

WHY ARE WE ASKING FOR YOUR HELP?



Statistics for mission (membership and attendance) and church finances

Who uses the returns and the information from them?

Some parishes find the completion of the parochial returns useful for their own purposes; the information, when collected over a period of years, can give a useful insight into the continuing life of the parish. Many diocesan offices regularly use information extracted from the returns. The figures, usually aggregated as diocesan totals, are used extensively by central church organisations and ecumenical bodies; and are largely published in **Church Statistics***.

They are used annually to assess emerging mission opportunities, for clergy deployment; allocations of new deacons; stipend support allocations; to monitor charitable giving; and to present a broad picture of the Church's finances. For example, it is recognised that parishes are facing increased financial pressures, and if the Church nationally is to argue the case for government help (e.g. VAT relief on repairs) then a clear picture of how the expenditure is split over the various categories is needed. Figures for giving (e.g. tax-efficient planned giving by gift aid; collections; legacies/bequests; and special appeals) are always very important, especially in the context of how the Church stewards its resources.

Why have the returns changed?

The Statistics for Mission form now reflects the growing incidence of fresh expressions of church and other developing mission opportunities. The finance return was revised in 2007, which had remained largely unchanged for the previous seven years or more, to simplify the form and its completion, whilst ensuring consistency with SORP 2005. This year the new form, which is appropriate for both Receipts & Payments accounts and Accruals accounts, remains largely unchanged, but reflects feedback received.

Are they used for parish share/common fund purposes?

In some dioceses particular items are used to help calculate the parish share. For all dioceses, figures are

extracted from the Returns to help determine the contribution each diocese will be invited to pay towards the cost of training for the ministry and for national church activities.

Surely, on the finance side, a set of PCC accounts should suffice?

The use of standard format returns means that we can process the information much more efficiently with fewer staff. The effect of the Charities Act 1993 was that the Church had to ask its parishes to review the way in which they present their accounts. **The Charities Act 1993 and the PCC 3rd edition*** provides a guide to the workings of the act as it applies to PCC accounts. Chapter 6 identifies the various items of expenditure and income and categorises them under certain headings. The finance form has been designed to be consistent with the language and the format set out in the guidelines. Parishes are asked to identify separately the restricted and unrestricted income as these figures have to be shown separately in accounts.

How confidential is the information?

Whilst we treat the parish information as confidential and only publish diocesan figures, any member of the public has a right to ask the PCC for a copy of its annual accounts.

Do I need to bother making a return when I did one last year?

YES please! Failure to receive completed returns every year delays the production of the results and detracts from their reliability and accuracy.

THANK YOU for completing these forms

*The annual publication **Church Statistics** and publication **The Charities Act 1993 and the PCC 3rd edition 2006** (£8.99 plus p+p) may be obtained from Church House Bookshop - visit: www.chbookshop.co.uk or call telephone number 020 7799 4064. Church Statistics may also be downloaded from the Church of England website at: <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats/research-statistics.aspx>