



A year after its launch, The Church of England’s award-winning Alexa skill has been asked more than 75,000 questions, new data has revealed.

The smart speaker skill was originally launched with prayers, explanations of the Christian faith and details of where to find the nearest church for local events and services based on location.



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The data also reveals a trend of highest numbers of people using the skill in the evening. As a result of this, the Church's Digital and ChurchHouse Publishing teams added a wider range of mealtime, evening and night prayers during the year.

More family prayers have also been added, and integration improved with [A Church Near You](#), the national church finder tool, to show maps of where the nearest church is. A range of videos have also been added to bring the Christian faith to life and showcase the social action work of churches across the country.

In a typical week people ask the following questions by topic area:

- Read today's daily 'EasterPilgrim' reflection – 16%
- Say a prayer – 40%
- Explore the Christian faith – 31%
- Share a grace before a meal – 6%
- Where is my local church? – 7%.

The skill is average 4.2 out of five stars on the [Alexa store](#) with comments such as "Love it - great example to the kids on how to pray".

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, said: "The aim of the Alexa skill is to help users to know more of the love of Jesus Christ, to enable regular churchgoers and those exploring faith to connect with God in another way and at a time that's right for them.

"My hope and prayer is that this will encourage many more people to make a pattern of daily prayer and Bible reading the foundation of their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

"The skill will soon be updated with Daily Prayer for [Thy Kingdom Come](#), allowing people to take part in daily services."

Adrian Harris, Head of Digital at the Church of England, said: "We are pleased with the levels of engagement in the first year of launching the skill, which was built in just three months in 2018. The skill has also been recognised at a number of leading digital industry awards. Working in close partnership with Church House Publishing, we have responded to feedback from users by adding more family prayers and content at Advent and Christmas 2018 and Lent 2019.

"In the months to come, we hope to make the content developed available on other platforms. UK smart speaker usage doubled in 2018 to more than 9.5 million monthly active users so we're excited about the opportunities to use the technology to help people grow in their Christian faith, to bring people to faith and to connect them with a local church."

Revd Katherine Hedderly, Vicar of All Hallows by the Tower and a contributor to the Alexa project, said: “It’s been wonderful for me to see the impact the Alexa skill has had in giving people extra opportunities to pause and pray throughout the week, especially given changing life patterns.

“I can see how the skill enables members of the congregation to reflect more deeply at key moments like Lent and Christmas. It also helps people who are new to faith explore the deep questions they have and to find a local church to take the next step.”

The skill was jointly built and has been maintained by the Church’s Digital and Church House Publishing teams, with future development planned to make more content available and to develop on other smart speaker platforms.

To activate the Church of England skill “Alexa, open the Church of England”. A full list of commands is available on our dedicated [Alexa page](#).

The skill was developed by [Aimer Media](#), an app developer founded in 2009. The company focuses on creating new publishing models using the opportunities created by a new generation of computing devices. Aimer have worked closely with the Church of England over several years on a range of apps for Church House Publishing.

Notes to editors

What is a skill? An Alexa skill works like an app, which users must enable, using the Alexa app on their smart phone or web browser in the same way you install or uninstall apps, or by saying: “Alexa, open the Church of England.” Skills on Alexa are voice-driven. Read more in the [original release](#).

The Church of England Digital team was established in October 2016 to harness the considerable opportunities that digital and social media brings. The first full two years have seen several key successes: the transformation of the [Church’s national website](#), with a 20% uplift in page views; the relaunch of [A Church Near You](#), our local church finder, which saw a 50% uplift in traffic in December 2017 from December 2016; a successful Christmas 2018 #FollowTheStar Advent and Christmas campaign that had a reach and engagement of 7.94 million; a #LiveLent 2018 campaign that reached 3.54 million; and winning 15 industry awards for the work so far.

Church House Publishing (CHP) is the official publisher of the Church of England, producing a range of apps, books, ebooks and websites in partnership with Anglican charity Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd. CHP’s range of Church of England apps have been downloaded over 500,000 times across the world. The Church of England Alexa skill draws on two of CHP’s most important publications: the Common Worship series of official prayers and services, and Pilgrim: A Course for the Christian Journey. Find out more about both on [the Church House Publishing website](#).

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