

How do I submit my returns?

You need to login to the portal at: parishreturns.churchofengland.org. There you can submit your returns and once logged in you can access the link to the user guide which has a list of FAQs for further help.

If you are completely new to this, you will need to register for an account by contacting Sue Dale on 01904 699535 or sue.dale@yorkdiocese.org. Once you have a user account you can then access the user guide which has a list of FAQs.

If you do not have access to the internet but are responsible for the returns then maybe you could partner with someone in your church that has internet access.

If you are a church officer (Warden, PCC Secretary, PCC Treasurer) you may wish to gain access via the new Church of England portal at www.cofeportal.org. If you haven't already registered on this site, click 'register for an account'. You will then be able to link the parish returns site to your portal area. You don't have to do this but it will make things simpler for the future and it will enable you to access other useful resources such as our diocesan online directory.

Where do I go for help if I am having problems?

Please don't give up! Remember the user guide once logged in and if you need to talk to someone please contact the Diocesan Office on 01904 699500 or office@yorkdiocese.org.

Further information and assistance can be found on the Diocesan website at: www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/parish-returns from where this leaflet can be downloaded along with various guides.

Annual Accounts, Report & Budgets

Please do not forget to submit all three elements to the Diocesan Office following your APCM, which must be held by 30th April, as stated in the [Church Representation Rules](#). In an effort to save on paper and postage etc. we are going electronic from 2019 and welcome your assistance to that end. If you can please forward a signed audited copy of your accounts via email to sue.dale@yorkdiocese.org it would be very much appreciated. Alternatively for those not in a position to do this then you can post ONE signed audited copy.

Deadlines

Statistics for Mission – 31 January

Return of Parish Finance – 31 May

Annual Accounts, Report & Budgets – 31 May

Annual Parish Returns

Everything You Need to Know



Good statistics are a powerful weapon in the mission and ministry armoury of local parishes, dioceses and the national church. Not for nothing do we call them Statistics for Mission!



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Every year, parishes/benefices are asked to complete two returns covering membership, attendance and church finances.

Statistics for Mission (deadline 31 January) are all about membership and attendance at church. The information collected provides the latest figures on attendance at Church of England services, and the numbers of baptisms, marriages and funerals that have taken place over the last year. In October, the Church of England publishes the statistics from the previous year.

The statistics help paint a picture of participation in the Church of England across the country. The figures help to identify trends and spot mission opportunities. They make it possible to plan on terms of clergy deployment.

Return of Parish Finance (deadline 31 May) is about your church finances. The financial figures help paint a picture of the Church's finances at the grassroots. This is useful for a number of reasons. For example, if the Church nationally is to argue the case for Government help – such as the matter of VAT relief on repairs – it bolsters our case if we have an accurate picture of the pressures at the local level.

Why bother?

When we ask you to complete the returns, people sometimes think that it's all about 'the diocese' or the national Church. We know churchwardens or treasurers sometimes say "We send all this information, but what's in it for us?" Well we truly believe that completing the Statistics for Mission and Return of Parish Finance has benefits at every level of the life of the church – local, deanery, diocesan and national.

The Diocesan and National perspective

The returns from the parishes are vital for planning our shared mission and ministry. Robust data is essential if Archbishop's Council and deaneries are to make good decisions about how the Church uses its resources.

And at the local perspective – what's in it for Parishes?

As each local church discerns its own plans for mission and growth, understanding the local context is essential. The national research unit has worked hard over the past few years to turn the data it receives into accessible information which local churches can use, e.g. Parish Dashboards which are

available from the online returns system via the 'View Data' menu option. Otherwise, there is a danger that you make incorrect assumptions about the people in your parishes. There are many examples where people have looked at the Parish Dashboards and made unexpected discoveries about people living around them. Such insights offer vital mission and outreach opportunities – which help grow the Church.

So the questions on the Statistics for Mission Returns are designed to help you answer important questions about your parish or benefice. In the light of these questions, you can then look at attendance patterns over the past few years.

Our challenge

The problem is that where the information is missing, the national Church and those working in the Diocese have to use 'guesstimates' to fill the gaps. If your parish's information isn't there, assumptions have to be made and they can't be accurate or represent reality. This can have far-reaching consequences; for example, if it looks as if your congregation is shrinking when in fact it is growing – or your parish's financial situation isn't what it is assumed to be – that might lead to unhelpful decisions about future provision of ministry or appropriate offers of support.

In other words, we know the information is wrong, but we can't put it right without your input!

We appreciate this can be yet another task on top of the many others taking up more of your time but good quality data is essential to good quality decision-making.

Thank you for faithfully providing this information, year after year. To those who struggle to complete the returns please speak with the Diocesan Office and we will do all that we can to help you complete them.

Thank you very much in anticipation of your contribution to this very important task.



Peter Warry
Diocesan Secretary
January 2019