This, the third edition of *UK Church Statistics*, gives an overview of church life in the UK (across all four countries) culled from a thorough survey of church membership, churches and congregations, and the number of ministers. It contains a number of extra features not found in earlier volumes, such as a detailed look at both Scottish and English church attendance (Sections 12 and 13 respectively) and church growth in Sub-Saharan Africa (Section 15) from a newly published volume. It also contains more essays and articles than before, and gives further analysis on funerals (Page 2.8).

The book covers the individual years between 2012 and 2017 (many of the final year having to be estimated), and then gives a forecast through for the next five years to 2022. This Introduction seeks to highlight the major trends from this mass of data. While the overall numbers continue to decline, there are a number of areas where growth is occurring, although overall the appearance of the future (as shown in Fig 1.4) is a downward line, though by 2030 (Table 1.1.1) membership of Christian churches in the UK will likely still be over 7% of the adult population.

Churches in the UK

In 2017 there were some 50,500 churches in the UK, one for every 1,300 people in the population (there is 1 doctor for every 300 people). Not all the churches are *buildings*, as some congregations meet in homes, schools, rooms in pubs, village halls and other places. Perhaps 42,000 are actual buildings.

What is the best way of grouping this number of units? There are three main mechanisms. One is by denomination – most people are familiar with the Church of England, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Salvation Army and so on, but in fact there are at least 257 such groups. Another is by what is termed "churchmanship", or the ethos or the theology on which a church's work, worship and practice is based – Evangelicals, Charismatics, Catholics, Liberals and others. The third is location – Rural churches, City churches, Council Estate and Suburban churches and so on.

A fourth descriptor sometimes used, size, is very relative, as "large" churches exist in every group but where the actual number referred to varies considerably – over 10,000 in a single congregation in a few groups, but perhaps just a few hundred in others. Mega-churches are taken in America as meaning churches with over 2,000 attending, but there are very few with so many in the UK. Size is not used as a variable for analysis in this volume except in Figure 11.7 and Tables 12.14.3 and 12.17.2.

There are a few Tables which look at churches by environment (such as Tables 6.2.2, 13.5 and 13.6), and more which look at churchmanship (Tables 12.11-13, and 18, 13.3.2,3 and 13.5.1,2), but most of this book focusses on denominational groups. In his 1977 book *The Becoming Church* (published by SPCK), the management guru John Adair defined a denomination as "a Christian organisation uniting a number of local congregations," a convenient, practical definition which is used here. Some groups would come within this definition but for theological reasons would prefer not to call themselves a denomination. For ease of reference we have put every group of churches, with a general category for "others," into a denomination.

UK Denominations

Table 1.1.3 shows that in this edition of *UK Church Statistics*, there are 257 denominations, rather less than the 290 in 2013 listed in the previous volume. The Table shows that some of the 10 denominational groups have fewer individual denominations in than before and two, the Roman Catholics and Presbyterians, one more (respectively the Old Catholic Church [new to this volume, and not the same as the Old Roman Catholic church] and the International Presbyterian Association [previously included with Smaller Denominations]).

The main decline in number of individual denominations is among the Pentecostal mega-group. The Charity Commission's register of annual returns reveals that a number of these denominations have made no returns over the last five years or so and that they no longer have a live website. It maybe that the 100 Pentecostal denominations estimated previously was too high, but, as the article on Page 9.8 indicates, recent Pentecostal growth has slowed, and part of the reason is that a number of their churches have closed. It remains true, however, that the comment by Dr Joe Aldred, the Pentecostal and Multicultural Relationship Officer at Churches Together in England, that there could be as many as 8,000 Pentecostal churches in the UK is perhaps correct (we list only 4,000), since tracking these churches is incredibly difficult, and the ones listed here have taken weeks of research to find them.

For simplicity the various denominations are collated into 10 broad groups, and when a denomination covers the whole of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, only the Northern Ireland component is included. The following percentages relate to 2017 membership figures, and the initial number refers to the section in this volume in which details may be found:

1) **Total** of (2) to (11).

2) **Anglican:** 82% of which are Church of England, 12% Church of Ireland [in Northern Ireland], 4% Church in Wales, 2% Scottish Episcopal Church, and 0.2% the much smaller Free, Traditional, Continuing or other ex-Church of England groups.

3) **Baptist:** 69% of which are Baptist Union of Great Britain, 8% Independent Baptists,6% Baptist Union of Wales, 6% Baptist Union of Scotland, 4% Grace Baptist Churches, 4% Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland [in Northern Ireland], 2% Gospel Standard Strict Baptist and 8% other, mostly independent, Baptist churches.

4) **Roman Catholic:** 57% of which are the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, 28% the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland [in Northern Ireland], 10% the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and 5% all other Catholics.

5) **Independent:** 26% are Christian Brethren [Open], 23% are FIEC [Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches], 8% the Union of Welsh Independents, 8% Christian Brethren [Exclusive], 6% are other Congregational churches, 3% Churches of Christ, and 26% other independent (often individual) churches. The main change in this group from 2013 is the increased proportion which are FIEC (it was 17%).

6) **Methodist:** 91% of which are part of the Methodist Church of Great Britain, 6% the Methodist Church in Ireland [in Northern Ireland], 1% are Wesleyan Reform Union, 1% Independent Methodists and 1% Free Methodists.

7) **New Churches:** 18% were Newfrontiers, 9% are Vineyard Churches, 6% Salt and Light Ministries, 3% are Ground Level Network, 3% part of Pioneer, 2% Multiply Network, 2% International Network of Churches, 2% are, or were, part of the Ichthus Christian Fellowship, 6% part of other House Church streams (individually listed), 14% part of other small House Church networks (not individually listed), and 35% other non-denominational churches. This category is kept separately from other Independent churches for comparison purposes, even though many of the former networks in this category have now dissolved [hence “were” before some names here].

8) **Orthodox:** 43% of which are Greek Orthodox, 18% Romanian Orthodox, 15% Russian Orthodox, 13% other Eastern Orthodox, 10% Oriental Orthodox and 1% other Orthodox churches. The Orthodox churches in this volume are given in three groups: Eastern, Oriental and Other. The main change here is the huge growth in the Romanian Orthodox church (13% in 2013).

9) **Pentecostal:** 17% are Redeemed Christian Church of God,17% Elim Pentecostal Churches, 12% Assemblies of God, 4% Oneness Churches, 3% New Testament Church of God, 3% Kingsway International Christian Centre, 2% Church of Pentecost, 2% Deeper Life Bible Church, 1% United Pentecostal Church of Great Britain, 1% Apostolic Church, 1% Mountain of Fire Ministries, 1% Church of God of Prophecy, 1% Holiness Churches, 23% other known African and West Indian Churches, and 12% numerous other smaller denominations.

10) **Presbyterian:** 52% are Church of Scotland, 29% Presbyterian Church in Ireland [in Northern Ireland], 9% United Reformed Church [URC], 3% Presbyterian Church of Wales, 3% Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, 2% Free Church of Scotland and 2% other smaller Presbyterian denominations.

11) **Smaller** (or Other) **Denominations:** 17% are Salvation Army, 17% overseas national [immigrant] churches, 13% Seventh-Day Adventists, 12% Lutheran churches, 5% Religious Society of Friends [Quakers], 1% Church of the Nazarene, 1% Moravian Churches, 1% Mennonites and other small groups, and 33% “Messy Church” and other like synonyms.

These 10 broad denominational groups have been used for reporting church data over the last 45 years, in publications like the *UK Christian Handbook*, or, since 1998, in the seven volumes of *Religious Trends,* as well as the first two editions of *UK Church Statistics.*

Sources of data

The data was collected by sending a form to every single denomination in the UK in the middle of 2016 where a contact address was available asking for the number of members by UK country, churches and ministers (and the number who were female). Some respondents were unable to provide all the data requested, so where necessary the missing information has been estimated. Where no data was available from a denomination, sometimes their website was used instead.

All estimated numbers are indicated by the footnote [1], sometimes placed by the date at the left hand side of a page or above a column of figures, where the footnote then refers to *all* the figures in that row or column unless indicated otherwise. Denominations were asked to give their own estimates for 2017 and 2022, and these, as with all data directly supplied by a denomination, are indicated by the footnote [3], which again will apply to all the figures in a row or column if placed by the year date. Numbers previously published which have been superceded in this volume are all indicated by the footnote [2].

Some denominations do not have membership as such, the chief of which is the Roman Catholic Church, so Mass Attendance figures are used instead. The same has been true of many Pentecostal churches, whose attendance is frequently two or three times greater than their membership. We have used membership figures this time as far as we can, which explains why the total number of Pentecostals is less than before. Some Independent and New Churches only have attendance data also (like the FIEC). The Church of England Electoral Roll is used for their membership figures.

The above is true for Sections 1 to 11. Section 12 gives Council and other results for church attendance in Scotland from the 2016 Scottish Church Census (which have been used to adjust some previous estimates in Sections 2 to 11), and various other sources have been utilised for the data in the other sections, which are individually itemised.

The economic and political changes in the UK over the past few years make the estimation of numbers, focussing especially on immigrants either in the community or membership of some of the denominations, very difficult. For example, one senior official put the number of Greek Orthodox in Scotland at over 20,000. The 2011 Scottish Census recorded the number at just over 1,500. Given that many probably would not have written "Greek Orthodox" on their Census form but just ticked "Christian" we have taken a figure of just over 3,000. How these immigrant numbers vary according to employment opportunities and the uncertainties of Brexit are also unknown. Hence for those denominations which have many from other lands included in their numbers there has to be much uncertainty. We have searched the web as much as possible to try and obtain as reasonable estimates as we can, and have always indicated when the relevant numbers are estimated.

Growth

One key factor over the last few years is the fact that a number of denominations have seen substantial growth. This stems from various factors. The *FIEC*, for instance, launched its Church Revitalisation programme especially aiming at churches with one or more of the following characteristics (which are taken from their 2017 Annual Report):

- Had seen no conversions in the previous three years
- Had had no baptisms
- None or under 5 young people on a Sunday
- Whose numbers were small (under 35) and hadn't changed significantly in the last 10 years.

The consequence, as is shown in Table 5.2.2, was a considerable influx in church membership (which increased by 10%) and consequently produced an increase in their numbers, offset by reducing numbers in some denominations shown in other Tables. This growth is assumed in the forecast future numbers to 2030 in Figure 5.1.

A key cause of growth in other areas is through the *number of immigrants* coming to the UK. A partial list of some of these is shown in Table 11.4.3, but numbers from some countries are especially important church-wise. This includes:

- The Romanians, many of whom belong to the Romanian Orthodox Church (Table 8.2.3)
- The Poles, of whom there were over a million in the UK in 2017 according to the Office for National Statistics, seen in the Polish Catholic Churches (Table 4.2.2), and particularly seen in Aberdeenshire in Scotland (Page 12.2 and Table 12.4.1); perhaps as many as 5% of Poles in the UK attend church. There are also Protestant and Orthodox church-going Poles.
- The continuing growth among Black Africans especially in groups like the Church of Pentecost (Table 9.1.6), Potters House Christian Fellowship (Table 9.2.6), the Redeemed Christian Church of God (Table 9.3), Kingsway International Christian Centre (Table 9.5.1) and the Seventh-Day Adventists (Table 11.1.6)
- The ongoing growth in many of the Protestant Overseas National Churches (Table 11.2.1), especially seen in the Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Syrian, Portuguese and Polish churches (all on Pages 11.2-4), all of which have increased at least 10% in the last 5 years
- The same growth is seen among the Lutheran churches, mostly from European countries, who collectively have also increased by over 10% since 2012.

A third group of growing churches are those *especially concerned with evangelism*, including;

- Hillsong, focussing especially on young people (Table 9.2.4)
- Messy Church, which has more than doubled its numbers since 2012 (Table 11.8.1), with 3,200 units in 2017 attracting almost 100,000 people, including many families
- Churches of Christ (Tables 5.2.4 and 5)
- Some of the New Churches like Multiply Network (Table 7.2.2) and Vineyard (Table 7.3.3) both of which have grown over 30% in the last 5 years
- Many other smaller denominations with similar concerns but which haven't grown so spectacularly over the last 5 years.

The actual rates of growth achieved by these denominations, and totalling all the other growing denominations provides an interesting Table, given on the next page.

Table 0.2.1: Rates of growth of growing congregations in the UK, 2012 to 2022E

Group	No of denominations	Total 2012 membership	% change 2012-2017	Total 2017 membership	% change 2017-2022E	Total 2022 membership
Fastest growing	19	319,327	*+53%*	487,014	*+13%*	552,067
Growing more slowly	155	947,556	*+6%*	1,000,884	*+5%*	1,055,917
All growing	174	1,266,883	*+17%*	1,487,898	*+8%*	1,607,984
Declining	83	4,212,958	*-15%*	3,596,600	*-12%*	3,148,815
All churches	**257**	**5,479,091**	***-7%***	**5,084,498**	***-6%***	**4,756,799**

This Table shows that of the 257 denominations in the UK in 2017, 174 or two-thirds (68%) of them are *growing*, and on average have increased by a sixth, 17%, in the last 5 years. There are 19 denominations which have seen especially fast growth of more than half (53% average) in that period, leaving the remaining 155 growing denominations increasing at the more sedate rate of 6% over these five years, just over 1% per annum. These growing congregations were 23% of total church membership in 2012, but rose to 29% by 2017.

Over the next five years, 2017 to 2022, the growth rate in the growing denominations is expected to be less, just 8%, about half the previous rate. Rapid expansion often requires a time of consolidation before growth can again occur rapidly. However, the 19 faster growing denominations are likely to increase at a greater rate than the slower growing denominations, 13% to 5%.

One third, 32%, of the denominations in the UK in 2017 had seen decline over the previous 5 years. This 33% represents 83 denominations, but they include 18 denominations (or 7%), which were static rather than declining, so the real percentage of declining denominations is a quarter, 25%. These are the larger denominations, 77% of the total in 2012, 71% in 2017 and 66% in 2022.

Generally the size of these larger denominations, the so-called Institutional Churches, all declining except for the Orthodox Churches, outweighs the Free Churches, so that the overall result is an overall decline. The -7% shown in the above Table is in line with that which was predicted in *UK Church Statistics* No 2, -1.4% per year, which has characterised the last 5 years and is likely to continue much the same to 2022.

Despite the growth of some denominations, therefore, the overall rate of decline has not changed greatly since 2013, and looks set to continue for the next few years.

Which are the faster growing denominations? A third of them are immigrant churches,[1] another third are Pentecostal[2] and the remaining third a mix of well-known (but probably largely White) denominations.[3]

Which are the large declining denominations? They are readily seen in Table 0.2.2 on the next page, where Smaller Denominations is shown without the inclusion of Messy Churches as these form such a large component of it.

This Table shows that the groups that are growing are the Independent Churches, the New Churches, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Smaller Denominations, which in 2017 were 32% of total membership, and the declining groups are the other five – Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Methodists and Presbyterians, which make up 68% of membership.

It may be seen that all the percentages shown for change between 2017 and 2022 are lower than for the previous five years, showing that change is slowing down generally. An article focussing on the slowing down of Pentecostals is on Page 9.8.

Figure 0.2.1 illustrates Table 0.2.2, but omits the Orthodox, Presbyterians and Smaller Denominations for space reasons.

[1] They are especially the Chinese (Tables 11.2.2 and 11.3.1), Filipinos (Table 11.2.3), Koreans (Table 11.2.4), Poles (Tables 4.2.2, 11.4.2 and 11.5.6), Portuguese (Table 11.3.5), Romanians (Table 8.2.3), and Syrians (Table 11.3.4).

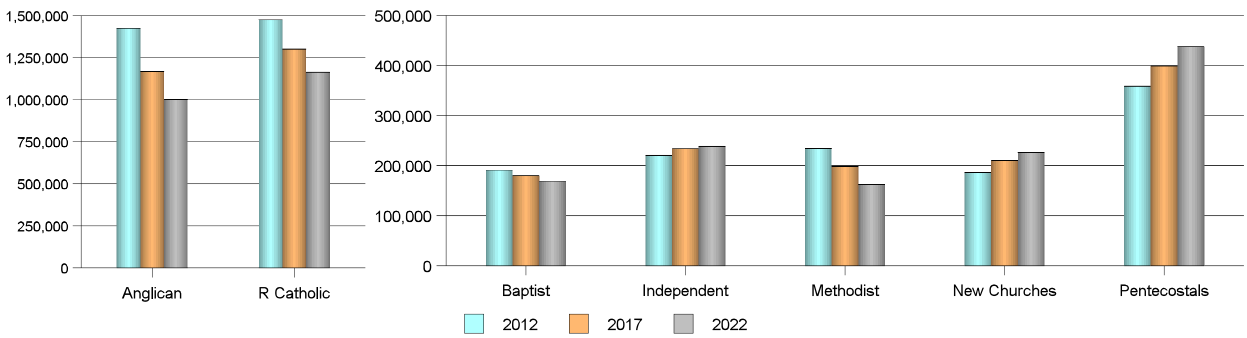
[2] These are especially the Church of Pentecost (Table 9.1.6), Kingsway International Christian Centre (Table 9.5.1), Potters House Christian Fellowship (Table 9.2.6), the Redeemed Christian Church of God (Table 9.3), and the Seventh-Day Adventists (Table 11.1.6).

[3] These are the Churches of Christ (Tables 5.2.4 and 5.2.5), the FIEC (Table 5.2.2), Hillsong (Table 9.2.4), Messy Church (Table 11.8.1), Multiply Network (Table 7.2.2) and Vineyard Churches (Table 7.3.3).

Table 0.2.2: Rates of change by Denomination 2012-2022E

Denominational Group	No of denom-inations	Total 2012 membership	% change 2012-2017	Total 2017 membership	% change 2017-2022E	Total 2022 membership	% membership is of total 2012201	7	2022E
Anglican	13	1,424,254	*-18%*	1,167,201	*-14%*	1,000,370	*26*	*23*	*21*
Baptist	8	191,135	*-6%*	179,611	*-6%*	169,184	*44*		*4*
Roman Catholic	19	1,475,495	*-12%*	1,300,703	*-11%*	1,163,038	*27*	*25*	*25*
Independent	22	220,575	*+6%*	233,487	*+2%*	238,477	*44*		*5*
Methodist	5	233,974	*-15%*	198,120	*-18%*	162,459	*44*		*3*
New Churches	19	186,363	*+13%*	209,906	*+8%*	226,215	*34*		*5*
Orthodox	25	440,091	*+17%*	514,095	*+2%*	524,990	*8*	*10*	*11*
Pentecostal	75	358,629	*+11%*	399,504	*+10%*	438,675	*78*		*9*
Presbyterian	16	730,819	*-19%*	592,800	*-13%*	514,324	*13*	*12*	*11*
Smaller Denom's	54	177,046	*+9%*	193,251	*+6%*	205,477	*34*		*4*
Messy Church	1	40,710	*+135%*	95,820	*+19%*	113,590	*12*		*2*
All churches	**257**	**5,479,091**	***-7%***	**5,084,498**	***-6%***	**4,756,799**	***100***	***100***	***100***

Figure 0.2.1: Membership of Denominational groups, 2012 to 2022E



Which denominations are declining most?

If the overall change is -7% in 5 years, it is worth asking which denominations have especially declined or grown. We have looked at the growing ones above, identifying the individual denominations in the footnotes. Taking those with more than 10,000 members in 2012 which have decreased between 2012 and 2017 by, say, at least -15% gives the following results:

Declined

The Church of England (1,170,000 members in 2012 declined -19% between 2012 and 2017)
The Church in Wales (55,000 members; -23%)
The Scottish Episcopal Church (35,000 members; -30%)
The Baptist Union of Wales (13,000; -19%)
The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland (130,000; -17%)
The Union of Welsh Independents (20,000; -18%)
The Methodist Church of Great Britain (181,000; -16%)
The Presbyterian Church of Wales (19,000; -26%)
The Church of Scotland (307,000; -26%)

This list includes the Church of England for the first time, but it omits the Roman Catholic Church in N Ireland and the Kingsway International Christian Centre, which is a growing church but had a temporary change due to having to disperse temporarily when the Olympic Park was built, and is now based in Chatham, Kent.

Of these nine more rapidly declining denominations, only two are in England, the rest in Wales or Scotland.

Church Membership by Country

Table 0.2.3 shows the membership changes by each of the 4 constituent countries in the UK.

Table 0.2.3: Church Membership in the UK, by Country, 2012-2022E

Country	No of denom-inations	Total 2012 membership	% change 2012-2017	Total 2017 membership	% which are In-stitutional	% change 2017-2022E	Total 2022 membership	% membership is of total		
								2012	2017	2022E
England	237	3,715,253	*-5%*	3,521,472	*64%*	*-5%*	3,351,814	*68*	*69*	*71*
Wales	90	206,339	*-8%*	189,243	*56%*	*-13%*	163,792	*4*	*4*	*3*
Scotland	95	736,116	*-17%*	613,667	*85%*	*-12%*	536,965	*13*	*12*	*11*
N Ireland	71	821,383	*-7%*	760,116	*92%*	*-7%*	704,228	*15*	*15*	*15*
All churches	**257**	**5,479,091**	***-7%***	**5,084,498**	***70%***	***-6%***	**4,756,799**	***100***	***100***	***100***

Overall, church membership in England is holding its own, increases offsetting decreases. Membership decline in Wales and Scotland is much greater. Decline is N Ireland is a little greater than in England. If the major declining denominations in Wales (Union of Welsh Independents) and Scotland (Church of Scotland) are taken out, the declines in these three countries would be considerably less. Across the UK, two-thirds, 70%, of membership is Institutional*.*

What is this saying?

These figures show that church membership in the UK declined -7% between 2012 and 2017, slightly faster than the previous rate of decline of -5% because of the lessening impact of immigration and Messy Church (which had increased five-fold between 2010 and 2015). A broadly similar rate of decline is expected between 2017 and 2022, thus continuing the general trend over the last 60 years.

In this period, however, the Scottish Church Census took place (in 2016) and while this is a prime measure of attendance, not membership, nevertheless the huge declines in the major Scottish denominations (Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church) simply emphasises the general trends observed throughout the UK. These seem to be as follows:

- English church membership continues to decline, along with attendance, although the percentage of the adult population who are members is still likely to be about 7% of the population in 2030 (Table 1.1.1).
- The dominance of the decline is in the major institutional denominations of Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians. The Orthodox are also institutional but contrariwise their membership is growing, though only because of the continued immigration, especially the Romanians in their case. However, Orthodox attendance is fractional in terms of their membership (7% of membership in 2015, compared with 56% generally).
- At the same time as this decline, there are numerous pockets of growth across many denominations, including within the major denominational groups of Anglicans, Catholics and Presbyterians.
- It would seem that there is a focus on "our group" which tends to prevail against seeing the broader picture of a wider movement.
- Theology is important. Evangelicals are the spearhead of growth in many areas, including growing numbers of Evangelical Roman Catholics in Scotland (as also in England). Those with Broad/Liberal theology are declining slowly, but not disappearing, and some of their churches are seeing significant growth. Tensions over current issues within the Evangelical movement may hinder growth.
- Size does not seem to be a key factor for growth. The 2014 Grace Baptist Church Census (details on Pages 3.3 and 3.4) showed that many small churches can and are growing, although the FIEC Revitalisation Initiative has undoubtedly also helped some. The larger Anglican churches, for example, continue to grow, but more slowly than before. The quality of leadership is almost certainly the major factor behind growth.
- The Scottish Census also recorded the fact of key churches leaving the Church of Scotland because of sexuality issues, something which could easily be repeated in other Institutional churches, re-inforcing the localised "our group" mind-set.
- With two-thirds of the denominations in this book growing, even if only slowly, there is very little possibility of "Christianity dying out," or whatever the latest headline may say, over the next 20 or 30 years. Reduced numbers, yes. Lively, local expressions of active communities of faith caring and helping in their neighbourhoods as well as in the wider world, also yes. And such will multiply.

Number of Churches

UK Church Statistics also gives the number of churches or congregations by country, shown in Table 0.2.4. The average church in 2017 had 101 members. The yellow column after 2017 gives the percentage of the 2017 churches which are part of the Institutional denominations.,

Table 0.2.4: Number of churches in the UK, by country, 2012-2022E

Country	Total 2012 churches	% change 2012-2017	Total 2017 churches	% which are Institutional	% change 2017-2022E	Total 2022 churches	% churches is of total		
							2012	2017	2022E
England	38,685	*+2%*	39,543	*51%*	*+1%*	40,043	*79*	*79*	*79*
Wales	4,159	*+2%*	4,239	*52%*	*-3%*	4,120	*8*	*8*	*8*
Scotland	3,868	*+6%*	4,106	*57%*	*-1%*	4,063	*8*	*8*	*8*
N Ireland	2,218	*+3%*	2,285	*65%*	*0%*	2,280	*5*	*5*	*5*
All churches	**48,930**	***+3%***	**50,173**	***52%***	***+1%***	**50,506**	***100***	***100***	***100***

The Scottish Church Census showed that previous estimates of churches in Scotland had been overestimated as many congregations are merging, mainly within the Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Church, thus reducing the number of ministers/priests needed for pastoral work. England still has four-fifths, 79%, of the UK's churches. While more churches had been started in the period 2012 to 2017 than closed, the number of closing churches is expected to exceed new ones in Wales, Scotland and N Ireland (only just) in the five years 2017 to 2022.

The yellow column shows that just over half, 52%, of the churches in the UK are either Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox or Presbyterian (in the proportions respectively of 68%, 15%, 1% and 16%). The Church of England already knows it has a problem with many of its buildings as it has some 9,000 rural churches, many with very small congregations. A large majority of these are old and listed, involving expensive maintenance upkeep. Some see the likelihood of localised groups wanting to spearhead action, perhaps enabling some of these churches to move from Diocesan ownership to village or group ownership, as a possible, partial solution.

The increasing number of churches in England is partly because of the continued Pentecostal church planting expansion, as well as fresh church plants by other denominations, and more successful Messy Churches.

Between 2012 and 2017 some 1,100 churches opened, excluding Messy Churches (Table 1.1.2) while 1,700 closed, a loss of 600 congregations were it not for the 1,800 Messy Churches which started in the period, leading to an increase of 1,200 worshipping units.

In 2012 the average number of members per congregation was 112. In 2017 it was 101, in 2022 it is likely to be 94, and, if present trends continue, it will be 81 in 2030. In 2017 the average was 89 in England, 45 in Wales, 149 in Scotland, and 333 in N Ireland, reflecting the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church in latter two countries.

In 2017 the average Roman Catholic Church in the UK had an average of 336 members per church, while all the rest together had an average of 82. Institutional churches had an average membership of 137 in 2017, while Free churches were half this at 62.

Number of ministers

The number of ministers in the UK is also given in *UK Church Statistics.* Numbers for the four countries are shown in Table 0.2.5. Not all ministers are ordained; not all are full-time; not all are paid.

Table 0.2.5: Number of ministers in the UK by country, 2012 to 2022E

Country	Total 2012 ministers	% change 2012-2017	Total 2017 ministers	% which are Institutional	% change 2017-2022E	Total 2022 ministers	% ministers is of total		
							2012	2017	2022E
England	31,154	*+4%*	32,382	*36%*	*0%*	32,444	*81*	*80*	*80*
Wales	1,834	*+6%*	1,937	*39%*	*-3%*	1,885	*5*	*5*	*5*
Scotland	3,559	*+11%*	3,934	*53%*	*+2%*	4,012	*9*	*10*	*10*
N Ireland	1,867	*+8%*	2,015	*69%*	*+5%*	2,123	*5*	*5*	*5*
All churches	**38,414**	***+5%***	**40,268**	***39%***	***+½%***	**40,464**	***100***	***100***	***100***

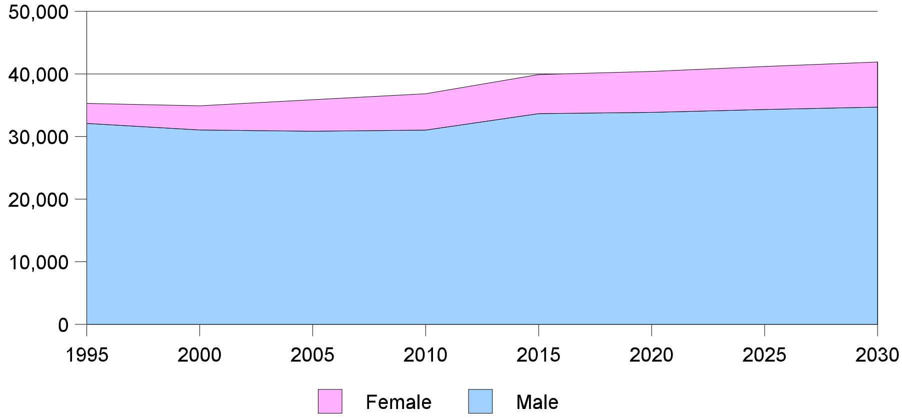
The average minister was responsible for 1.3 churches in 2012, 1.2 in 2017, projected as 1.2 in 2022. If present trends continue, it will also be 1.2 in 2030. In 2017 the average was 1.2 in England, 2.2 in Wales, 1.0 in Scotland, and 1.1 in N Ireland. In 2017 there was an average of 1.3 priests per Roman Catholic Church in the UK, while in all other churches the minister was responsible for an average of 1.3 churches (the other way round!). In Institutional churches the minister looked after an average of 1.7 churches, whereas Free church ministers looked after 1.0 churches, this latter because of the large number of part-time ministers working in Pentecostal churches.

The variations in the number of ministers by country is similar to the variations already seen in the number of churches. Growing denominations plant more churches and need more ministers; declining denominations normally see a reduction in both.

Church ministers were analysed by gender, and Figure 0.2.2 shows the overall trend in which the proportion of female ministers rises from 9% in 1995 (it was first measured in 1992) to 16% in 2017 and rising to 17% by 2030 if present trends continue. These percentages are lower than previously shown because the leaders of Messy Churches have been excluded as these will already have been counted as church members (their very considerable numbers, however, are given in Table 11.8.1).

The increase seen in the number of ministers between 2010 and 2015 reflects the number of new churches started in that period.

Figure 0.2.2: Number of UK ministers, by gender, 1995 to 2030E



Women are especially prevalent among Messy Church (56% in 2017), the Salvation Army (49%), Methodist (39%) and Anglican (28%) leadership, but are also present in Presbyterian (18%), New Churches (17%), Pentecostal (14%), Baptist (13%), Independent Churches (5%) and other Small Denominations (2%).

So what of the future?

The mostly firm figures for 2012 to 2017 and the projections to 2022 show a declining number of church members across the UK, and esp ecially in Wales, Scotland and N Ireland. The English membership figures show especial growth for three denominations not strongly present in Wales, Scotland or N Ireland – the New Churches, the Orthodox and the Pentecostal churches, particularlyt the Black church component of the last (though the Scottish Church Census showed this was rapidly changing in Scotland). Growth in these three groups, and Messy Churches, is strong in both England and Scotland.

The analysis shows the impact of evangelicalism in the New and Pentecostal Churches and the consequential drive for mission and starting new groups of worshippers. Orthodoxy is not part of the evangelical scene but equally shares a passion for mission, undertaken by ordaining new priests and encouraging them to start new congregations.

A picture of the future is given at the bottom of Page 6 of this Introduction. Growth requires a passion for mission and a willingness for the commitment in undertaking fresh risks, which are sometimes independent of denominational structures. However, allowing such experimentation and, with it, a permission to fail, is crucial if the church is not only to survive but also to flourish.

Peter Brierley
September 2017
[5,400 words]