim's passion to provide people with a more supportive theology of work.

'What we discovered was that it's in the first five years after uni that young workers are especially vulnerable because they're just not equipped. They go from the warm nest of their university Christian group to the brutal reality of the workplace. And, within five years, there's a massive fall-off rate of Christians.'

Typically, he says, in a context like Macquarie University a student will get great input and lots of love and attention from their Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES) or another university-based Christian group.

'Then, if they put their hand up for some kind of "ministry" role like pastor or missionary, they get very clear runway lights and all the resourcing and equipping they could ever want, and almost celebrity status.

'But if God calls them to be an engineer or an accountant say, then the runway lights are just not there. There's a subtext that says, "Yeah, well, if you chose that, you chose a lesser role anyway." And there's no vision for equipping people in that space.'

During his decade at Macquarie, Tim has worked hard through teaching, preaching and conversation to expand people's understanding of God's vision for work and to help them bridge the faith-work divide.

Each year he asks people to focus on three aspects of worker experience – the work, the worker and the workplace – and to contemplate questions like: 'What does it mean to be an accountant to the glory of God or write code to the glory of God?'

Periodically Tim has also:

- Led My Work Matters, a guided reflection he devised that helps people explore the church-work disconnect.
- Asked people to talk in the service about how they do their work to the glory of God and what challenges they face in their roles.
- Split people into industry groups (accountants with accountants, teachers with teachers) with a simple grid that asks them to discuss where God is in their work and workplace issues.
- Paired people up to talk, pray and show an interest in each other's work and to encourage them to continue supporting each other in this way.

'It's quite ground-breaking because people are not used to having their vocations talked about and their work-day experiences validated in the context of church – unless of course they've got a gift that can be used in the church.'

Tim provides a paradigm to help people think about how to be a co-worker with God. It starts with them walking into their workplaces prayerfully and expectantly and being good to people in their work team. It extends to them shaping organisational culture and policy so that their organisation does good in the community and offers a genuinely helpful product that's good for the environment and blesses the world.

'I think that's God's vision for work.'

Tim has run successful seminars at Baptist churches about the importance of integrating faith and work but theological resistance on campus has meant he has not been able to cultivate an awareness of God's vision for work in that context to the degree he would like.

'It's a work in progress,' he says. 'We've certainly made progress. But it's a hard push.'

He says the resistance arises from the 'faulty theological grid' of Western evangelicalism – a grid that has helped shape Sydney evangelicalism and its restrictive theology of work.

'We're very big on being gospel-centred and highlighting the importance of people trusting in Jesus for salvation. But I think we're pretty shrivelled in our vision for what that redeemed life then goes on to look like other than making more disciples.'

'I find the only key messages I hear about work are that's it a place to evangelise and it's a place to make money for serving the gospel. I hear almost nothing that helps people understand how their daily work needs to be to the glory of God or how we're made to be workers in the image of God the worker.'

Tim takes issue with Christians who find themselves in organisations that are 'not blessing the world' yet don't act to change those organisations from within or to leave them.

'Too many Christians compartmentalise. They'll sing big in church, and they'll give big in church, and they'll talk big about glorifying God on Sunday. But Monday to Friday, they're part of workplaces and work cultures that are abusive and self-interested. Whole industries offer nothing to society except wealth creation for people, and I think that's got to be challenged. And the higher we get in organisations, the more responsible we are for this.'

5 Integration of faith and work among attenders

Our main research question was 'How is faith and work integrated for Australian church attenders?' We were also interested in whether factors such as a person's age, gender or education, had an impact. Further, are religious factors, such as a person's practice of faith or their denominational tradition associated with faith-work integration?

For this part of the study, we focussed on *attenders in paid employment* who answered a special set of 15 survey questions about faith and work integration. They were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral/unsure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

A statistical technique called factor analysis was used to group these questions into four scales reflective of broader concepts to do with the integration of faith and work.

1. *Vocation*: attenders' sense that they have been called to their work and that their work is meaningful;
2. *Devotion*, the practice and deepening of faith in the workplace;
3. *Influence*, the extent to which faith impacts on how the individual conducts their work; and
4. *Separation*, a disconnect between faith and the workplace.

To find out more about how scales were calculated and items in each scale, see the Technical Report.

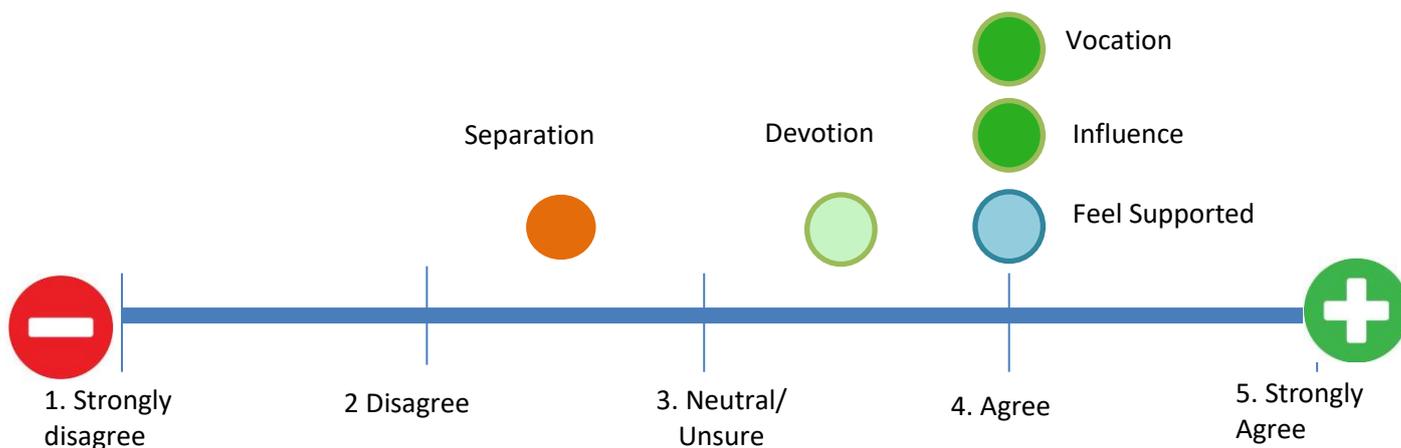
5.1 Patterns of faith-work integration

Key Finding: The average attender experiences and practices moderate levels of faith-work integration, according to the measures used in this research

Using the median scores on each scale, Figure 5 shows visually that the average attender:

- Agreed that their work is a calling that makes a difference in the world (Vocation).
- Slightly agreed that they pray regularly for colleagues and their faith had deepened as a result of work (Devotion).
- Agreed that their faith influences their actions at work (Influence).
- Slightly disagreed that they separated their faith from their working life (Separation).

Figure 5: Median scores for faith-work integration for the average church attender



Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey F Attenders in paid employment (n=830-866).

Key Finding: There are small differences in faith-work integration between attenders in different denominations.

Error! Reference source not found. shows that Separation was highest among Catholics. Influence was highest among non-Mainstream Protestants. Faith-work integration was a little higher among those who identified with charismatic/Pentecostal approaches to faith than among other attenders.

Table 8: Mean faith-work integration scores by denomination and faith identity

	Denomination			Faith identity		All attenders
	Catholic	Mainstream Protestant	Non-mainstream Protestant	Charismatic/Pentecostal	Not charismatic/Pentecostal	
Vocation	3.8	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.7	3.8
Devotion	3.5	3.4	3.7	3.9	3.4	3.6
Influence	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.1
Separation	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.6	2.5

Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey F Attenders in paid employment (n=830-866).

Key Finding: Feeling supported by their church is positively related to attenders’ faith-work integration.

When attenders feel that they are supported by their churches:

- They tend to have a stronger sense that work is meaningful (Vocation),
- Their faith tends to be deepened in the workplace (Devotion).
- Their faith tends to impact more on how they conduct their work (Influence).

In contrast, when a person does not feel supported by their church, there is more likely to be a disconnect between their faith and the workplace (Separation).

5.2 Factors related to faith-work integration

Which of the following are associated with faith-work integration?

- Demographics (age, gender, education, country of birth)?
- Religiosity (religiousness scale, frequency of church attendance)?
- Faith tradition (denomination, faith identity – Catholic or Anglo-Catholic, evangelical/reformed, charismatic/Pentecostal, liberal/progressive, moderate/traditionalist, don't identify)?
- Evaluation of support from the local church?

We conducted statistical tests known as stepwise linear regressions to examine the influences of these factors on faith-work integration.

Key finding: How religious an attender is strongly predicts how well faith and work is integrated for them.

Religiousness is the main influence on the integration of faith and work, predicting Vocation, Devotion, Influence and Separation. Religiousness is measured by

- the regular personal and communal practice of faith,
- the importance of God in a Christian's life, and
- a growing faith.

Support from the local church also predicted all four scales, as did holding a university degree.

The predictor variables explained 18% of the variation in Separation, 27% in Vocation, 33% in Influence and 42% in Devotion. This means that we were best able to predict Devotion, and least able to predict Separation. For the full regression results, see the Technical Report.

5.3 Qualities of work

What job qualities are important to church attenders and what factors are associated with different qualities? Attenders were asked to reflect on three qualities of work: creativity, helps others or high pay.

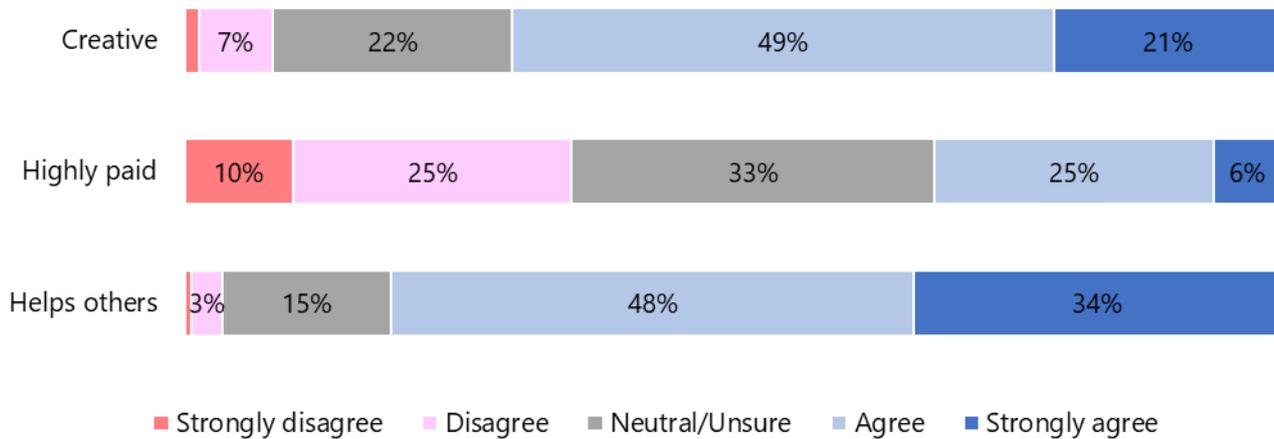
Key finding: The average church attender agrees that it is important to them to have a job where they can be creative and help others and is neutral about the importance of a highly paid job.

The results for importance of working in jobs with different qualities are given in Figure 6. Considering the median responses, the average attender:

- Agreed that it was important to them to have a job where they can be creative
- Was neutral about whether it was important to them to have a highly paid job
- Agreed that it was important to them to have a job where they can help others

Table 8 indicates that it is attenders who identify as charismatic or Pentecostal who most agreed that it is important that their job allows them to be creative and to help others, but the differences are small. A different pattern is present for the importance of being in a highly paid job. Here, it is Catholics who most agreed (although still a minority, at 40%), while Mainstream Protestants were the group least likely to agree (20%). A third of attenders across all groups were neutral or unsure.

Figure 6: Importance of qualities of work



Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey F Attenders in paid employment (n=804-836).

Table 9: Importance of qualities of work by denomination and faith identity

	Denomination			Faith identity		All attenders
	Catholic	Mainstream Protestant	Non-mainstream Protestant	Charismatic/Pentecostal	Not charismatic/Pentecostal	
Creative						
Strongly disagree	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Disagree	5.2%	13.4%	4.6%	3.2%	8.0%	6.6%
Neutral/unsure	24.5%	21.3%	18.9%	20.0%	22.6%	21.9%
Agree	49.4%	48.8%	49.7%	39.1%	53.0%	49.4%
Strongly	19.7%	15.0%	25.3%	36.4%	15.0%	20.7%
Highly paid						
Strongly disagree	7.3%	15.6%	10.0%	10.6%	9.7%	9.9%
Disagree	19.8%	32.2%	28.9%	22.7%	26.9%	25.4%
Neutral/unsure	32.8%	32.0%	34.2%	31.2%	33.8%	33.1%
Agree	34.1%	17.0%	18.9%	23.6%	25.5%	25.5%
Strongly	6.0%	3.3%	8.0%	11.8%	4.2%	6.2%
Help others						
Strongly disagree	0.9%	0.6%	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%
Disagree	2.2%	4.8%	2.6%	2.3%	3.0%	2.9%
Neutral/unsure	16.5%	16.0%	13.4%	10.5%	17.5%	15.3%
Agree	52.7%	48.8%	40.6%	39.4%	50.9%	47.7%
Strongly	27.7%	29.7%	43.2%	47.4%	28.0%	33.5%

Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey F Attenders in paid employment (n=791-836).

Key finding: Faith-work integration is strongly expressed in valuing work that helps others

Which of the following factors are associated with faith-work integration?

- Demographics (age, gender, education, country of birth)?
- Religiosity variables (religiousness scale, frequency of church attendance)?
- Faith tradition (denomination, faith identity – Catholic or Anglo-Catholic, evangelical/reformed, charismatic/Pentecostal, liberal/progressive, moderate/traditionalist, don't identify)?
- Faith-work integration (Vocation, Devotion, Influence, Separation, evaluation of support from the local church)?

Again, a series of stepwise linear regressions were conducted in order to examine influences on the importance of different qualities of work.

Different patterns of prediction were observed for different sorts of work. Vocation and Influence predicted the importance of being in a helping job and to a lesser degree being in a creative job, whereas Separation predicted the importance of being in a highly paid job. Faith-work integration is strongly expressed in valuing work that helps others, which is in line with Christian norms of love and care of neighbour. Gender predicted the importance of the different types of work – with being male a positive predictor of the importance of both creative and highly paid work, and being female a positive predictor of the importance of being in a helping job.

The strength of prediction was 11% of the variation explained in creativity, 20% in high remuneration and 37% in helping.

The full regression results can be found in the Technical Report.

6 Discussion and conclusion

Drawing primarily on data from the 2016 NCLS, this report aimed to address the integration of faith and work among Australian church attenders, by providing demographic and denominational profiles of employed attenders, presenting information on the ways in which churches are supporting attenders to address issues in their workplaces from the perspective of faith, and exploring how faith and work are integrated and what factors contribute to higher levels of integration. The main findings of the research are now summarised, their significance discussed and future avenues for research presented.

6.1 Attenders in employment have distinctive characteristics

Employed attenders are older than their counterparts in the Australian community at large. This is unsurprising, given the older profile in the churches in general (McAleese, Pepper and Powell, 2018). What is striking about the denominational profile of employed attenders is the rising proportions from Pentecostal and evangelical traditions. There are now more working Pentecostal attenders than working Mainstream Protestants, and while Catholic attenders still number more than four in 10 employed attenders, it is likely that their share of the total will decrease, given the younger profiles of the Pentecostal and evangelical churches.

6.2 Churches offer support in diverse ways but there is room for improvement

Churches support working attenders in a variety of ways. Some nine in 10 churches reported that they were addressing the linkage of faith with paid employment in some way, particularly through sermons/homilies, although fewer (six in 10) local senior leaders reported preaching on the topic at least occasionally. Very few churches have targeted programs on the subject, but small groups, informal conversations and pastoral care are common, especially in Pentecostal and Other Protestant churches, and also reflect the emphasis given in the interviews with church leaders. That Mainstream Protestant churches are the least likely to offer support to attenders in relation to their paid employment is likely to reflect the older age profile of these churches. For example, in the Uniting Church, two-thirds of church attenders are aged at least 60 (McAleese, Pepper and Powell, 2018). The questions included in the 2016 NCLS were a fairly limited operationalisation of support for workers – while they identified the presence of the forms of support, it is difficult to gauge the depth of support. Future research should address the topic in more depth.

Overall, six in 10 attenders felt supported by their local church in being a Christian in their workplace, while almost three in 10 were neutral or unsure. There is clearly room for improvement, particularly in the Mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches.

Interviews with three pastors who have a particular ministry focus on faith and work have demonstrated a diversity of ways that support can be offered, with the potential to be transformative for Christian workers and their workplace communities. Although the pastors did mention targeted programs, the emphasis on peer-to-peer learning and support and the attention to everyday experience in the workplace, whatever the occupation, are focuses that other churches could also emulate. However, the case study interviews were with charismatic and evangelical leaders only. Future research could be conducted with leaders from Catholic parishes and Mainstream Protestant churches, to provide a wider diversity of case studies that may resonate across the cultural and theological diversity in the Australian churches.

6.3 Faith-work integration among attenders is moderate and religiousness contributes strongly

Four multi-item scales were constructed from the available questions that were put to attenders about the integration of faith and work. *Vocation* tapped attenders' sense that they have been called to their work and that their work is meaningful; *Devotion* was the practice and deepening of faith in the workplace; *Influence* concerned the extent to which faith impacts on how the individual conducts their work; and *Separation* was about a disconnect between faith and the workplace. The average attender experiences and practices moderate levels of faith-work integration, according to the measures used in this research.

Four ways in which workers may live out their faith in the workplace were theorised by Miller (2007): *ethics*, *expression*, *experience* and *enrichment*. *Ethics* concerns adherence to ethical standards in personal and organisational practices, *expression* is about the expression of a faith tradition and worldview in the workplace, *experience* is the experience of work as meaningful and understanding of work as a spiritual calling, and *enrichment* draws strength and comfort from religious and spiritual practices to cope with difficulties in the workplace (Miller, 2007; Miller and Ewest, 2013). Although the NCLS faith-work integration questions were not explicitly informed by this framework, two of the four scales have particular synergies with it. The Vocation scale aligns with experience and Influence aligns with ethics. Also, one of the two items in the Separation scale is the reverse of expression. Future research could look more fully at different forms of faith-work integration, perhaps making use of The Integration Profile (TIP) Faith and Work Integration scale, developed recently by Miller, Ewest and Neubert (2017).

In the present study, religiousness (regular personal devotions, the importance of God in a Christian's life, and a growing faith) was the main influence on the integration of faith and work, in line with US studies which have also reported a strong relationship between measures of religiosity and faith-work integration (Lynn, Naughton and VanderVeen, 2010; Miller, Ewest and Neubert, 2017). Support from churches does make a difference to faith-work integration. Given the relative paucity of prediction of separation between faith and the workplace for attenders in this study (18% of variance explained), future research should seek to examine what, in an Australian context, contributes to this separation.

The contribution of university-level education to the integration of faith and work is noteworthy. Does this finding reflect more freedom on the part of attenders with higher levels of formal education to pursue work that is in line with their faith? If so, efforts need to be made by churches to encourage their attenders in the calling on their lives that lies in the everyday, whatever line of work they find themselves in, and whatever choice they have been privileged with or exercised. With privilege also comes responsibility, and the prophetic word of one of the pastors interviewed is also relevant here – those in influential positions have a particular responsibility to ensure that the work of their organisations is a blessing for the world, not simply a means of wealth creation.

6.4 Faith-work integration is strongly expressed in valuing work that helps others

Atenders were asked about the personal importance of working in jobs with three different qualities; creativity, high paying and helping others. The average attender agreed that it was important to them to have a job where they can be creative, was neutral about the importance of working in a highly paid job, and agreed that it was important to have a job that allowed them to help others. Faith-work integration strongly predicted helping others. Love and care of neighbour is a strong Christian value, and attenders' desire that this be possible in their work is encouraging.

It is telling that faith-work separation predicted the importance of high pay, and the higher emphasis on pay among Catholics particularly is worthy of further research attention. The paucity of prediction of valuing creativity in work (a little over a tenth of the variance explained) also invites future research.

In the present research, Pentecostalism has repeatedly been shown to have a role in the integration of faith and work. The participation of the Pentecostal churches in the 2016 NCLS was relatively low. Future research should seek to boost participation of churches from this movement.

6.5 Conclusion

This report has provided insight into the characteristics of church attenders in paid employment, the ways in which churches support attenders in their working lives, and attenders' perspectives on faith-work integration. There is significant engagement from churches in this area. A majority of workers do feel supported by their churches, but there is room for improvement. On the whole, attenders report moderate levels of integration of faith and work. The strengthening of these connections holds the promise of more mindful and intentional ways of being for Christians in their workplaces, and for strengthened contributions to the flourishing of the world.

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About NCLS Research and the NCLS

NCLS Research was established in the early 1990s and is a joint project of several denominational partners. NCLS Research is a world leader in research focused on connecting churches and their communities. The most well-known project is the five-yearly National Church Life Survey (NCLS).

The NCLS is a quantitative survey of 260,000-450,000 church attenders, 6,000-10,000 church leaders and 3,000-7,000 churches in more than 20 Australian denominations (Catholic, Anglican and Protestant denominations) every census year since 1991. The survey covers a wide range of areas of religious faith and practice and social concern. The NCLS includes three major survey types:

1. Attender Surveys (comprising a main survey variant and multiple small sample survey variants);
2. Several variants of a Leader Survey, which is completed by local church leaders; and
3. An Operations Survey audit of local church activities.

Data from the three surveys are weighted to adjust for variations in participation levels across denominations and regions.

Appendix 1: Statistical notes

Data were weighted to account for variations in levels of participation from different denominations and regions. Attenders from 14 denominations and movements were sampled well enough in to be included in the weighted analysis (13 denominations in the case of leader and operations data). These denominations/movements account for some 95% of the weekly church attenders in Australia (not including Orthodox, independent or house churches or other small poorly documented movements). Other denominations which were inadequately sampled or absent are not included in the analysis.

The denominations have been combined into larger groups in this report as follows:

1. Catholic
2. Mainstream Protestant (Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Uniting Church)
3. Pentecostal (Australian Christian Churches, C3 Church, International Network of Churches, Christian Revival Crusade)
4. Other Protestant (Baptist, Churches of Christ, Christian Reformed, Salvation Army, and in attender data also includes CityLife Church)

Pentecostal and Other Protestant are combined into a single group in Attender Sample Survey F, due to small numbers of Pentecostal respondents.

The maximum margin of error on a simple random sample of 800 (typical number of cases for Attender Sample Survey F questions contained in this report) at a 95% level of confidence is 3.5%. That is, assuming a simple random sample, there is a 95% chance that a sample result falls within $\pm 3.5\%$ of the result for the population of Australian church attenders. In the case of the Operations Survey, the maximum margin of error on a simple random sample of 2,268 at a 95% level of confidence is 1.8%, when a finite population correction factor is applied. For the Leader Survey, the maximum margin of error on a simple random sample of 1,002 at a 95% level of confidence is 2.9%, when a finite population correction factor is applied.

The margin of error is greater for reported results for subsamples.

For some questions included in this report, missing data exceeds 10% of respondents. Where this is the case, the per cent missing is given in table footers.

The following conventions are used for effect size:

$r = .1$ (small or weak), $.3$ (medium or moderate), $.5$ (large or strong)

$\eta^2 = .01$ (small or weak), $.06$ (medium or moderate), $.14$ (large or strong)

$R^2 = .01$ (small or weak), $.06$ (medium or moderate), $.14$ (large or strong)

Appendix 2: Faith-work integration scales

Vocation

I believe God has called me to my current work
My work gives me a real sense of my worth as a person
My work contributes to God's work in the world
My faith has influenced my choice of occupation or profession
I believe my work makes a contribution to our country's progress

Devotion

I pray regularly for my work colleagues
As a result of my working life, my faith has deepened

Influence

My faith influences how I make ethical or moral decisions in my work
My faith influences how I interact with colleagues in the workplace
My faith influences the quality that I strive for in my work

Separation

I believe it is not appropriate to talk about my faith at my workplace
I don't think about God much when I am at work

The integration of faith and work in Australian churches

Occasional Paper 41

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One of the primary ways in which Christians interact with the world is through their work.

The concept of vocation, the calling to Christian living in diverse ways that enable the expression and development of passions and gifts and that contribute to God's kingdom, has a long pedigree in Christian thought and practice related to work. The workplace is also a context in which Christians interact with others on a daily basis.

This report investigates the integration of faith and matters related to work, by addressing the following topics:

- Demographic and denominational profiles of church attenders in paid employment.
- Ways in which local churches support church attenders to address matters of faith in their working lives.
- The integration of faith and work among church attenders and the factors that are associated with this integration.

This study draws primarily on results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey, supplemented by interview-based case studies and was commissioned by Reventure Ltd.

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NCLS Research is a leading research organisation whose research aims include studying Australian spirituality, church health, effective and sustainable leadership, and the connections between church and community. The National Church Life Survey is a collaborative project involving millions of participants in over 20 denominations since 1991.

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