

... getting the bigger picture in 2016

May 8th 2016

Every one of the 4,000 local churches in Scotland will be invited to take part in the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken of churchgoing in this country!

This leaflet tells you more.....

What is the Census?

This is the fourth Scottish Church Census, and like those in 1984, 1994 and 2002 is a comprehensive survey of all denominations and every local church in Scotland. It will measure trends in churchgoing, and also explore certain factors which are thought to lie behind some of the recent changes in churchgoing patterns.

Who will benefit from it?

It is a big study, but the results will be really important both nationally and locally. They will help national church leaders to plan strategically for the whole country as well as their own denomination. At a local level it will be possible for individual congregations and groups of churches to identify issues specific to their area, and thus to develop appropriate strategies for evangelism and mission.

Why do we need another Census?

There have been various changes in churchgoing in recent years and it is important to find out how widespread these are in Scotland. For example, some people come to church less often than they used to, while others may prefer to come only mid-week. Many church leaders are concerned about the falling numbers of children and young people in Sunday services, but some of these youngsters may be attending mid-week activities instead. Such questions have been asked before, and national church leaders believe this is the time to do so again across Scotland.

What questions will be asked?

The Census will focus primarily on church attendance, both on Sunday and mid-week, asking for numbers by age, gender and frequency of attendance. There will be a major section on mid-week attendance at both worship services and 'fringe' activities. There will also be some sponsored questions. The answers will be compared with each other and with previous results, so for example it will be possible to identify whether boys come to church more frequently than girls, or are more likely to have left church than they were fourteen years ago in the 2002 Census. The information will be gathered from a two-page questionnaire.

Who is carrying it out?

There is a national Steering Committee with members from the major denominations and representatives for the smaller ones. The committee have commissioned Brierley Consultancy to carry out the Census for them. Its Director is well known for his research and has undertaken several other national Censuses and Surveys (Scotland: 1984, 1994, 2002; England: 1979, 1989, 1998, 2005; Wales: 1982; London: 2012). Brierley Consultancy also publishes information for church leaders, especially the widely-used *UK Church Statistics* and its bi-monthly bulletin *FutureFirst*.

How will it be done?

Census Sunday is 8th May 2016, or Saturday 7th May where appropriate. Shortly before that the minister of each local church will receive a two-page questionnaire, along with clear instructions on how to complete it. As soon as possible after 8th May, the questionnaire should be returned using the reply envelope supplied. It will also be possible to complete the form online. Brierley Consultancy will then computerise and analyse the data.

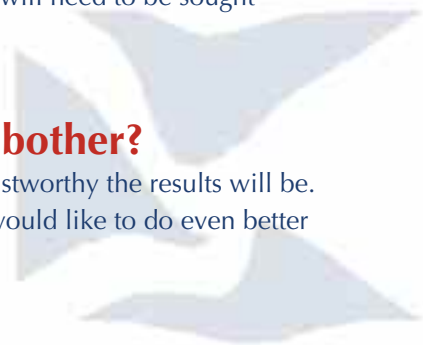
The final report is expected to be published in spring 2017, although the format for it has not yet been decided. The results will be designed to help church leaders and others to think through the relevance of the findings to their own context.

How confidential is the information?

The results will be published in such a way that it will be impossible for local churches to be identified. No details of specific congregations will be released to anyone, including their denominational headquarters. Should more detailed analysis be requested, prior permission will need to be sought from the local churches concerned.

Why does my church need to bother?

The more churches which respond, the more trustworthy the results will be. We had a very good response in 2002, but we would like to do even better in 2016!!



Which denominations are involved?

The Census is endorsed by the following denominations and organisations:

- Christian Brethren
- Church of Scotland
- Baptist Union of Scotland
- Roman Catholic Church
- Free Church of Scotland
- Scottish Episcopal Church
- United Free Church of Scotland
- United Reformed Church, Synod of Scotland
- University of Edinburgh
- Christian Aid
- Tearfund Scotland
- Alpha Scotland

Who is on the Steering Committee?

Chair: Rev Colin Sinclair, Convener, Mission and Discipleship Council, Church of Scotland
Gordon Bell, Communications Officer, Free Church of Scotland
Father Thomas Boyle, Assistant General Secretary, The Bishops' Conference of Scotland
Rev Alan Donaldson, General Director, Baptist Union of Scotland
Rev John Fulton, General Secretary, United Free Church of Scotland
Rev John Humphreys, Moderator, United Reformed Church, Synod of Scotland
Rev Canon Fay Lamont, Scottish Episcopal Church
Rev Dr Fergus Macdonald, Past Moderator, Free Church of Scotland
Dr Alastair Noble, The Christian Brethren
Lt Col Jonathan Roberts, The Salvation Army Scottish Office
Rev Dr Fiona Tweedie, Mission Statistics Co-ordinator, Church of Scotland

Do I need to know anything now?

No, you do not need to take any action until you receive the questionnaire in late March or early April 2016. However, if you have any questions, know of new congregations in your area which we may not have heard of, or wish to ensure all your congregations are included, please contact:

Dr Peter Brierley, Brierley Consultancy, The Old Post Office,
1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 4PW
Tel: 01732 369303
Email: peter@brierleyres.com www.brierleyconsultancy.com