

# WHAT HAVE WE FOUND?

This research explores whether evangelicals are loving their neighbours, and how they relate to others both in their community and further afield.

## Neighbours across the world

When asked “who is my neighbour?” Jesus responded with the story of the Good Samaritan who cared for someone who was not from the same people group as him. We’ve found a huge 43 per cent sponsor a child in a less developed country, and a third are actively involved in campaigning on an international justice issue (page 20). A quarter specifically support the persecuted Church, and development or overseas mission are the church projects evangelicals are most likely to be involved in. Almost half (46 per cent) say they regularly pray with others for international issues.

*Time to consider: Would you say you are a good neighbour to people overseas?*

## Looking out for strangers?

It seems evangelicals look out for people. Almost half (48 per cent) recall having done an act of kindness to help a stranger in the past week – from one-off events such as redecorating someone’s home, to more regular acts including mentoring ex-offenders and providing emergency accommodation for the homeless. Even so, almost a quarter regret not helping someone they saw in need in the last week (page 9).

*Time to consider: Do you look out for ways to bless strangers?*

## Should we know our next-door neighbours?

While Jesus’s command to “love your neighbour as yourself” does not specifically refer to our next-door neighbours, it is clear we are called to be a blessing to those around us.

But the reality is we may not even know the names of those who live beside us. Although two thirds of our panel think people in the UK are not as good neighbours as they used to be, most feel that despite the busyness of life it is still reasonable to expect you would know your neighbours well (page 12).

*Time to consider: Do you know your next-door neighbours? Is it important to?*

## Do we know our neighbours?

More than 40 per cent know a neighbour well enough to trust them to look after their home. One in four are regularly supporting a neighbour who is lonely, frail or otherwise in need, while another one in four are actively welcoming newcomers to their area (pages 10-11). While it’s great that many are loving their neighbours in this way, just two per cent would turn to neighbours first for advice (whereas 65 per cent would turn to a church friend).

Two thirds say most of their friends are Christian, and another 22 per cent say at least half are. Our panel were also likely to have friends of the same ethnic group and social class as themselves (page 18). This indicates we may need to make more of an effort to have friends unlike us.

*Time to consider: Are there ways you can get to know your neighbours more? Does anything hold you back?*



## Are we sharing our faith?

Virtually all of our panel said being a Christian was very important to their sense of who they are, and 80 per cent said it was the most important aspect of their identity (page 17).

Three-quarters have prayed for their neighbour in the last three months, with a third letting their neighbour know they were doing so. Almost two thirds have also made it clear to a neighbour in the last three months that they are a committed Christian (pages 10-11).

*Time to consider: Do your neighbours know you are a Christian? How did/might they respond? How can you creatively show God’s love to your neighbours?*



## Do we care about our local communities?

Where we live obviously determines who our neighbours and local community will be. Most of our panel are happy where they live, with some adding that despite problems in their area they feel called by God to be part of that local community.

A massive 91 per cent say they vote in local elections, indicating a much higher level of engagement in local issues than the national average (35 per cent in 2014). Issues or social groups seen as important for Christians to prioritise locally include poverty, foodbanks, the elderly, youth, families and homelessness (pages 14-15).

More than a third are regularly joining with others to pray for their local community and the majority are involved in at least one church social action or community project.

*Time to consider: How have you come to live where you do? Are you involved in the local community? Being honest, do you care about your neighbourhood?*

## Is the Church involved in the neighbourhood?

We’ve discovered a wide range of community activities being run by churches, including money advice services, foodbanks, sports ministries, village shops and prayer rooms. Some churches are also partnering with secular and statutory groups to deliver services to the community, including youth work, social enterprises, lunch clubs and work with prisoners (pages 22-23).

It’s great that a huge 82 per cent partner with other churches on projects or activities in their community – something the Alliance is encouraging through Gather, our network of unity for mission movements across the country ([www.wegather.co.uk](http://www.wegather.co.uk)). But a much smaller proportion (34 per cent) partner with secular projects to serve their community.

*Time to consider: Is your church actively involved in the wider community? Do you volunteer with a secular or church-run project? Would you consider volunteering with a secular project?*

### Ways your church can encourage neighbourliness:

- Encourage people to get to know their neighbours and be generous to them
- Ask people to sign up to the Neighbourhood Prayer Network, which aims to see every street in the UK covered by prayer – [www.neighbourhoodprayer.net](http://www.neighbourhoodprayer.net)
- Encourage people to use opportunities such as the Big Lunch to host parties on their street – [www.thebiglunch.com](http://www.thebiglunch.com)
- Engage with the online community Streetbank which helps neighbours connect with each other – [www.streetbank.com/church](http://www.streetbank.com/church)
- Visit the Contextual Theology Centre’s online resources – [www.theology-centre.org.uk](http://www.theology-centre.org.uk)