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Sustaining young Canadian Baptists in the faith: Exploring the connection  
between religious affect and parental religious attendance

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**Abstract**

This paper explores the impact of parental religious practice on sustaining positive religious affect among churchgoing young Canadian Baptists. A total of 299 participants between the ages of 12 and 18 years attending a summer youth programme sponsored by the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, completed the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity as a measure of positive religious affect, together with measures of frequency of church attendance for themselves, their mother and their father. These data identified fathers' religious attendance as a statistically significant factor augmenting the effect of mothers' religious attendance for sustaining young Canadian Baptists in the faith. The implications of this finding are discussed for pastoral practice.

*Keywords:* Baptists, faith transmission, parental influence, attitude toward Christianity

## Introduction

### Faith transmission

The question of faith transmission from one generation to the next has become an issue of increasing interest and concern across Christian denominations in the Western world. This question was focused, for example, by Voas and Watt (2014) in their commentary on the situation facing the Church of England. There they make the point that ‘retaining children and youth is critical; it is easier to raise people as churchgoers than to turn the unchurched into attenders’ (p. 19). In an earlier analysis, Voas and Crockett (2005) had concluded that religious decline in Britain is generational: children tend to be less religious than their parents. While two non-religious parents successfully transmit their lack of religion to their children, two religious parents have roughly a fifty percent chance of transmitting their faith to their children. Moreover, one religious parent does less well than two religious parents together. In a later paper, Voas and Bruce (2019) underline this point in the following way: ‘To borrow the terminology of radioactive decay, institutional religion in Britain now has a half-life of one generation’ (p. 21).

In Canada, the Christian faith was embraced by much of the population in the mid-twentieth century. Clarke and Macdonald (2017) observed that, according to the 1961 census, ‘taken together, Roman Catholics and Protestants from the country’s five largest Protestant Churches – Anglican, Presbyterian, United, Baptist, and Lutheran – made up over 90% of the Canadian population’ (p. 4). Much of the remaining 10% of the population embraced one of the smaller Christian denominations. Clarke and Macdonald (2017) observed that by the time of the 2011 census, however, the percentage of the Canadian population that reported an affiliation with any Christian denomination in Canada had dropped to 67%. These data on a national scale capture the reality of the challenge in many Christian families – the

transmission of the Christian faith from parent to child in Canada was largely ineffective for a period of more than five decades.

### **Agencies of faith transmission**

The Catholic Church has consistently spoken of the partnership among three primary agencies in the Christian education and the Christian formation of the young. In this partnership, home, church and school stand side-by-side. The case is clearly made in primary documents from the Second Vatican Council (Tanner, 2012), including *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic constitution on the Church) and *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education). The priority among these three primary agencies may emerge differently in different social and educational contexts. Evaluating the situation within modern plural and secular societies, John Paul the Second (1981), in *Familiaris Consortia* (The role of the Christian family in the modern world), was clear in prioritising the family and drew on the terminology of *Lumen Gentium* that spoke of the family as ‘the domestic church’. Building on the foundation in *Familiaris Consortia*, John Paul the Second (1981) commented as follows:

In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centres of living, radiant faith. For this reason, the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are ‘by word and example ... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children’. (*Familiaris Consortio* 1656)

Elsewhere in *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul the Second (1981) writes that:

parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. The right and duty of parents to give education is essential. (*Familiaris Consortio* 36)

This case is also clearly argued in the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) in the following way

Indeed, in the same way as the Church, the family 'is a place in which the Gospel is transmitted and from which it extends'. The family as a locus of catechesis has a unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values.

Between 2016 and 2019, the Church of England published three statements, focusing in turn on the influence of congregations, schools, and homes in sustaining young Anglicans. In the first statement, *Rooted in the Church*, the emphasis was on identifying the characteristics of local churches that sustain the engagement of young people (Church of England Office, 2016a). This perspective argued that churches should: aim to build a culture of intergenerational relationships; be inclusive of all ages in both leadership and worship; recognise young people and young adults as equal members of the Body of Christ; be encouraged to explore the possibility of admitting baptised children to communion before confirmation; become unconditionally welcoming places for young people; and do more to support their youth workers and leaders (p. 3).

In the second statement, *Church of England vision for education: Deeply Christian, serving the common good*, the emphasis was on identifying the characteristics of Anglican church schools, operating in England within the state-maintained sector of education, that are both deeply Christian and committed to serving the common good of the whole human community (Church of England Education Office, 2016b). This statement offered a vision of human flourishing inspired by four basic elements: wisdom, hope, community, and dignity. This vision is encapsulated in the following aspiration:

We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way which enhances their lives. (p. 13)

In the third, and most recent statement, *Growing Faith: Churches, schools and households*, the emphasis was on the primacy of the third of the three agencies, the home. This report stated that ‘research shows that parents have the largest influence on their children in matters of faith’ (General Synod, 2019, paragraph 11). In response to this evidence, the statement wants to see:

Every parish creating experiences of church where children, young people and households are actively involved, growing spiritually and have their voices heard (General Synod, 2019, paragraph 13).

Although there is virtually no discussion among Canadian Baptists about public or private schools for children and teenagers having a role in faith transmission, among Canadian Baptists the desire to support Christian parents in faith transmission has been growing in recent decades. In the Atlantic Provinces, for instance, where faith transmission to youth has traditionally been prioritized at the denominational and local church level, the denominational youth department was given a broadened mandate in 2001. Whereas denominational events for youth and training for youth leaders were previously led by a ‘Director of Youth Ministries’ the role was refashioned as ‘Director of Youth and Family Ministries’ and the incumbent was given a broader mandate not only to provide training in faith transmission for local church youth leaders and lead faith transmission initiatives for young people, but also to provide training and events to support the parents in their desire to transmit the faith to their children (Gardner, 2002). The importance of this emphasis is further illustrated by the fact that, although denominational revenue was declining, the denomination



added two additional staff members to this new department in the following four years (Gardner, 2006).

### **Researching the influence of home**

One strand of research that has systematically drawn attention to the centrality of the home in sustaining the faith of young churchgoers was initiated by the Australian National Church Life Survey, in which young churchgoers have been invited to complete a survey alongside the surveys completed by adult attenders. For example, in their report from the 2001 Australian National Church Life Survey, on data provided by 10,101 10- to 14-year-old attenders, Bellamy, Mou, and Castle (2005) found that parents have a central role in the development of faith. They concluded that the practice of family prayer times, the encouragement of a personal devotional life for children, and parents simply being prepared to talk with their children about faith are all aspects that are positively related to higher levels of belief and a more positive attitude toward and involvement in church life.

In their report from the 2011 Australian National Church Life Survey, on data provided by 6,252 8- to 14-year-old attenders, Francis, Penny, and Powell (2018) found that these data confirmed the power of parental example on frequency of church attendance. Frequent attendance among young churchgoers occurred when *both* parents attended as well. The most positive attitude toward their church was found among young churchgoers who had the opportunity to talk about God with their parents and who did not feel that their parents made them go to church. Young churchgoers responded to parental encouragement better than to parental pressure. Although peer influence within the church did not make much contribution to frequency of attendance, it made a contribution to shaping positive attitude toward church.

In their report from the 2016 Australian National Life Survey, Francis, McKenna, and Powell (2020) concentrated on data from 2,131 8- to 14-year-old attenders who completed

surveys while attending Catholic churches. This study employed multiple regression modelling to examine the effects of parental church attendance (treating mother and fathers separately) and home environment (in terms of family encouragement and religious engagement within the home) on frequency of child church attendance. The data demonstrated that parental church attendance is the strongest predictor. Young Catholics are more likely to attend church frequently if both mother *and* father attend church a lot. Moreover, after taking parental church attendance into account the home environment adds additional predictive power. Young Catholics are most likely to attend church frequently if both parents attend church and support faith within the home environment through both family encouragement and religious engagement within the home. When parental churchgoing and home environment have been taken into account, the external factors of engaging with online religious resources and of attending a Catholic school add no further positive predictive power in sustaining churchgoing among young Catholics.

The Australian National Church Life Survey gave rise to the 2001 Church Life Survey designed primarily for use in England (Churches Information for Mission, 2001). In their report on the survey conducted among 10,153 8- to 14-year-old attenders, Francis and Craig (2006) drew attention to two key findings. The first finding is that having friends attending the same church is important to tweenagers. The second finding is that parents play a crucial role through what they do and what they model outside their pattern of church attendance. The maintenance of a positive attitude toward church during the tweenage years is associated with having parents who support the faith in conversation and example at home.

Building on this research tradition established by the Australian Church Life Survey, Francis and colleagues have reported on three studies exploring the place of the home in sustaining young Anglicans in England and Wales. In the first of these studies, Francis (in press) drew on data collected within schools in England and Wales (half of the schools were

church schools within the state-maintained sector and half were schools without a religious character within the state-maintained sector) to identify 13- to 15-year-old students who identified as Anglicans. This method allowed research to be undertaken among non-churchgoing Anglicans as well as churchgoing Anglicans. From a total sample of 7,059 students, 645 identified themselves as Anglican (Church of England or Church in Wales), that is fewer than one in ten of the sample. This study employed multiple regression to take into account the effects of personal factors (sex and age) and psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) before testing for the effects of peer-related factors and parental factors. These data demonstrated that young Anglicans who practise their Anglican identity by attending church did so primarily because their parents were Anglican churchgoers. Moreover, young Anglican churchgoers were most likely to keep going if their churchgoing parents also talked with them about their faith. Among this age group of Anglicans peer support seemed insignificant in comparison with parental support.

In the second of these studies, Francis, Lankshear, Eccles, and McKenna (2020) drew on data provided by 2,019 9- to 11-year-old students attending 88 Church in Wales primary schools who self-identified as Anglican. These data demonstrated that the single most important factor in sustaining churchgoing among these young Anglicans was the church attendance patterns of mothers. The effect of maternal example is, however, augmented when mothers take the opportunity to talk with their children about God, Jesus, prayer, and church, and when fathers are also seen to support mothers' pattern of church attendance.

In the third of these studies, Francis, Lankshear, Eccles, and McKenna (2020) drew on data provided by 2,323 11- to 16-year-old students attending eight Church of England secondary schools, one joint Anglican-Catholic secondary school, and one secondary school operated by a Christian foundation. These data confirmed that parental church attendance provides the strongest prediction of church attendance among young Anglicans. More

frequent attendance is associated with mother attending church ( $\beta = .52$ ) and with father attending church ( $\beta = .29$ ). These two factors operate cumulatively with the stronger influence being when both parents attend church.

Also building on this research tradition established by the Australian Church Life Survey, Francis and colleagues have reported on two studies exploring the place of the home in sustaining young Anglicans in England, Scotland and Wales, and in the Republic of Ireland. The first of the two studies, reported by Francis and Casson (2019), employed data from 2,146 students who self-identified as Catholic from among 9,810 participants to a survey conducted in England, Scotland, and Wales. The second of these two studies, reported by Byrne, Francis, Sweetman, and McKenna (2019), employed data from 1,942 students who self-identified as Catholic from among 3,000 participants to a survey conducted in the Republic of Ireland. In both studies multiple regression analyses were employed to assess the predictive power of five sets of factors: personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (psychoticism, neuroticism, and extraversion), parental religious identity (treating mothers and fathers separately), parental religious practice, and peer-related practice. The data suggested that young Catholics who practise their Catholic identity by attending church do so largely because their parents are Catholic churchgoers. Moreover, young Catholics are most likely to keep going if both mother *and* father are Catholic churchgoers, and if they discuss faith with their mother. Peer-related factors and psychological factors added little additional predictive power to the model.

Drawing on data from 33,898 Australian Baptists who participated in the 2016 National Church Life Survey, Powell (2018) reported that parents participating in the survey indicated that 96% of their children aged 14 or younger regularly attended church, compared with 53% of their children aged 15 or over (including adult children). Cronshaw (2019a) called this development a 'generational drift away'. From these data, Powell concluded that a

key factor in sustaining faith transmission among Baptists as children aged was the influence of family members, especially mothers. In light of this, Cronshaw (2019b) suggested that Baptist churches and parents abandon the model of faith transmission that focuses on delegating faith formation to the church and instead focus on ‘partnering with parents’ to encourage parents to engage their children in meaningful conversation about Christian faith while sharing a family meal and at other times.

In a 2011 report on the results of a national study of 2,886 Canadian young adults entitled *Hemorrhaging faith: Why and when young adults are leaving, staying and returning to the church*, Penner, Harder, Anderson, Desourcy, and Heimstra (2011) reported that the faith commitment of parents strongly influences the faith and church engagement of children into their adult years. They found that young adults raised by parents who attend church regularly, pray regularly, and read their Bible regularly are far more likely to attend church regularly than their peers with parents who do not engage in these spiritual practices. Penner et al. (2011) found that young people benefited from parents who were intentional about passing on their faith through both modelling and instructing.

Similarly, in a 2018 report on a national survey of 1,998 Canadian young adults and 1,570 Canadian Christian ministry experts entitled *Renegotiating Faith: The delay in young adult identity formation and what it means for the Canadian church*, Heimstra, Dueck, and Blackaby (2018) reported that the ministry experts agreed on the importance of the family for faith transmission, quoting one Mainline protestant ministry leader who simply said that the household of origin ‘to be honest, [is] almost everything’ (p. 43).

### **Focusing on religious affect**

The series of studies exploring parental influence rooted in the research tradition shaped by the Australian National Church Life Survey has tended to focus on the church attendance of young people as the dependent variable. A different approach concerned with

examining parental influence on adolescent religiosity was pioneered in a study reported by Francis and Gibson (1993) among a sample of 3,414 11- to 12-year-old and 15- to 16-year-old students attending secondary schools in the city of Dundee, Scotland. In this study the dependent variable was religious affect as operationalised by the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity (1978a, 1978b). In these early studies, Francis argued that the attitudinal dimension was able to get closer to the heart of religion within the individual lives of children and adolescents, and that the measurement of attitude carried a number of important advantages over the measurement of affiliation, belief, and practice in the exploration of the correlates, consequences and antecedents of individual differences in religiosity.

The Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity is a 24-item Likert Scale that contains both positive and negative items concerned with an affective response to five components of the Christian faith accessible to and recognised by both children and adults, namely, God, Jesus, Bible, prayer, and church. Each item is assessed on a five-point scale ranging from agree strongly, through not certain, to disagree strongly, producing a range of scores from 24 to 120. The reliability and validity of the scale have been supported by studies among children and adolescents (Francis, 1987, 1989; Lewis, Cruise, McGuckin, & Francis, 2006; Lewis, Cruise, & Lattimer, 2007; Francis, Lankshear, & Eccles, 2017) and among adults (Francis & Stubbs, 1987; Francis, Lewis, Philipchalk, Brown, & Lester, 1995; Lewis, Cruise, & McGuckin, 2005).

In order to facilitate further cross-cultural studies within the psychology of religion, the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity has also been translated into a number of different languages, including: Arabic (Munayer, 2000), Chinese (Francis, Lewis, & Ng, 2002; Tiliopoulos, Francis, & Jiang, 2013), Czech (Francis, Quesnell, & Lewis, 2010), Dutch (Francis & Hermans, 2000), French (Lewis & Francis, 2003, 2004), German (Francis & Kwiran, 1999; Francis, Ziebertz, & Lewis, 2002), Greek (Youtika, Joseph, & Diduca, 1999;

Nazar, 2019), Italian (Crea, Baiocco, Ioverno, Buzzi, & Francis, 2014), Norwegian (Francis & Enger, 2002), Portuguese (Ferreira & Neto, 2002), Romanian (Francis, Ispas, Robbins, Ilie, & Ilescu, 2009), Serbian (Flere, Francis, & Robbins, 2011), Slovakian (Lewis, Adamovová, & Francis, 2008), Slovenian (Flere, Klanjsek, Francis, & Robbins, 2008), Spanish (Campo-Arias, Oviedo, Dtaz, & Cogollo, 2006), Swedish (Eek, 2001), and Welsh (Evans & Francis, 1996; Francis & Thomas, 2003).

### **Research question**

Against this background, the aim of the present study was to build on the research tradition initiated by Fawcett that has begun to compile a systematic profile of the Christian experience of Baptist youth in Atlantic Canada who engage with the Tidal Impact mission and service event. This research tradition has led over the years to a series of publications, including Fawcett and Francis (2009), Fawcett, Francis, and Robbins (2009), Fawcett, Francis, and Robbins (2011a, 2011b), Fawcett, Francis, Linkletter, and Robbins (2012), Fawcett, Francis, Henderson, Robbins, and Linkletter (2013), Francis, Fawcett, and Linkletter (2013), Francis, Fawcett, Robbins, and Stairs (2016), Francis, Fawcett, Linkletter, Robbins, and Stairs (2016), and Fawcett, Francis, Linkletter, Robbins, and Stairs (2017). The 2017 survey was completed by young participants engaged in simultaneous Tidal Impact events based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia. The survey was designed to explore the wider theme of what helps young Christians grow in discipleship, and within this context to examine the effect of parental religious attendance on individual differences in religious affect as operationalised by the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity.

### **Method**

#### **Procedure**

All the young people attending the week-long Tidal Impact summer youth mission and service programme sponsored by the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada, held in 2017

in Halifax, Nova Scotia and in Bridgewater Nova Scotia, were invited to complete a detailed questionnaire following the completion of seminars that provided training in spiritual disciplines. Following an explanation of the nature of the survey and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, the questionnaires were distributed to the young people. Participation was voluntary, but the overall level of interest in the topic meant that few young people failed to complete the exercise. A total of 325 questionnaires were returned by participants between the ages of 12 and 18 years, of which 299 provided data fully completed for the analyses reported in the present study (that means with no missing data). The research was approved by the Research Ethics Board of Crandall University in November 2016.

### **Participants**

Of the 299 participants who provided full data, 109 were male and 190 were female; 17% were 12 years of age, 18% were 13, 23% were 14, 17% were 15, 11% were 16, 10% were 17, and 4% were 18 years of age. In terms of frequency of church attendance, 74% attended weekly, and a further 9% at least once a month, leaving 17% who attended less than monthly.

### **Measures**

*Religious affect* was assessed by the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity, a 24-item Likert instrument developed originally by Francis (1978a, 1978b) concerned with affective responses toward God, Jesus, Bible, prayer, and church. Each item is assessed on a five-point scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1). Summated scores range from 24 to 120.

*Church attendance* of the young participants, their mothers and their fathers was assessed by three questions regarding frequency of attendance followed by the options: nearly every week (5), at least once a month (4), sometimes (3), once or twice a year (2), and never (1).



*Sex* was coded in the conventional manner: male (1), and female (2).

### **Data analysis**

The data were analysed by the SPSS package using the frequency, reliability, correlation, and regression routines.

### **Results and discussion**

- insert table 1 about here -

The first step in data analysis concerned exploring the scale properties of the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity in terms of internal consistency reliability and item endorsement. The alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) of .95 demonstrates a high level of internal consistency reliability, consistent with the established performance of this instrument (see Francis, Lewis, Philipchalk, Brown, & Lester, 1995). The correlations between each individual item and the sum of the other 23 items, as presented in table 1, demonstrates that all the individual items work well alongside the other items to produce a homogeneous scale. The item endorsements, also presented in table 1, in terms of the sum of the agree and agree strongly responses demonstrate satisfactory variation in terms of item discrimination. The negatively voiced items range in endorsement from 4% to 19%, while the positively voiced items range in endorsement from 67% to 90%.

The five themes included in the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity offer the following overview of the affective response of this sample of 299 young Baptists toward the Christian tradition. In terms of God, nine out of ten of the young participants believe that God helps people (90%). At least eight out of every ten of the young participants say that God means a lot to them (83%), like to learn about God very much (82%), agree that God helps them to live a better life (80%), agree that the idea of God means much to them (80%), and know that God helps them (80%). The proportion falls only slightly to 79% who feel that

God is very real to them. Looked at from the opposite perspective, 17% find it hard to believe in God.

In terms of Jesus, almost nine out of every ten of the young participants want to love Jesus (89%) and believe that Jesus still helps people today (87%). At least eight out of every ten of the young participants know that Jesus helps them (83%). The proportion falls slightly to 73% who know that Jesus is very close to them. Looked at from the opposite perspective, 6% say that Jesus doesn't mean anything to them.

In terms of prayer, almost nine out of ten of the young participants think that praying is a good thing (87%). At least eight out of every ten of the young participants believe that God listens to prayers (83%). The proportions fall then to 71% who feel that prayer helps them a lot, and to 67% who feel that saying their prayers helps them a lot. Looked at from the opposite perspective, 5% think saying prayers does no good, and 4% think people who pray are stupid.

In terms of church, 79% of the young participants feel that the church is very important to them. Looked at from the opposite perspective 9% think going to church is a waste of their time. In terms of the Bible, 19% of the young participants find it boring to listen to the Bible, and 14% think the Bible is out of date.

- insert tables 2 and 3 about here -

The second step in data analysis concerned exploring the distributions of the four core variables (attitude toward Christianity, personal attendance, mothers' attendance, and fathers' attendance) in terms of means and standard deviations, and with exploring the bivariate correlations between these four core variables and their correlations with sex and age. These data are presented in tables 2 and 3. The data in table 2 demonstrate a high level of personal church attendance among the young participants, with a slightly lower level among their mothers, and a lower level still among their fathers. These mean scores translate into 74% of

the young participants attending service weekly, compared with weekly attendance among 69% of the mothers, and among 59% of the fathers.

The bivariate correlations in table 3 show a very strong correlation between the church attendance of mothers and fathers ( $r = .66$ ), and strong correlation between the church attendance of the young participants and both their mothers ( $r = .49$ ) and their fathers ( $r = .46$ ). Attitude toward Christianity is significantly correlated with personal church attendance ( $r = .20$ ), fathers' church attendance ( $r = .26$ ), and mothers' church attendance ( $r = .18$ ). According to correlations presented in table 3, neither age nor sex are significantly correlated with either church attendance or attitude toward Christianity.

- insert table 4 about here -

The third step in data analysis concerned exploring the cumulative effect of age, sex, personal church attendance, mothers' church attendance, and fathers' church attendance on individual differences in young Baptists' attitude toward Christianity. Table 4 presents the series of three regression models, in which fixed order entry was employed. In model one personal factors were entered first (sex and age). In model two personal church attendance was entered. In model three parental church attendance was entered (mother's attendance and fathers' attendance). The data demonstrate that neither age nor sex were significant predictors of individual differences in attitude toward Christianity in any of the three models. Model two demonstrates that personal church attendance served as a significant predictor of individual differences in attitude toward Christianity ( $\beta = .19$ ). In model three, however, the effect of personal attendance has become statistically non-significant and the key effect is now seen to reside in fathers' attendance ( $\beta = .21$ ).

### **Conclusion**

This study was designed to explore the association between religious affect and parental religious attendance among young Canadian Baptists, by drawing on data provided

by 299 participants between the ages of 12 and 18 years attending a summer youth programme sponsored by the Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada. In this study religious affect was operationalised by the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity. Three main conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of these data.

The first conclusion concerns the applicability of the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity in this context. Consistent with the findings of previous research summarised by Francis (2019, pp. 9-34), these data confirmed that the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity demonstrates a high level of internal consistency reliability and that all the individual items work well alongside the other items to produce a homogeneous scale. The Scale, then, has been affirmed as a reliable tool that researchers can utilize to collect data to explore further the attitudes of young people and others toward Christianity in other settings.

The second conclusion concerns the religious profile of the young Canadian Baptists attending Tidal Impact in terms of the five themes included in the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity. These new data can be viewed alongside previous studies to gain a clearer understanding of these youth and the extent of their embrace of the Christian tradition. A review of these data suggest these young Canadian Baptist youth have warm and positive feelings toward God and Jesus, have confidence in the Bible and prayer, and indicate that the church is very important to them.

The third conclusion specifically concerns the core research question addressed by the present study regarding the role of parental religious attendance in sustaining young Canadian Baptists in the faith. Consistent with the pattern of findings emerging from the wider family of studies reported by Francis and Gibson (1993), Bellamy, Mou, and Castle (2005), Francis and Craig (2006), Francis, Penny, and Powell (2018), Francis and Casson (2019), Byrne, Francis, Sweetman, and McKenna (2019), Francis, McKenna, and Powell (2020), Francis, Lankshear, Eccles, and McKenna (2020, and Francis (in press), the present study confirmed

the importance of parental religious attendance in sustaining young churchgoers. The majority of these earlier studies employed church attendance as the measure of the young person's faith and found that mothers were the primary influence with fathers adding additional secondary influence. The present study has employed religious affect as a more sensitive measure of personal faith among young people than church attendance. In this case fathers' attendance emerged as the statistically significant factor in the final regression model. It is this finding that carries implications for pastoral practice.

The family of studies, to which the present study makes a unique contribution by focusing on the experience of young Canadian Baptists, has pointed to key importance of the household within the partnership among the three primary agencies in the Christian education and nurture of the young: congregation, school, and home. The Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada have already acknowledged the importance of the household by establishing the role of 'Director of Youth and Family Ministries'. The unique contribution of the present study is to suggest that the agenda for family ministries may be wise to prioritise work among fathers in light of the significant additional contribution made by fathers to the contribution made by mothers. This finding should inform the teaching and strategy of Canadian Baptist local churches and their denomination. Since effective transmission of the Christian faith from believing parents to child is best promoted through attendance by fathers, alongside mothers, church leaders would do well not only to communicate this regularly to believing parents in a variety of contexts, but also design worship services, programmes, and initiatives that encourage regular attendance by fathers.

In assessing and applying the findings from the present study, it is important to recognise that these findings have been reported on the basis of statistical significance, not on the basis of effect sizes. The view taken by this research tradition is that reliance on effect

sizes is too vulnerable to assumptions about the adequacy and precision of the research instruments, and that effects unlikely to have occurred by chance are worth taking seriously.

A major limitation with the present study is that it was conducted within the unique context of a week-long summer youth mission and service programme that may have attracted particularly committed young Baptists. The research is worth replicating and extending among young Baptist churchgoers within a congregation survey.

**Disclosure statement**

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Table 1

*The Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity: Item rest of test correlation and item endorsements*

	<i>r</i>	Yes %
I find it boring to listen to the Bible*	.43	19
I know that Jesus helps me	.67	83
Saying my prayers helps me a lot	.58	67
The church is very important to me	.64	79
I think going to church is a waste of my time*	.50	9
I want to love Jesus	.64	89
I think church services are boring*	.47	19
I think people who pray are stupid*	.47	4
God helps me to lead a better life	.70	80
I like to learn about God very much	.77	82
God means a lot to me	.81	83
I believe that God helps people	.73	90
Prayer helps me a lot	.71	71
I know that Jesus is very close to me	.76	73
I think praying is a good thing	.75	87
I think the Bible is out of date*	.49	14
I believe that God listens to prayers	.67	83
Jesus doesn't mean anything to me*	.55	6
God is very real to me	.68	79
I think saying prayers does no good*	.66	5
The idea of God means much to me	.75	80
I believe that Jesus still helps people	.79	87
I know that God helps me	.78	80
I find it hard to believe in God*	.59	17
Alpha	.95	

Note: \* these items are reverse coded; Yes = sum of agree and agree strongly responses;

*r* = correlation between individual item and sum of the other 23 items



Table 2

*Means and standard deviations*

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	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attitude toward Christianity	99.4	15.0
Personal attendance	4.5	1.0
Mothers' attendance	4.2	1.4
Fathers' attendance	3.7	1.9

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Table 3

*Correlation matrix*

	FSAC	Mot	Fat	Sel	Age
Sex	.05	-.01	-.01	-.05	-.08
Age	-.10	-.03	-.00	.02	
Self attendance (Sel)	.20***	.49***	.46***		
Fathers' attendance (Fat)	.26***	.66***			
Mothers' attendance (Mot)	.18***				

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4

*Regression models*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Personal factors</i>			
Sex	.02	.03	.03
Age	-.09	-.10	-.10
<i>Church attendance</i>			
Self		.19***	.11
<i>Parental church attendance</i>			
Father			.21**
Mother			-.03
$r^2$	.01	.05	.08
$\Delta$	.01	.04***	.03**

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$