



to at home from the start of the first lockdown, according to a new

More than 9,000 churches (78%) offered 'Church at Home' online, via email, post and telephone during the March to July 2020 lockdown when collective worship was suspended because of the coronavirus restrictions.

More than 8,000, or 69%, offered livestreamed or pre-recorded services, while more than 5,000, or 44%, offered services downloadable from a website or emailed. More than 4,000, or 33%, offered printed and posted services and more than 2,000, or 21%, provided telephone or dial-in services.

The majority were continuing to offer these services in October last year even though most were also open for in-person collective worship.

The findings, from data gathered from 12,700 Church of England churches, show that rural churches were as successful as urban churches in providing remote worship once the size of parishes' pre-pandemic congregations was taken into account.

The rise in 'Church at Home' services and remote worship came as the Church of England stepped up its programme of training in digital communication for congregations and clergy over 2020 to help churches provide remote worship during the pandemic.

A total of 7,000 people were trained in digital communications, live streaming and running online communities, seven times the figure for the previous year.

Hymns were downloaded more than a million times as part of resource provided by St Martin-in-the-Fields church, working with the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) and the Church of England. The facility was launched during the lockdown through the A Church Near You Resource Hub website.

Writing in the report, Dr Ken Eames, from the Church of England's Research and Statistics Unit, said: "It would have been fascinating to have asked people early in 2020 whether they thought the Church of England would be able to switch at a moment's notice to worshipping online and in other innovative ways; my guess is that the Church of England massively exceeded expectations."

Welcoming the findings, the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "I thank God for the work of the churches over the pandemic including the huge effort that was made to provide worship at home.

"This has been a source of comfort and strength to so many people during a very difficult and challenging time.

"It has also meant that many have been able to discover the Christian faith and hear the good news of Jesus Christ for the first time.

"Online services and videos have become part of a toolkit for how churches can offer worship. It is inspiring to see the life of our parishes sustained and revitalised in this way."

Those providing worship at home include the benefice of Broughton Gifford, Great Chalfield and Holt in Wiltshire, which attracted thousands of viewers to YouTube explanatory 'Faith in the Village' videos on Christianity during the lockdown.

Online services broadcast by the group had an 'attendance' of up to 400 viewers compared to a maximum congregation size in person of around 120 before the pandemic.

Rector Revd Canon Andrew Evans said: "We had never thought of broadcasting online before the pandemic. We have been thrilled by the



## Notes to editors

- The 'Church at Home' figures detail those services offered online, by phone, post, email, and other means.
- The 'Church at Home' figures do not include the Church of England's weekly national online service, led by churches across the country, or remote worship provided by cathedrals.
- There have been more than 75 online services, which have been viewed 14.5 million times across Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.
- The figures also do not include the Daily Hope phone line, launched during the first lockdown. The service offers a free national telephone line, with music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England. The phone line has received more than 500,000 calls since it was launched in the first lockdown with more than seven million minutes of listening.
- More information on the Church of England's Vision for the 2020s is available on the CofE's website.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/thousands-churches-offered-remote-worship-during-lockdown-new-report-finds>