



second year running, statistics published today show.

Worcester Cathedral

A total of 135,000 people came to Church of England cathedrals to worship on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in 2017 – an increase of three per cent on the previous year, and the highest total since records began, according to the [report](#).

Attendances at Sunday worship in cathedrals throughout the year also continued to hold steady over a five-year period, while average weekday attendances continued their pattern of increase, with just over 18,000 attending in 2017, compared with 7,000 in 2000 when this data was first recorded. Over 10 years, the total number attending all regular services in cathedrals has increased by 10 per cent.

While year-on-year changes to Advent and Christmas attendance can be affected by the number of Sundays counted for Advent and the day on which Christmas falls, numbers attending cathedrals on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day have increased by 13 per cent over the past 10 years, evidencing sustained growth.

Meanwhile, more than 10 million people visited cathedrals (including Westminster Abbey) in 2017, with fewer paying for entry than in previous years.

Cathedrals also reported having around 1,000 more volunteers in 2017 compared with the previous year.

Life events including baptisms, memorial services, marriages and blessings of marriage all increased in numbers, with 70 more baptisms in 2017 than the previous year, an increase of nine per cent.

Elsewhere, more young people came through cathedrals' doors for educational events, with 2017 seeing an increase of three per cent on the previous year with a total of 318,000 children and young people attending, compared with 309,000 in 2016.

Cathedrals continued to be centres of civic life, with 1.3 million people reported at 5,300 civic services and events. In 2017, 289,000 people attended 290 graduation ceremonies.

Around 900,000 people attended special one-off events at cathedrals in 2017, with 29 hosting Beacon Events at the conclusion of Thy Kingdom Come, a global week of prayer for Christians from all denominations.

**The Bishop of Worcester, Dr John Inge**, The Church of England's lead bishop for cathedrals said: "Year after year our cathedrals continue to have enormous appeal to worshippers and visitors. They are awe-inspiring buildings, places to explore faith and encounter God - and centres of learning, outreach, service to the community and civic life. This year they will be at the heart of the nation's commemorations for the centenary of the end of the First World War."

"Christmas is a natural opportunity for people to re-connect with their church or cathedral, and the growth in numbers of those doing so over the past ten years is very encouraging. We hope that still more people will have the joy of rediscovering the Christmas story in a cathedral or church in 2018, and our campaign [#FollowTheStar](#) is all about helping them to do so. Everyone can be assured of a very warm welcome."

**The Chair of the Association of English Cathedrals, Adrian Dorber**, who is Dean of Lichfield said: "Cathedrals minister in a culture that is

more and more diverse, spiritually attuned, but religiously unaffiliated. They offer a mixture of absolute reliability, being open every day, and missionary enterprise. We attract large numbers of committed and skilled volunteers and the public likes to visit not only at Christmas and for national commemorations but also for events, performances and exhibitions where they are free to think new thoughts, wonder, reflect and pray.

“Much of our outreach work through education and music is reaching bigger numbers of schools and students year on year and it’s good to be able to help a rising generation with their discovery of their talents and knowledge.

“Cathedrals aren’t complacent about what opportunities lie before them, but these statistics accurately portray where they are making an impact and what they are trying to do.”

**The Third Church Estates Commissioner, Dr Eve Poole** who leads the Church of England’s Cathedrals’ Support Group said: “The breadth of this data is testimony to the wonderful diversity of cathedral activity. Some visitors are drawn to their ephemeral music and liturgy, some to their majestic architecture, some to learn about our rich heritage; others to mark life events, to come together as a civic community, and to visit one of the many creative installations to which only these lofty spaces can do full justice.

“This report reminds us of the broad appeal of these special places at the heart of our cities, which ably demonstrate what the Church of England has to offer the nation.”

## **Growth in visitors, worshippers and community engagement**

Ely Cathedral witnessed increased a 31 per cent increase in worshippers in advent between 2015 and 2017 following an increased focus and promotion of services and activities for children and families. This included a Christmas tree lights service and another service at the city’s Christmas Fair.

**The Dean of Ely, Mark Bonney**, said: “Christmas is a very special part of the year for Christians and we have made an extra effort to share what we do, especially via social media, encouraging sharing not just in the beautiful offerings from our choirs, but also as an invitation to share in worship together.

In 2016, Gloucester Cathedral created the new post of Community Engagement Manager as part of a project to grow the cathedral as a centre of spiritual, civic and heritage activity for a wider audience, connecting particularly with local residents, and addressing social issues.

In addition to several art exhibitions, including My Solitude, a photography exhibition by formerly homeless artist David Tovey which was visited by nearly 17,000 people during Lent.

**Community Engagement Manager, Helen Jeffery**, said: “The cathedral actively seeks strong partners who are committed to addressing social and human issues.

“Accessible, inclusive and affordable public events are key to our community engagement programme and we are proud of the relationships we have built and continue to grow to ensure we can provide a meaningful place of welcome for all.”

More recently in 2018, Hereford Cathedral saw increased numbers of visitors during spring, during an installation of Poppies: Weeping Window, first displayed at the Tower of London in 2014.

**The Dean of Hereford, Michael Tavinor**, said: “The Poppies created an event of great significance to the cathedral and we were privileged to host it. The reactions of the many thousands, young and old, were as varied as the locations they travelled from, but a common experience seems to be one of remembrance, thanksgiving, regret and beauty. Our wonderful volunteers, who were present in all weathers, engaged in many deep and profound conversations with our visitors.”

“For us at the cathedral, the artwork appeared as an ‘extension’ of the building itself. It helped to bring so many elements of the Christian faith we experience inside the cathedral and demonstrated the power of one-off installations to engage both new and repeat visitors and worshippers alike.”

Also during the current year, Peterborough Cathedral similarly saw an influx of 58,000 visitors in the space of one month following the arrival of Tim Peake’s Soyuz space capsule for a three-month exhibition – a 600 per cent increase on the same period the previous year.

## Notes for editors

- [2017 Cathedrals report and statistics](#)
- [Christmas reflections and materials 2018 - #FollowTheStar](#)

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