AVERAGE WEEKLY ATTENDANCE IN OCTOBER 2023

A REPORT FOR THE DIOCESE OF CANTERBURY

Dr Bev Botting (Data Analyst Diocese of Oxford)

Ven Bob Jackson (Church Growth Consultant, writer of this report)

BACKGROUND TO THIS YEAR'S REPORT

In 2022 we asked churches in the Diocese to send in promptly their October2022 attendance returns and as a result we were able to produce a report on trends and patterns in December. We have repeated the exercise this year based on 177 churches (58%) that made a return both years. Theses data have been checked for quality and corrections made where necessary. Thanks are due to all the churches that filled in their entries so promptly – there were responses from more than 177 churches but some did not have a corresponding return for 2022.

As we move out of the covid era, the recovery trend in AWA is still overlaying the long-term decline trend we assume has not gone away. Between 2014 and 2019 AWA declined in Canterbury Diocese at 3.4%pa compared with 2.5%pa in the Church of England as a whole.

A summary of the 2022 report is included as Appendix A to this report.

FACTS AND ADVICE

Each section reports on the data trends observed in 2023 but may then indicate some implications and offer some advice. Even if you don't quite agree with the conclusions, please don't disregard the data on which they are based! Also, when a correlation is established (eg between the start of a new FxC and overall attendance growth) this does not prove causation. Those who know how churches work may think the direction of causation is clear, but it should not be taken for granted.

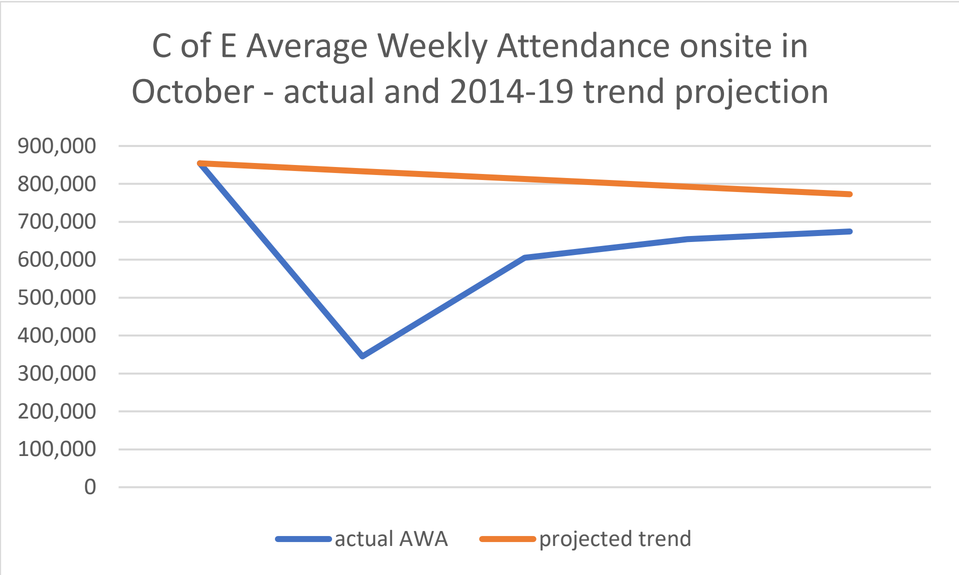
CHANGES IN TOTAL AWA SINCE 2019 AND 2022

The official AWA figures for 2022 were published in November 2023 and these showed only a slight difference from the estimate we made last year from the sample we worked with. Our estimate was that the AWA total was 72.7% of the 2019 value and the final (rounded) total suggests 71.4%. The major concern with this finding was that Canterbury was the only diocese in the Church of England in which AWA went down between 2021 and 2022. Every other diocese continued some modest recovery of attendance. Total C of E AWA was 8% higher than in 2021 but Canterbury was 5% lower.

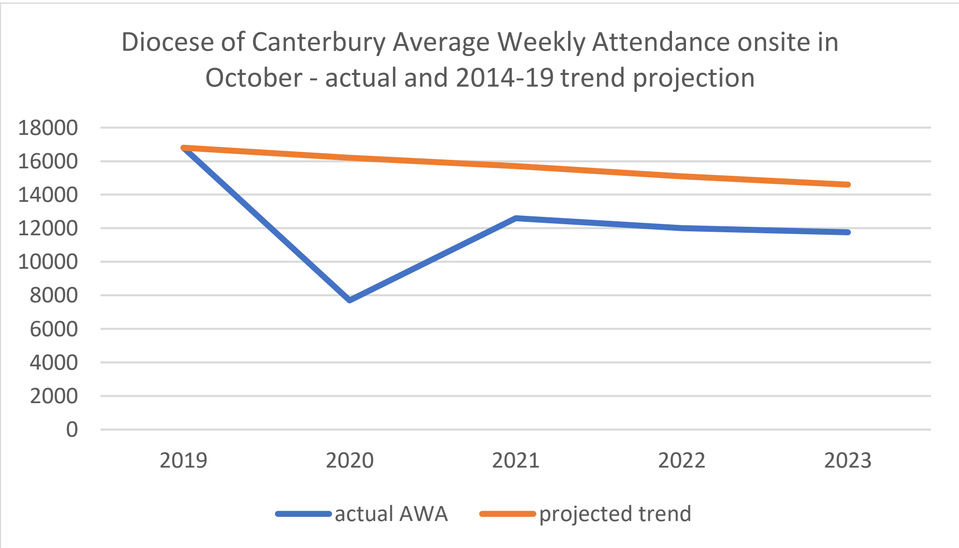
This discrepancy continued in 2023. We estimate that AWA fell a further 2% in Canterbury, but early indications are that across the C of E there was a further modest rise.

The twin graphs below show the projected trend line giving a best guess at AWA if covid had not struck against the actual AWA up to 2022 and our current provisional estimate for 2023. Though there is still a gap, attendance is still climbing up towards the trend line in the C of E as a whole,(Graph 1) but not in Canterbury (Graph 2).

Graph 1



Graph 2

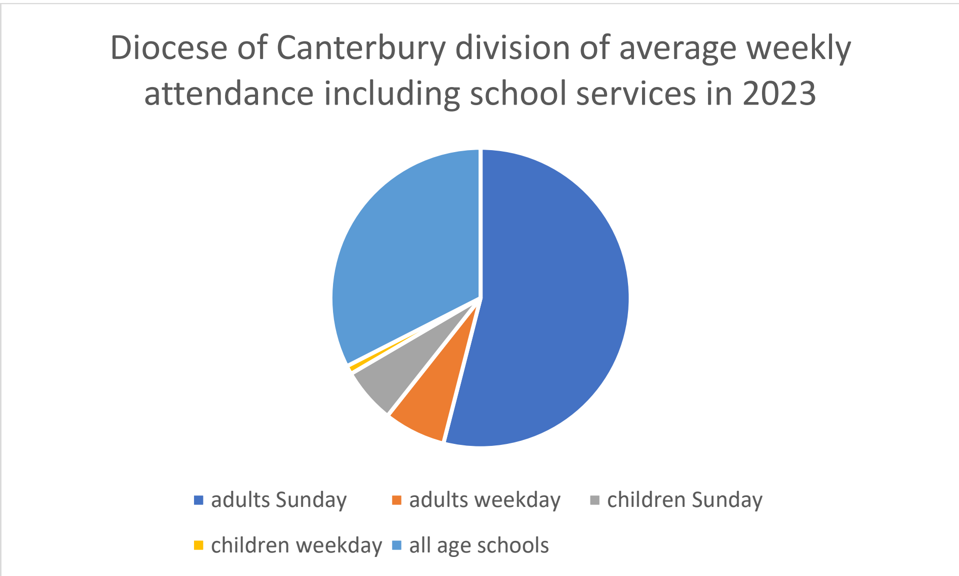


CHANGES IN THE COMPONENTS OF AWA

The table below shows the percentage change in each main element of AWA from 2022 to 2023 in Canterbury Diocese. We also include attendance at school services, which do not normally count as an element of AWA, because of the large numbers involved. The pie chart shows the relative size of each element in 2023.

There are marked contrasts between changes in different elements. Adult attendance has held up better than child attendance, but attendance at school services has continued to rise rapidly. These contrasts are picked up in subsequent sections of this report:

Adults on Sunday	-1%
Adults on Weekdays	+4%
Children on Sunday	-19%
Children on Weekdays	-6%
Total	-2%
School Services	+18%



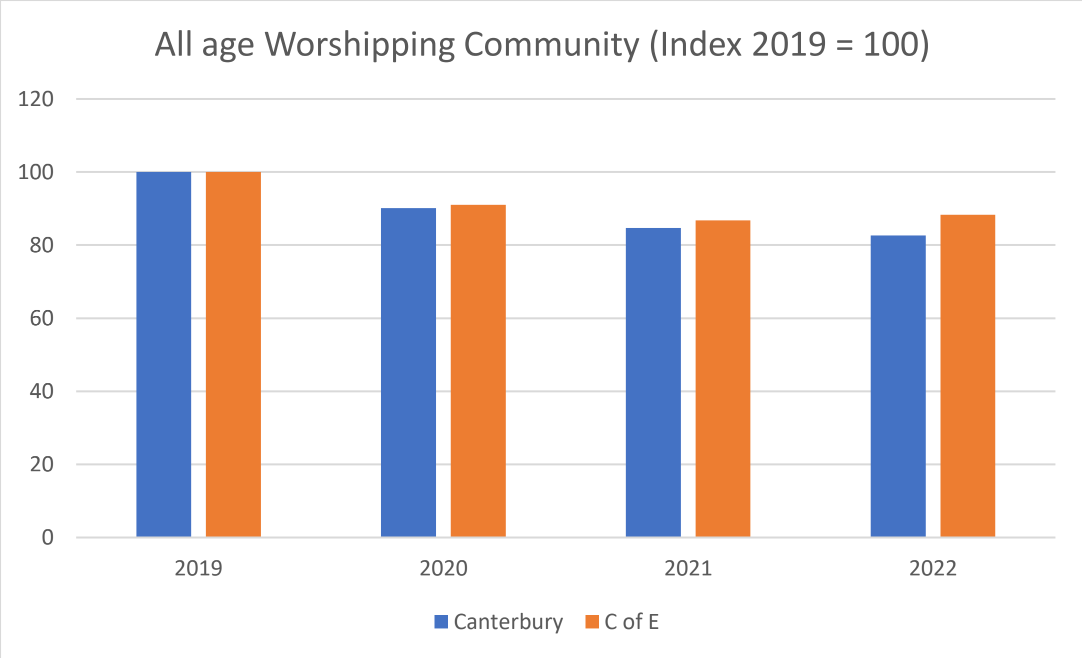
MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Worshipping Community (WC) fell by much less than attendance in the covid period, but the lag from the initial lockdown was longer. At first, when services were all online, churches did not know who had left and joined. Whereas attendance recovery began in 2021, membership went down again that year as churches reviewed the situation more clearly. WC only started recovering nationally in 2022, and we do not yet have the December 2023 numbers.

The size of the all-age worshipping community in Canterbury fell 17% from 2019 to 2022 while AWA fell 29% in the same period. The table below shows this was a faster fall than the average for the C of E and, moreover, the WC continued falling in 2022 whereas there was a small rise in the C of E as a whole. So, membership seems to tell roughly the same story of a bigger post-covid recovery problem in Canterbury than elsewhere.

Worshipping Community Totals

	Canterbury	Church of England
2019	20,200	1,112900
2020	18,200 (-10%)	1,013,300 (-7%)
2021	17,100 (-6%)	966,300 (-6%)
2022	16,700 (-2%)	983,600 (+2%)
2019-2022	-17%	-12%



Possible reasons why WC has suffered less than onsite AWA include the fact that some people now attend online rather than in person but are still considered to belong to the church. But also, there has been a long-term decline in average attendance frequency which seems to have been accelerated through covid times. The habit of being in church every week has, for some, been broken and family visits and holidays have become a higher priority. In general, churchgoers appear less likely to arrange their lives around church and will only attend if church fits in with the rest of their busy lives. Newer churchgoers are quite likely to be attending a new style service or fresh expression that may only meet once a month. Meanwhile, more of the traditional churches and services in the diocese have started meeting less often than weekly.

As with AWA, the fall in child WC was greater than for adults. We estimate that child WC in 2022 in Canterbury was 66% of 2019 whereas for ages 18-69 it was 79% and for over 70s was 95%. This means that the average age of the diocese has risen sharply and, for the first time, in December 2022 over half the people in the worshipping community were aged over 70.

ADULT AND CHILD ATTENDANCE

Although average weekly adult attendance was steady in 2023, child attendance fell very sharply, by 17%. This is on top of the 33% drop between 2019 and 2022. At a time when there was hope that attendance of families might start to recover this is a particularly disappointing outcome. Moreover, the diocese has adopted the intention of doubling the number of young disciples at a time when numbers in the churches have been plummeting. If the base year for doubling was 2019 then child attendance would need to increase 3.5 fold from 2023 to 2030. It may be more realistic to make 2023 the base year.

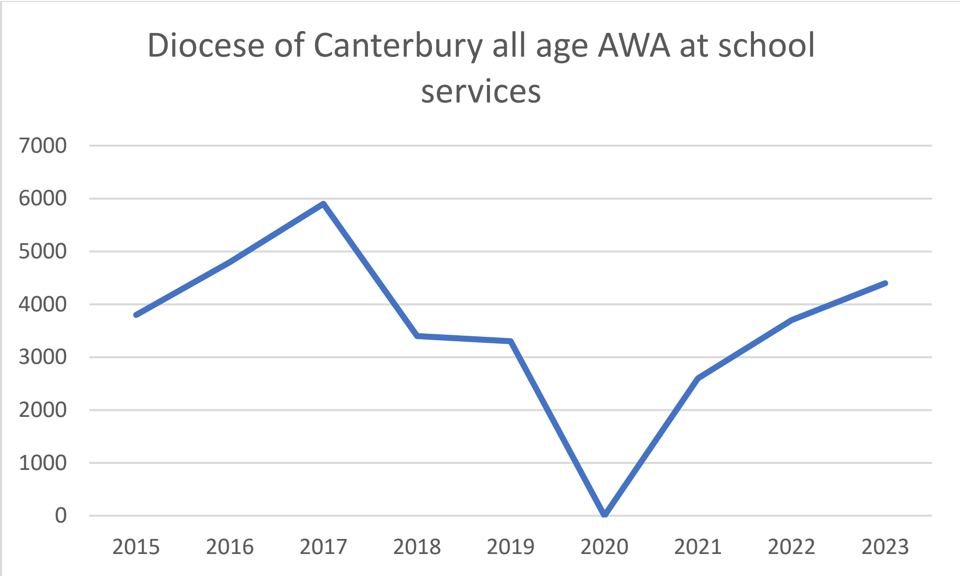
Child attendance fell across all sizes of churches. The number of churches without a single child attending in any of the four Sundays grew from 26% of the whole in 2022 to 36% in 2023. 80% of churches averaged five children or fewer. But the few churches with average Sunday attendance of 20+ children also fell, seeing an 11% reduction in 2023.

Some of the child attendance loss is associated with problems at Fresh Expressions of Church (FxC) but it is also clear that the Sunday School model has died or is on life support in the great majority of churches. It is probably unrealistic to hope for a major turnaround in existing forms – much of the future growth will have to come from new initiatives and new worshipping communities aimed at families and children.

It is hard to see how anything other than reversing the decline in child participation could be the top priority for a diocese or a church that is concerned about mission.

SCHOOL SERVICES

However, in complete contrast, attendance at school services continued to grow in 2023, by 19%. Although this is now well above the total for school attendance in 2019 it is important to see that it has not yet returned to the height of 2017. School service attendance is very lumpy – just a few churches often with congregations of several hundred make up the numbers and a couple of churches in or out can make a big difference to the diocesan total.



In October 2023 41 churches out of 177 had school services – 34 had one school service, 3 had two and 4 had three. There were no school services on Sundays or in the fourth week on the month, which was half term. It is likely that many of the school services were harvest festivals and, because of the numbers involved, many were presumably with secondary schools. Because of a few giant attendances the average attendance at a school service was as high as 70 adults and about 200 children. A total of about 9500 individual children and 3000 individual adults attended these services in our sample of 177 churches, most of them just once in the month. It is impossible to gross this up to the whole diocese as the attendance is so lumpy. But it is worth noting that, probably, more individuals attended school services in the churches in October 2023 than there were members of the regular worshipping community of the churches of the diocese.

The children, of course, had little option but to turn up, but then that is also probably true of the children brought along by parents to Sunday services! Adult teachers also had little option, but most adults, judging from the high numbers involved, were probably family members who did choose to come.

But does this add up to little more than some schools sometimes holding their assembly in a church building? It perhaps does in that in many cases large numbers of adults (presumably mainly parents and grandparents) also attended, which adds weight to the theory that we are largely looking at harvest services. In fact, the number of adults at school services has been rising faster than the number of children. At one school service, for example, there were 182 adults and 349 children. At another there were 269 adults and 395 children. These are easily the largest congregations of adults, let alone children, in the diocese. And a congregation of 500 could appear or disappear overnight at the decision of a head teacher. Also, it is worth noting that, if the theory that many of the services are harvest festivals is correct, then attendance the rest of the year may be much lower.

If this is not already in hand, it may be worthwhile someone checking with the churches involved how they see their school service ministry in the context of their overall mission. At the very least, the contacts made with schools should provide good foundations for the new church initiatives and worshipping communities based on families that will probably be at the heart of diocesan strategy this decade.

FRESH EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH & NEW WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

The number of FxC in the diocese in 2022 was half that in 2019, and average attendance was little more than a third. Most churches did not re-start their FxC post lockdown or else found that the congregation had melted away. This was a major element of the exceptionally large drop in child attendance. However, a smaller number of new FxC were begun in 2021 and 2022.

The returns for our 177 churches in 2023 include 17 FxCs on Sundays and 12 on weekdays. Of those 29, 17 were also reported in 2022 and 12 appeared to be new. However, of the 31 FxC reported in 2022 only 17 were also reported in 2023, the inference being that 14 had closed. Total reported attendance at the FxC were as follows:

	Adults	Children	Total
2022	264	127	391
2023	239	91	320
% fall	9%	30%	18%

16 of the FxC in 2023 met once in October, 3 met twice, 4 met three times and 6 met every week. AWA per FxC was 8 adults and 3 children. But when they actually met, the average attendance was 16 adults and 6 children. The loss of

38 in child AWA accounts for a quarter of the total reduction, the remaining three quarters being lost from traditional services.

If the way the churches fill in their FxC details is accurate then the birth rate of new FxC is very high and the death rate even higher.

This is why it is inadequate to focus just on the births. Not all new worshipping communities are fresh expressions of church, but all new fresh expressions of church are new worshipping communities. The diocesan goal to start 200 new worshipping communities in about nine years suggests a rate of 22 pa spread among about 300 churches, a rate of 1 per 14 churches per annum. We seem to have found 12 new FxC in one year from 177 churches, a rate of 1 per 14.7 churches. This implies that the diocese is already giving birth to new WCs at the required rate or more, as there must be some others that are not FxC. However, this is in the context not of growth but of decline – the death rate cancelling out the birth rate and survivors shrinking.

So, there is a question first of whether the 200 target is in any way bold if the diocese is already on target and second of whether it is a useful target if most of the 200 are small, meet monthly, and die young. At the least, consideration should be given to a bold outcome that is a net increase, and it may also be prudent to have some overall attendance or membership element in the target.

However, it would also be prudent to check with churches that the inference made from them ceasing to report fresh expressions of church - that they have folded - is in fact correct. See Appendix 2.

It is also possible that some churches are not reporting their NWCs on their Statistics for Mission forms – perhaps the person filling in the form is not quite sure the NWC counts or else is just reading from the service register and attendance at a NWC in the church hall on a Wednesday has not been entered.

So, we may not know the full story of new fresh expressions or worshipping communities. Also, the fact that NWCs have not generated growth in recent years because we have found more that have ceased than have been started does not mean they do not have the power to turn things around if they can be helped to stay alive. The experience of churches in Canterbury with a FxC in 2022 or 2023 illustrates the power of planting NWCs:

Three lists of churches with FxC are given in Appendix B. The 14 churches that dropped out in 2023 between them lost 29% of their total 2022 AWA. Only 2 out of 14 recorded any growth. The 17 churches that continued with the FxC both years gained 6% on AWA and 6 out of 17 saw some growth. The 12 churches that started a FxC in 2023 gained 29% on their AWA and 10 out of 12 saw growth.

We also found that five churches with an ‘Ignite’ congregation saw a collective increase in their AWA from 413 to 526 between 2022 and 2023, a rise of 27%.

It is no surprise that losing a congregation is associated with shrinking attendance and gaining a congregation with growing attendance, but these results are quite striking. They seem to confirm the contention that planting new WCs in the diocese will help turn decline into growth, though of course the new WCs need to survive and prosper once they have been born, otherwise there is no net gain. Far from giving up on the NWC agenda the data suggests it has great power to grow the churches if recent NWCs can be kept alive at the same time as new ones are started.

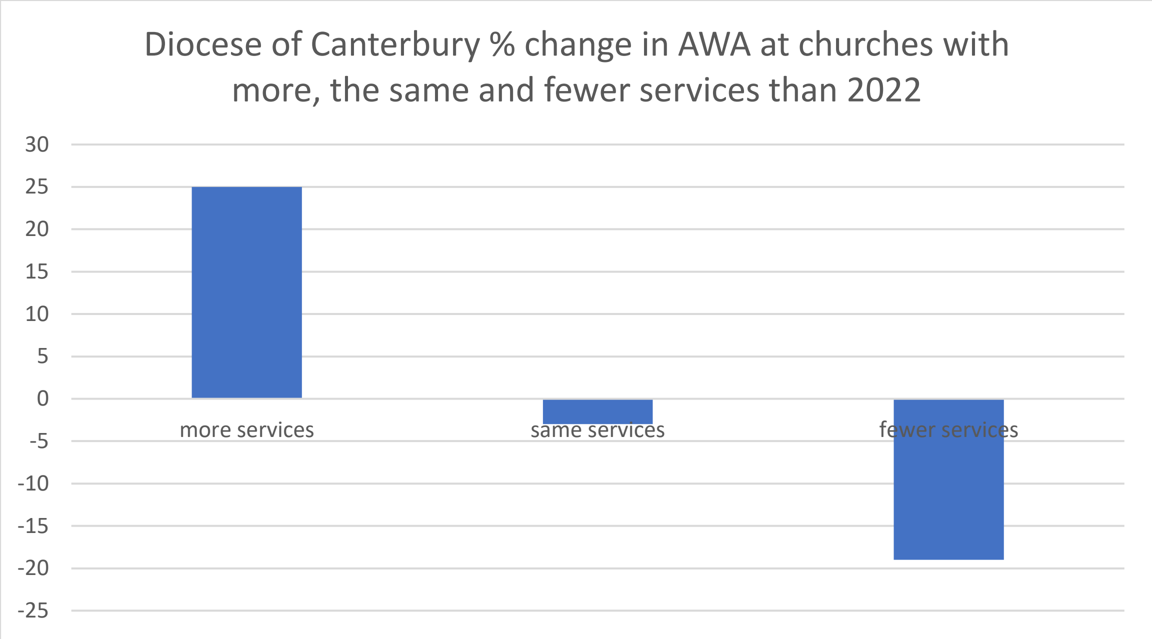
We have been instrumental in a new ‘one-off’ question being asked in the 2023 Statistics for Mission enquiry – asking whether each church has started one or more new worshipping communities (NWC) in 2023. Answers to this question should be available from the end of January and these should be put together with the FxC analysis to produce a fuller picture of what is happening in relation to the starting of new churches and services.

NUMBER OF SERVICES

We found in 2022 that the diocese collectively put on only 76% of the services it offered in 2019. It was largely a case of fewer services not smaller ones. Churches that maintained or increased their number of services over October 2022 had far better attendance trends than churches that had fewer services.

In 2023 there was a further 9% fall in the number of services offered by our sample of 177 churches. With only a 2% fall in AWA this means that the average congregation was a little larger than in 2022, but there were fewer of them.

47 churches held more services in October 2023 than in 2022. Their AWA went up by 25%. 63 churches held the same number of services and their AWA went down 3%. 67 churches held fewer services and their AWA went down 19%.



This striking finding once more suggests that the key to growing church attendance is to offer church services. The problem the diocese has been having is not so much lack of demand for church services as restrictions in the supply of them. Far from the number of services starting to recover again as covid faded in 2023 it went down again in 2023, and so did attendance. Attendance is unlikely to start rising again until the number of services starts rising again. This inevitably means the starting of new services, ie of NWCs.

NUMBER OF SUNDAYS

The same story can be told in relation to the number of weeks on which the churches offer services. Out of our sample of 177 churches, 42 did not offer a service every week in 2022 and 47 in 2023. Five churches went back up to one service a week but ten slipped down below it.

23 churches with under one service a week in 2023 had even fewer services than in 2022 (eg they went down from 3 Sundays a month to 2). Their aggregate AWA went down by 38% from an AWA in the average church of 10.5 to 6.5. 21 churches that stayed with the same number of services at a rate of under one a week saw AWA fall 4%. This implies an average AWA of 8 falling to 7.5. But the 13 churches with under one service a week in 2022 that increased their number of services saw their AWA rise by 74% - from an average of 6.5 to 11.5.

A further group of 12 small churches with an AWA under 20 in 2022 maintained at least one service a week in both 2022 and 2023. Their AWA went up 29% from an average of 14.5 to 19.

There would seem to be strong attendance growth potential in the smallest churches providing they meet every week and especially if they increase their number of services.

Very often the lack of a service every week feels forced upon churches by a shortage of service takers in multi-church benefices and perhaps a sense of despair as to whether it is worth bothering trying hard to maintain and grow very small and elderly congregations. The data suggests that there is in fact considerable growth potential if a weekly service can be offered. Reducing the number of services is usually a likely route to closure, increasing the number is a route to revitalisation.

It was suggested in our report last year that part of the solution to the problem of the supply of church services on a weekly basis is to replace the current multi-church benefice model with a focal and oversight-ministers model. This seems to be working elsewhere and since last year a network has been set up for people with a responsibility for focal ministry in dioceses. CPAS have developed an excellent training course for focal ministers.

Dioceses are sometimes accused of abandoning village parish churches to run after ephemeral gimmicks in towns. Focal Ministry and the general restoration of weekly worship in small churches is a way to counter such criticism and grow the village churches without costing money.

CHURCH SIZE

As last year we have found that attendance was rising in smaller churches and falling in larger churches:

AWA group in 2022	no. churches	% change 22-23	change in av AWA
Under 20	66	+13%	10 to 11.5
20 to 49	57	+1%	32.5 to 33
50 to 99	35	0%	70 to 70
100 plus	19	-12%	138 to 122

Total	177	-2%

AWA has only gone down overall because it has gone down among the group of 19 largest churches. The fall was widespread and significant - it fell in 15 out of the 19 and by an average of 12% in the year. There can be fluctuations in a single church due, say, to a large one-off service one year that is not repeated the next. However, these should balance out in a group of churches, and they should not generate a long-term trend. The 12% drop in AWA in large churches in 2023 should be added to the 23% drop from 2019 to 2022. Even before 2019 the larger churches across the country had been shrinking faster than the smaller ones. It looks as though covid has simply exaggerated an issue that was already there.

Likely reasons for the shrinking of the large churches include:

1. Their congregations tend to be younger, with more children – the age group in more rapid decline.
2. There seems a larger premium on belonging and community in church life today – harder to generate in a large, more anonymous crowd even if the service and sermon are high quality.
3. It is easier to lose people unnoticed and harder to attract the new people needed to maintain numbers in a large church.
4. It has been harder to re-assemble widely scattered town congregations post covid than small congregations in villages that were more likely to stay in touch with each other anyway.
5. There was greater reluctance to return to a building that might be crowded than to one where there were only twelve people in a hundred-seater church.
6. Large churches run on programmes and rotas, commitment to which has been weakened by the covid experience.

Yet some large churches have grown well since lockdowns ended and large churches also have strengths that may be key to growth. For example, they are more likely to be able to find a team to start a new worshipping community (NWC) and to have suitable premises to house it. Going together with this report, a conference for the larger churches of the diocese to consider their future growth took place on 2nd December.

ONLINE CHURCH

In October 2022 20% of the churches of the diocese were offering a form of Church at Home (CAH), almost all of which were online services, usually on YouTube. We estimated from the figures the churches provided on their Statistics for Mission returns that online attendance added about 39% to onsite AWA of churches with CAH, and 12% to total onsite attendance. This made total onsite + online attendance about 82% of 2019 AWA.

We are unable to count online attendance in 2023 just yet as a change in the arrangement of the form has detached it from AWA and most churches have missed it. Hopefully they will provide their data in January.

However, it is worth noting that in 2022 across the dioceses, churches offering services online also did better for onsite attendance. It seems that for many people, the way in to trying out a church in person is to follow online for a few weeks. Churches not online are not on their radar.

That online is here to stay as a permanent element in churchgoing is illustrated by Canterbury Cathedral. We noted in 2022 that their YouTube view numbers totalled an average of about 13,000 a week across the services. Our best guess at the number of people accessing at least half the service online was about 60% of that - 7800. Easter 2022 had been a high-water mark of 50,000 views.

YouTube view in October 2023 averaged 5400 a week for the two Sunday services and 2200 a day for the daily evening service, making total view numbers of over 16,000 in an average week. Many of these views will represent people around the country and around the world, and many will doubtless be accessing more than one service a week or attending their own church as well. But enough may well live in Canterbury diocese to make a substantial addition to onsite attendance at the parish churches.

VACANCIES

As last year, we found that churches with an incumbent vacancy in 2023 on average found their AWA went down faster than the average. This especially applies to the larger and medium sized churches. Small churches in multi-church benefices tend to run more independently of an incumbent they rarely see and so are less vulnerable to a long vacancy. The 11 churches we identified with an AWA in 2022 of over 50 saw their collective AWA go down 19% in 2023. As some of these vacancies were not yet filled by October 2023 there may be more decline to come.

Churches can do their best to guard against the missional impact of a coming vacancy by using the ‘Growing through a vacancy’ materials provided by CPAS. The diocese can both encourage this and also maintain efforts to restrict the length of vacancies as much as it can.

WHY IS AWA NOT GROWING BACK IN CANTERBURY?

We estimate that AWA in 2023 was about 93% that in 2021. But in the Church of England as a whole, it may well turn out to be around 112%, give or take a few % points.

We have located ***where*** AWA is going down – children & younger adults, large churches, churches in vacancy, churches losing their FxC, churches offering fewer services in the week, and churches not offering a service every week. But that does not explain ***why*** AWA is going down when it is going up elsewhere.

So, why the difference? Perhaps there is no one major cause, but lots of smaller ones that together provide a plausible explanation:

1. The downward trend in AWA in Canterbury has been higher than the average for some time – by as much as 1%pa. If this downward trend has been continuing under the covid surface it could account for 2% of the 19% difference between 93 and 112.
2. AWA in Canterbury did not sink quite as far in 2020 and 2021 as the average. 2021 AWA was 75% of 2019 whereas the C of E total was 71%. So, there was slightly less to claw back.

But these statistical explanations only tell a small part of the story:

3. The Parish Share system, which is based on AWA and on which the diocese rolled out a roadshow in 2022, may be part of the explanation. If I were a vicar in Canterbury, I would consider moving the harvest service to the last Sunday in September and I may well feel the inhibiting effect of rising Share as the regular AWA grew. Share systems can inhibits real growth as well as affecting the statistical returns. But this cannot be the main explanation because the big AWA drop is in children not adults and the WC trend is also downwards.
4. Perhaps the diocese has emerged from covid with even less energy than the average diocese. And perhaps there has been a stronger culture of

acceptance of cuts to service numbers, to congregations and to the number of Sundays churches are open for business. But getting a feel for these cultural differences and patterns is not easy and can become subjective.

5. I have learned that, after some years of suspicion of strategy under former leadership, there still appears to be a lack of focussed intention for growth, which senior staff are seeking to shift. It is as if the diocese is trying to find its strategic feet or confidence after a long period of inattention to the promotion of the growth and flourishing of the churches. Apart from the general cultural issues, this has meant that changes in church life and interventions from the diocese aimed at growing the churches have been less prominent than in some other dioceses. None of the examples below, by themselves would have made a decisive impact, but put together, they may be sufficient to explain the divergent trend:

a) Beginning with London in the 1990s, various dioceses have developed recruitment criteria and role descriptions for clergy appointments that actively seek to appoint mission and growth-minded clergy. London began by looking for 'leaders in mission and enablers of other people's ministries' rather than parish pastors. We heard the example of Ipswich at the conference on 3rd December where appointments have only been made of clergy who convince the interview panel that they can grow their churches and who agree to plant two new worshipping communities in their early years in post. There has perhaps been less focus on this in Canterbury appointments.
b) In some dioceses there has been a consistent focus on asking every church to develop and deliver a succession of 'Mission Action Plans'. Comparisons between churches that follow this lead and use MAPs and those that don't show a marked difference in attendance trend. Although many churches in Canterbury do have MAPs and plan their future strategy, the culture is not as strong as in some other dioceses. Half of the larger churches attending the 2nd December conference said they had a mission plan and half said not.

c) Church Army research in 2011 indicated the number of FxC was over 70. Since then, with little diocesan support and encouragement, that number has fallen. The drop between pre and post covid eras was greater than in some other dioceses.

a) A smaller proportion of churches have stayed online in Canterbury, and it looks like staying online is also good for onsite attendance.
b) There seems to have been little or no take up of LyCiG courses and conferences in Canterbury in recent years. Those dioceses that have used LyCiG a lot tend to see a benefit in AWA as well as in other metrics.
c) There seem to have been no recently started major church plants or resource churches similar to ones that have had an impact elsewhere - especially on the attendance of young adults and families. One or two are now at the planning and financing stage.
d) Similarly, there has been less activity than elsewhere in terms of transplants and grafts.
e) Canterbury does not seem to have accessed as much central funding for mission as some other dioceses. The funded initiative 'Inspiring Ipswich' introduced at the large church conference this December is contributing to that diocese's AWA.
f) It looks like there are fewer paid families and children's ministers in Canterbury than in some dioceses. Our study last year of Guildford Diocese showed that the churches with a paid worker had recovered child numbers better than those without one.
g) New 'Focal Ministers' may be starting to make a difference to AWA in churches in some dioceses, though not yet in Canterbury.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

There can be no doubt that the churches can grow again – the problem has been identified. It is not lack of demand. When the supply is there the churches are growing. Surveys suggest that the population at large is now more open to the Christian faith due to the combined experience of covid, global warming, war in Europe, inflation & falling living standards. Some churches are finding ways to grow strongly. The problem is on the supply side and so is the remedy. The remedies are in our own hands.

If the above analysis is anywhere near the mark, it provides its own answers. These are both for local churches and the central diocese to take up. For example, any church can sign up to do a LyCiG course, but only a diocese can arrange for every church leadership team to take a course over a period of a few years. A church might see an opportunity for a NWC but only a diocese can access SMMIB money to pay NWC staff or midwives.

Rather than attempt here to be prescriptive in terms of detailed policy, we simply suggest that each church and the diocese at the centre consider all the options for upgraded plans for drawing more people and new generations into the body of Christ while there is yet sufficient life left. Then implement the most promising. With half the membership of the diocese being aged 71 or over, the time is short.

Ven Bob Jackson

5th December 2023

Appendix 1 Summary of the report on AWA last year, in October 2022

1. *Attendance recovery from covid lockdown seems to have stalled at about three quarters of the 2019 level.*
2. *Recovery has been weaker among children, on weekdays and, especially, at fresh expressions than it has been among adults at traditional Sunday services. But attendance at school services is now higher than in 2019.*
3. *The smallest churches are the only size group to have got back to the 2019 attendance level.*
4. *Fewer churches offered services online than at Easter but their contribution to attendance numbers is still significant. Total attendance at churches with an online presence is higher than it was in October 2019.*
5. *The Cathedral and some other churches with a national profile continue to attract large numbers of online attenders. If these are included, then attendance at services in the diocese is clearly higher than in 2019.*
6. *Churches that have maintained or increased the number of services they offer have recovered their 2019 attendance levels. But the majority of churches have reduced the number of their services and 40% now do not have a service every week. These churches are a long way off their 2019 average attendance levels.*
7. *It looks as though recovery is especially weak in churches with a vacancy.*
8. *The Parish Share roadshow may have impacted attendance returns and even the real-world totals*
9. *It is possible that leadership energy debilitated by recent experience lies behind the inability to return to previous service and attendance levels.*

10. *But significant new attendance growth in the coming year is still entirely possible, as proved by those churches that have grown their attendance since 2019. Among other things, new growth may need churches to plant new congregations and the diocese to encourage new ways of organising parish share and providing church leadership.*