



Average weekly attendance at Church of England services rose by almost five per cent in 2023 - the third year of consecutive growth, preliminary figures show.

Meanwhile weekly attendance by children was up by almost six per cent last year, according to an early snapshot of the annual Statistics for Mission findings.

While total attendance is still below 2019 levels, the last year before the Covid-19 lockdowns, the analysis suggests in-person attendance is drawing closer to the pre-pandemic trend.

In 2021 all-age Sunday attendance was 22.3 per cent below the projected pre-pandemic trend, but the new figures reveal that the gap had narrowed to 6.7 per cent last year.

All-age weekly attendance rose to within 8.3 per cent of the trend last year, compared with 24.1 per cent in 2021.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said "This is very welcome news and I hope it encourages churches across the country. I want to thank our clergy and congregations who have shown such faith, hope and confidence over recent years to share the gospel with their communities.

"I'm especially heartened to hear that more children are coming along to church and I'm grateful to everyone involved in that ministry.

"These are just one set of figures, but they show without doubt that people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ here and now – and realising it's the best decision they could ever make.

"Renewing and growing the Church is always the work of God, and it's our role to join in with what God is doing.

"As we gather in churches this weekend to celebrate Pentecost, let's keep praying and working to invite more people to discover the love of Jesus Christ."



The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "This is very good news. For the first time in a long time we have seen noticeable growth.

"Of course we don't yet know whether this growth is a trend but I take it as a great encouragement that our focus on reaching more people with the good news of Jesus, establishing new Christian communities, wherever they are, revitalising our parishes, and seeking to become a younger and more diverse church, making everyone feel welcome, is beginning to make a difference.

"Most of all it encourages me that our emphasis on being a Christ centred and Jesus Christ shaped church is renewing our confidence in the gospel and our dependence on Christ.

"I hope the whole Church will be encouraged to continue this story of faithfulness, believing it will lead to fruitfulness, not because we want to build the earthly 'empire' of the church, but because we want people to come to know Jesus and because we know that the love and compassion they find in Jesus is what the world needs."

Overall, all-age weekly attendance at Church of England churches rose to 685,000 last year, from 654,000 in 2022, an increase of 4.7 per cent.

The number of children attending weekly increased from 87,000 in 2022 to 92,000 (up 5.7 per cent).

The full Statistics for Mission report is due to be published in the autumn as usual but these preliminary figures, published for the first time, aim to provide a snapshot of the overall picture.

Notes to Editors

- The preliminary snapshot of Statistics for Mission is based on returns from over 11,000 churches. The totals could be revised as further figures come in and checks continue.
- The projected pre-pandemic trend is based on a straight-line fit to published attendance figures from 2014-2019. A straight line is a good fit to that dataset, particularly for adult attendance.
- This projection offers an indication of the attendance figures that would have been expected if pre-pandemic trends had continued, but trends may have changed even in the absence of the pandemic.
- Children are defined as anyone under the age of 16 for the purposes of Statistics for Mission.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/weekly-church-attendance-five-cent-third-year-consecutive-growth>