

Statistics report for House of Bishops

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0) Précis

In 2018 General Synod was able to collect a complete and mostly reliable set of data for from the dioceses for the first time since 2001. The data is for the year 2017 and it shows that the decline observed in earlier data has continued. Projections from our data indicate that there will be no members, attenders or givers in the Anglican Church of Canada by approximately 2040.

This report presents the headline data and includes diocesan decline data based on the statistics from 2001 and 2017. The report goes on to look briefly at a few of the implications of the data. The report then suggests further work which needs to be done. The work identified here can be done without substantial additional resources. If there is hope in these numbers, it is the hope that some data gathering and analysis in the next few years will enable us to plan for the future and not react to it. Through paying attention to these statistics we may discern God's call to our beloved church in these challenging times. We believe that this could be a critical part of the work of reviewing of the church's mission and ministry which the Primate has identified.

1) Background – Statistical projections of ACC membership previous to the 2017 data

There have been previous reports to the House of Bishops which have been identified the extent of our decline, for example the McKerracher report in 2006. While McKerracher predicted the last Anglican would leave in 2061, the current evidence projects that the church will run out of members in around 2040. There is no sign of any stabilisation in our numbers; if anything the decline is increasing. Some had hoped that our decline had bottomed out, or that programs had been effective in reversing the trends. This is now demonstrably not the case. The decline will not be a surprise to many congregations who see this happening week by week, but what the data confirms is that this decline is happening consistently across the country from BC to Newfoundland. International comparisons suggest that the decline in the Anglican Church of Canada is faster than in any other Anglican church, although the 2018 data from the Episcopal church shows an even greater rate of decline on attendance than ours.

There are two main sources of data which show us the past trajectory:

i) Historical ACC statistics from 1961-2001

1962-4 were apogee of Anglican Church of Canada membership

Membership Decline 1961-2001 = 50% in 40 years

BUT if you compare with overall Canadian population, it's more alarming!

Membership 1961 = 1,358,459 members / 18 million Canadians = 7% of Canadians

2001 = 641,845 members / 31 million Canadians = 2% of Canadians

(2017 = 357,123 members / 35 million Canadians = 1% of Canadians)

ii) Circulation data of Anglican Journal give figures for more recent decline. AJ circulation statistics are available for diocesan and parish levels. They have been collected through a consistent methodology of parochial data collection with the intention of distributing the diocesan newspapers. The overall numbers are as follows:

June 1991 - 273,000 subscriber households

June 2015 - 135,500 subscriber households

Decline 1991-2015 = 50% in 25 years

Both i) and ii) project that we will run out of members in around 2040.

2) Diocesan returns for 2017 – Membership, Attendance and Donors

	2001 Total	2017 Total	Annual change
Total number on parish rolls	641,845	357,123	-2.77%
Average Sunday Attendance	162,168	97,421	-2.50%
Regular identifiable givers	212,577	130,456	-2.41%

The data from 2017 shows the same pattern of decline as the historical statistics and the AJ data, but in more detail. We are using the 2001 data for comparison because the data collection of 2001 was the last data set which could be claimed

to have a reasonable degree of reliability until the 2017 data set. We are confident that the 2017 data set is a good set, and that the accuracy of the data will continue to improve.

Three statistics show approximately the same decline: numbers on rolls; Average Sunday Attendance; and number of households donating. There is some variation around the diocesan data for these metrics, and even some increases in certain dioceses on particular statistics. A further advantage to these three numbers is that each of them relies on a different primary collection methodology. Thus for all three metrics to show the same projection of zero value in 2040 is a powerful confirmation of that projection, especially when it fits with the data from the metrics in section 1).

2001 to 2017 Diocesan change data

Diocese	Total number on parish rolls	Average Sunday Attendance	Regular identifiable givers
Algoma	-3.00%	-3.29%	-1.90%
Arctic	10.36%	10.27%	-5.44%
Athabasca	-3.35%	82.69%	-1.69%
Brandon	-4.29%	-4.19%	-3.79%
British Columbia	-2.68%	-2.83%	-3.00%
Caledonia	-4.39%	-3.47%	-1.95%
Calgary	-3.79%	-3.23%	-3.12%
Central Newfoundland	-4.35%	-3.61%	-2.67%
Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador	-3.34%	-2.74%	-3.06%
Edmonton	-2.89%	-2.08%	-2.21%
Fredericton	-3.18%	-3.04%	-2.15%
Huron	-3.26%	-3.13%	-2.67%
Mishamikoweesh	1.04%	-3.59%	-5.90%
Kootenay	-2.87%	-2.74%	-1.55%
Montreal	-3.28%	-2.88%	-2.46%
Moosonee	1.24%	-3.45%	-2.37%
New Westminster	-3.29%	-3.45%	-2.70%
Niagara	-3.46%	-3.01%	-2.73%
Nova Scotia and PEI	-3.35%	-3.33%	-3.33%
Ontario	-0.74%	-2.84%	-1.78%
Ottawa	-2.69%	-2.34%	-1.97%
Qu'Appelle	-3.63%	-3.07%	-3.14%
Quebec	-3.83%	-3.65%	-3.91%
Rupert's Land	-3.57%	-3.46%	-2.57%
Saskatchewan	-1.67%	-3.02%	-3.74%
Saskatoon	-4.09%	-4.11%	-3.91%
Territory of the People	-4.26%	-2.91%	-3.06%
Toronto	-2.64%	-2.13%	-1.90%
Western Newfoundland	-2.89%	-3.10%	-1.26%
Yukon	0.53%	-2.51%	-1.56%
Total	-2.77%	-2.50%	-2.41%

Notes

- a) These figures are annual percentage rates of change and use 2001 as baseline
- b) Highlighted data in **bold** identifies data which, for a number of possible reasons, does not fit the dominant pattern

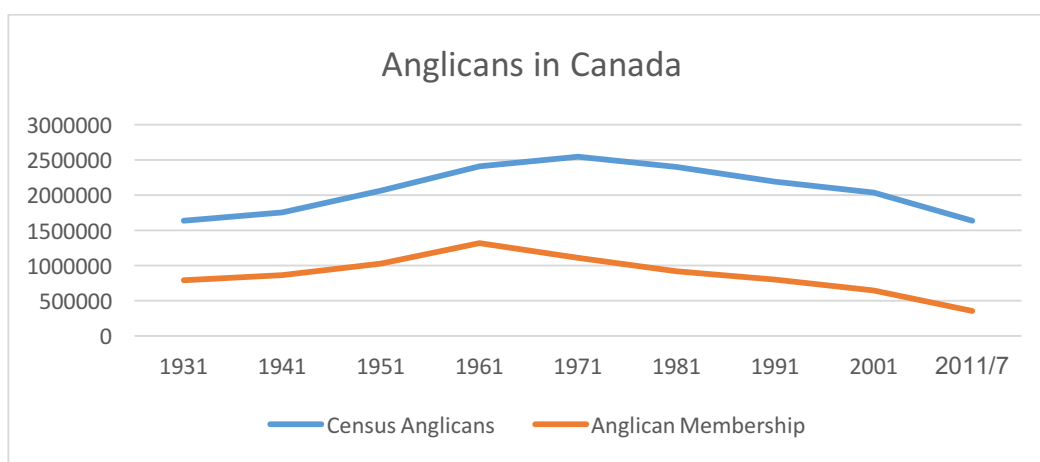
3) Comparisons with historical statistics

We can also look at statistics for the outreach ministries of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals. All of these have been in substantial decline since 1961, and the decline is increasing to around 4% p.a. for baptisms, confirmations and marriages, and 2 % for funerals.

The number which is in the slowest decline is the number of priests. The number peaked in 2001 and is now at the same level as 1991, whilst membership has approximately halved. The number of clergy is a complicated number because the nature of ordained ministry is changing; we have significant variation across the country in terms of part time, locally ordained, non-stipendiary and retired-but-active priests and deacons.

	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2017
Baptisms	44416	28722	23334	20953	13304	5411
Confirmations	32774	21965	15021	8267	5506	1997
Marriages	11963	16197	12343	9552	6009	2071
Burials/Funerals	20137	21108	19043	18316	15635	9074
Total no of clergy	2380	2367	3015	3459	3675	3491

The comparison between the self-declared figure for census Anglicans (obtained from Statistics Canada) and the figure for Anglican membership is interesting. As can be seen in a graph of the data the two have very similar shapes.



The number of census Anglicans is larger than that for members by around 800,000 in 1931 and is most recently 1,200,000. Membership declines from 1961, census Anglicans from 1971. We currently have about four times as many people who say they are Anglicans (1.6 million) as we have on our rolls (360,000). This may be seen as an opportunity or a missed opportunity.

4) Some implications from this data

The pattern of decline identified here is well established and has been for almost 60 years. Given that we have not been able to address this decline in the last 60 years, it is unlikely that we are going to turn it around in the next 20 years. The figures for baptisms and confirmations show we are not drawing in substantial quantities of new members. The figure for funerals show we are not just losing members, we are losing the opportunities to draw in members. It should also be noted that weddings and funerals have in the past been significant sources of income in some places – thus that income too is being lost. These figures are therefore arguments for an increasing rate of decline in the next decade.

As the primate has identified, we need to plan for a church which is going to change substantially in the years 2020 to 2040. In order to do that planning we need data on how the changes will affect the church. This is no longer speculation or long term visioning for a church in 40 or 50 years time. The data is available now to show what the church of 10 years time and 20 years time will look like. As a statistician I want to encourage us to rely more on

empirical evidence and not just on intuition. Not many of us would date the current decline to the 1960's, before we started our ministries, but the evidence is there in our data. Similarly, not many of us would expect that the church has 20 years left, while we might still hope to be drawing our pensions, but the evidence is there in our data. Having a plan inspired by the Holy Spirit and informed by data is our most hopeful way ahead.

5) Information we need to plan for the future

i) **Demographic profiles of our churches.** It is, of course, not true to say that we will *actually* completely run out of members in 20 years time. Many of us hope to still be practicing Anglicans in 20 years. The statistical projections above show the broad trend, but there is more detail now available. We are now able to move from a high level and long distant view of the future 50 years away, to a lower level nearer view of the future. In other words, we can now see who will still be around in our parish churches in 20 years time. So *we need to know how many members we will have who are still likely to be attending, volunteering in and leading the church. Thus we need to know what the age profile of the church is.* This will tell us a lot about how our population is aging and what we can expect in 5, 10, 15 and 20 years time. This demographic information can be extrapolated from a sample from a variety of parishes across the country. We also need to put effort into analysing this data to draw conclusions from it. The analysis can happen through a process of consultation across the country. **We can do this by obtaining the data through a simple one page form distributed to parishes and returned to the national office.**

ii) **Like-on-like comparisons of parish types.** We need to be able to compare parishes, as well as dioceses, across the country to see what types of parish are growing and what are shrinking. Some dioceses have their parish data in electronic format, some do not. **We can do this through analysis of data from 6 to 8 varied dioceses who have parish data in electronic format.** This analysis would be a considerable benefit to planning for the future.

iii) **Granular data from parishes.** We are collecting data from a few parishes via "ParishOS"— an electronic vestry book which enables a detailed look at our congregations on a week by week basis. ParishOS is a resource provided by the National Church to dioceses. It is free for the users and provides a wide range of statistical resources. ParishOS provides "granular" data which can help us see for example how seasons affect congregational size. ParishOS provides us with tools to assess experimental services and events like messy church, fresh expressions and pub theology. **We can do this if more parishes and dioceses will sign up to and use ParishOS.**

iv) **We need to identify the significant statistics.** There is still a need to identify which statistics will tell us which of the congregations are growing or have the potential to grow, which congregations are particularly fragile, and which congregations are facing immanent closure of some kind. We know there is a demand for this kind of data, some of which runs alongside suspicion of the usefulness of the current data we collect for predicting the future. There is no current consensus in academia or among practitioners on the best data or combination of data for local planning. **We can do this by gathering information and insights from bishops, exec officers and specialists.**

All of this information also needs contextualising with information on local, regional and national statistics. These are often available from Statistics Canada. For example, demographic data from our churches needs the context of the general Canadian life profile in terms of disposable income and health for seniors. This information is pastoral at the individual level, but is statistical at the regional and national level.

Finally, statistics are obviously not everything we need. There is much qualitative information which is as important as the quantitative information. We need to have good quality information of both types as we look to our future. This can inform our prayers and our plans. Statistical information has the advantage that we already collect much of what we need. We simply need to bring the data together. That which we do not currently collect (primarily the demographic data) would be simple to collect. **We can do this.... with your support.**