

Christmas attendance at services in cathedrals last year reached its highest figure since records began, statistics published today show. A one year rise of 5%, meant that 131,000 people came to cathedrals to worship last Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Increased attendances were also recorded at services in Advent with 635,000 coming to worship during the busy pre-Christmas build-up.

Average weekly attendances at services on a Sunday also increased to 18,700.

Meanwhile, over 10 million people visited cathedrals and Westminster Abbey with half donating or paying for entry.

The Rt Revd John Inge, Bishop of Worcester, and lead bishop for cathedrals and church buildings, said: "Behind these figures lie stories of worship, learning, exploring faith and spirituality and encountering God at times of joy and despair.

"Through new forms of worship, bringing people of all faiths and none together, and serving the young and old alike, these amazing places continue to be at the heart of national life."

Life events including baptisms, memorial services, marriages and blessings of marriage all remained steady in numbers with some, including baptism, seeing modest increases.

Cathedrals continued to be centres of civic life, with 1.2 million people reported at 6,000 civic services and events. In 2016, 295,000 people attended 280 graduation ceremonies.

Becky Clark, Director of Churches and Cathedrals, said: "These statistics show the enduring appeal of cathedrals as places of worship, pilgrimage, and tourism.

"This is testament to the hard work clergy, staff and volunteers put into making them welcoming and inspiring places.

"The last few years have been particularly busy, with substantial building and repair programmes at many cathedrals, ensuring these beautiful, complex historic buildings can continue to be at the heart of their communities."

Cathedrals are holding increasingly diverse services to reach out to people.

In 2016, 16,500 people went to Fresh Expression services, a 12% increase since 2013.

Over half a million people came to regular services conducted at least once a month, half of which were school services.

Some 310,000 young people also attended cathedrals through special educational visits, a rise of 10% since 2006.

Cathedral clergy and staff across the country participated in 350 formal inter-faith forums and events.

# Notes to editors

The Cathedral Statistics 2016 report can be [found here](#).

Fresh Expressions are new church communities and congregations that practice church in new ways to reach new people.

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