

Statistics for Mission - *Why Bother?*

Entering your Parish Data on the Church of England's Online Parish Return System

Entering the *Annual Statistics for Mission* data can feel like an unwelcome chore but statistics really can help:

- Improve our understanding of the people God calls us to serve
- Fulfil God's call to know and love those around us

We count people because people count – people are not just numbers!

Completing the *Annual Statistics for Mission Return* has benefits for the Parish, the Deanery, the Diocese and the National Church as we understand how well we are doing in mission and priority areas that need to be addressed. Statistical information gives us a great repository of data of which we can ask good questions, analysing trends in growth areas or areas of decline. This allows the Diocesan Outreach Team to prioritise investment in consultancy and training needed across the Diocese.

Benefits to the Parish – What's in it for us?

As each local church discerns its own plans for mission and growth, understanding the local context is essential.

In recent years, the Church of England's Research and Statistics Unit has been working to turn the data it receives into accessible information, which Parishes can use. For example, Parishes can now download their own *Parish Dashboard*. This provides information about attendance, the worshipping community, baptisms, marriages and funerals, the Electoral Roll etc. over a number of years. This information will help you make informed decisions about mission and outreach opportunities, which help grow the Church.



Benefits to the Diocesan Outreach Team

The Statistics for Mission data provided by Parishes help the Outreach Team to:

- Develop strategies for mission.
- Set key mission priorities.
- Plan for mission programmes, initiatives and events.
- Provide training that is helpful and relevant to parishes.

- Proactively offer specific support to parishes - the data is most helpful to the Diocesan Outreach Team when working with and advising parishes.
- Proactively offer diocesan-wide help in priority areas.

Example of a section of a Parish Dashboard

This dashboard contains figures as submitted by churches currently in the parish. Attendance statistics have been taken from annual Statistics for Mission returns. Variations in attendance from year to year may be the result of changes in the number of churches that submitted returns, or changes in parish/benefice structure.

1. Attendance Summary, (2009-2018)



Benefits to the National Church

- The statistics help the National Church to learn about what is and is not working in mission nationally.
- The statistics help teams within the National Church provide advice to Dioceses about their mission strategies.
- The statistics enable the National Church to work with groups of similar parishes across different Dioceses (e.g. coastal towns, city centres, rural benefices).
- The statistics give a national picture of the scale of activities of Church of England churches (e.g. worship; baptisms, weddings and funerals; social action; charitable giving).
- The statistics feed into resources that are produced by the National Church and shared with parishes and dioceses, such as Statistics for Mission and Finance dashboards.

When Parishes do not enter their data...

Where parishes do not submit their Statistics for Mission data, the national church makes estimates to fill in the gaps. This means that the data for many parishes is inaccurate and presents a picture that does not represent reality. For example, it may look as if a congregation is shrinking when in fact it is growing. Please help us to serve you better by improving the quality of your data and submitting it onto the Parish Returns System. Good quality data aids good decision making.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Outreach Team on 01928 718834 ext. 260 with any queries or for support in completing your return – we are always delighted to help.