THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Statistics for Mission information sheet:
Worshipping Community

Many of you recently told us about how you gather together the information about your parish for the annual 'Statistics for Mission' return. You also told us about extra information you collect and about the things we ask for which you find difficult to answer. This was all really helpful as we try to answer really important questions about the size of the Church of England and how it is changing.

Many of you have told us that any drop in average weekly attendance is actually reflecting a reduction in how often people come to church rather than a drop in the number of individuals who are regularly a part of the church. Whilst the electoral roll does include those individuals who are unable to attend services, for example because they are too ill, but are still a committed part of a church, there are a number of other problems with this figure and how accurately it reflects the shape and size of the church. We have therefore decided to try to measure the size of our church in a different way as it has become increasingly clear that electoral roll and attendance figures alone are not sufficient to give us a clear indication of how big the Church of England is and how it is changing.   So, for the first time this year, the National Statistics for Mission form includes a question about your "worshipping community". We recognise that for some of you this idea will be completely new but others of you already give to your diocese information about the size of your parish based on the number of individuals who are a part of the church. Dioceses use a number of different terms to describe this including "participants", "Agreed membership figure", "members", "declared members", "regular worshipping community", "active members", "committed members".

We are defining the "worshipping community" to include anyone within your parish who attends any of your churches, including fresh expressions, regularly, for example at least once a month, or would do so if not prevented by illness, infirmity or temporary absence. This includes all ages but it is useful to count separately from adults (18+) those under 11 (primary) and those 11-18 (secondary). It includes activities such as fellowship groups and other activities which have a distinct act of worship or prayer. It also includes activities not on church premises (e.g. school or community centre).

We include those who:

- come to midweek services
- are ill and unable to come to church
- are away on holiday or business
- have home communions
- are part of a 'fresh expression' of church
- live in care or residential homes and would consider themselves to be full members of your church
- give regularly to the church
- lead worship (e.g. your clergy)

We do not include those who:
- are visitors - holidaymakers, baptism parties etc
- consider their 'home' church to be another church.

How do I accurately calculate my worshipping community? We know that many churches keep a list of those who come regularly and others of you who live in rural areas told us that you know each of your congregation well. If you do not have such a list you may start with your Electoral Roll as a base, in particular as a reminder of those unable to attend because of sickness or infirmity, then add other people to the figure if they attend regularly but are not on the roll. You may have a 'prayer diary' with current members, which is regularly updated and this might remind you of people who are unable to attend due to illness or who have recently died.

We would be very grateful if you could fill in as much as possible of this question. We realise it is sometimes difficult to know why people have left, so just use the "total left" box if you can't break it down and leave blank the individual parts. Thank you so much. With your help we will be able to give a more true picture of the size of our Church .

If you have any queries or would like to discuss this question further please email
statistics.unit@churchofengland.org