

More than 17,000 online services and events are being provided by Church of England churches following the introduction of the lockdown and restrictions on public worship earlier this year, according to a new report published today.



Figures from the Church of England's [Church Near You website](#), which allows people to search for church services and events, show that more than 17,000 online services or events are now listed, including Sunday Communion services, Bible studies and morning or night prayer. Many of these services take place regularly and this figure represents a snapshot of the likely total number.

The statistics do not include the [Church of England's national online weekly services](#), broadcast on Sundays and shared on Facebook and YouTube.

There have been nearly three million views of the national online services and posts about the weekly broadcasts have been seen 23.6 million times. Contributors have included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Duke of Cambridge and Pope Francis.

The national online services are being watched by a wide range of ages and around one in five people viewing go to church infrequently or not at all.

Other figures in the report show that official Church of England apps from Church House Publishing – the most popular being Daily Prayer, or the Daily Office of morning, evening and night prayer - have been used more than seven million times so far this year, up from five million in 2019. Church of England social media posts have been seen 86 million times so far, nearly double the total for last year.

The growth in online services has been helped by the Church of England stepping up its digital training programme for congregations. More than 4,200 vicars and local church leaders have taken part in remote digital training courses so far this year, four times the number as in 2019.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: “At a time when many have felt isolated and fearful, Church of England parishes and clergy have broadcast thousands of online church services and events, seeking to bring comfort and hope to their communities. We know that tens of thousands of those tuning in will never have had contact with their local Church of England parish before and may never have heard the Christian message. Their welcome presence is a sign of the great hunger we all have for spiritual meaning in our lives.”

The 2020 digital figures are published alongside the Mission Statistics for 2019 showing social action and church attendance until December. The figures show that parishes were already running or supporting 35,000 social action projects before the pandemic, serving communities across the country from lunch clubs for older people to parent and toddler groups and food banks.

More than 4,000 parent/carer toddler groups are run or supported by Church of England churches, while more than 5,000 churches run or support lunch clubs, coffee mornings or similar hospitality for older people.

The figures show the extent of church support for people living in food poverty with nearly 8,000 food banks run or supported by Church of England churches.

Nearly 60% of churches are involved in food bank provision while nearly one in three reported either running, hosting or supporting a parent/toddler group. Other figures showed 2,700 churches involved in community cafes, 2,400 in night shelters and 2,300 in holiday or breakfast clubs.

The findings show Church of England churches were involved in 35,000 social action projects, compared to 33,000 recorded in 2017.

The figures for social action have been released alongside statistics showing that the number of regular worshippers attending church once a month or more decreased by 1% in 2019 to 1.11 million.

On average, 854,000 people attended Church of England services and acts of worship each week in October 2019, a decline of 2.1% compared to the year before. The additional number of people attending services for schools in Church of England churches rose by 3% to 182,000. Usual Sunday attendance fell by 2% to 690,000 in 2019.

There were nearly eight million attendances at Christmas and Advent services and more than a million people attended Church of England church services at Easter.

Notes to editor

- The [2019 findings](#) are based on returns from around 14,000 of the 16,000 Church of England churches and relate to activities during the calendar year 2019.
- Read the full [digital report for 2020](#).

