

## Coverpiece for 2016 Ministry Statistics and 2017 Vocations Data

by Julian Hubbard, Director of Ministry, Archbishops' Council

The 2016 Ministry Statistics are a portrait of the face of ministry today in the Church of England. The 2017 Vocations data published alongside them show us some features of the face of ministry in the future.

The Ministry Statistics show a further stage in long term trends among the clergy. An obvious feature is another step in the declining number of stipendiary clergy and a more gradual decline in the total number of clergy of all categories. The Vocations data on the other hand show a welcome improvement in the number of those currently being called to serve as clergy. These are positive signs that the church and the dioceses are responding to the challenge to arrest the decline.

Comparing the present face of ministry presented in the Ministry Statistics with the face of the communities in which these clergy serve, significant challenges become clear about how far their age profile, gender and ethnicity reflect the wider population. A longer look at this picture underlines the need to press on urgently with the programme of work in Renewal and Reform to encourage vocations to ordained ministry and increase the number and diversity of the clergy who will serve now and into the coming decades. Again the Vocations data show some progress in redressing the imbalance of age and gender: there remains a significant challenge around encouraging more from our BAME communities and nurturing the vocation of their members.

Ministry Statistics have tended to focus on clergy data. The role of lay ministries is increasingly important and needs further attention. In terms of traditional lay ministries, the numbers of Readers show a significant fall but this is in the context of unrecorded growth in a range of other lay ministries, whether licensed, authorised or recognised locally. The Research and Statistics team are working to gather data on these to reflect the fact that the face of ministry is changing in the Church of England.

The information in this report will be of interest to those engaged, especially in dioceses, in strategic planning for current and future ministry needs, so that they can cast their vision and plans in the light of the challenges for the Church of England as a whole. It will be of interest also to broader audiences, including members of the church who want to think and pray more intelligently about the future of the Church and maybe their own vocation within it, and also those in the wider community who watch the Church and wonder about its future. The challenges are obvious: there is a growing determination to face and overcome them, and some encouraging and hopeful signs for the future.

Ministry Statistics 2016 can be downloaded here: <https://churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics/ministry-statistics.aspx>

Vocations Data 2017 can be downloaded here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/4033939/ordinand-increase-factsheet.pdf>