



unprecedented engagement with hundreds choosing to 'tune in' to

One church, which usually sees such services attended by as few as five people, has reported online attendance in the hundreds for their services based on the text dating back to 1662.

Badminton Benefice, which is a group of 10 rural churches in the Diocese of Gloucester, began offering online services in the first lockdown. It has since had more than 8,500 views for its services which attempt to draw together liturgical and musical traditions as well as the beauty of art and buildings.

Chris Andrew, a Reader in the Diocese and an Archbishops' Evangelist, explained: "There is uncertainty, doubt, and insecurity and what we offer is stability, consistency, and changelessness. It is the calm on the stormy seas of lockdown."

The traditions of the Prayer Book have helped attracted people tuning in throughout a Sunday – including from the US and across Europe.

Ben Humphries, director of the church's music, is responsible for the videography.

"I am keen on capturing a moment of history in our Church's history – not just the big churches and the Cathedrals," he said.

"Our videos will become the permanent record of how parishes coped during this pandemic."

Chris Andrew added: "Others can do this too. It's a really easy way of connecting with your local congregation and we've shown it's wanted – the increase from our in-person services to our online services is 1,500 per cent."

The success of the Common Prayer services has been replicated across the country.

Historic parishes, like the Temple Church in London, are also nurturing a large online community while using the Book of Common Prayer. During the first lockdown Communion and Mattins were shared online. It also now offers regular livestreamed Evening Prayer services based on the Book of Common Prayer.

The Revd Robin Griffith-Jones, Master of the Temple, said: “We are now reaching more people virtually than ever before in person, and on both sides of the Atlantic.

“For some services, the number of congregants has increased by five-fold.

“Indeed, the response generally has been so positive and encouraging that we are investing in better quality equipment.

“We hope this will endure for everyone’s benefit after the pandemic has subsided and we resume normal public worship.”

Bradley Smith, Chairman of the Prayer Book Society, said: “Churches are seeing the long-term value in this ministry with Prayer Book services attracting new, online congregations in many parishes.

“The Prayer Book speaks with fresh clarity and authority in these uncertain times, and many people - some new or returning to faith - are finding real peace and comfort in its time-honoured rhythms.”

More information:

- The Book of Common Prayer is a permanent feature of the Church of England's worship and a key source for its doctrine.
- Written in 1662, Church of England churches often have services available based on the liturgy from the Prayer Book. To find your local church you can visit A Church Near You.

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