

Connexional Statistics for Mission Report

Introduction

2009 was the middle year of a triennium. Next year's connexional report will be more detailed and will contain comparisons over time. This year's looks at what information is available to provide a picture of the Methodist Church as it now stands. Given a comprehensive set of data for 2010, it will be possible to identify areas of change and to examine some theories about what best serves the Church's mission.

There is a great deal of diversity within the Connexion. Although it is possible to describe a typical Methodist church in terms of a rural church in a village location, having a few dozen core members, as many more in the wider pastoral roll, a scouting group and one or two other youth organizations, the full picture is more varied. Services take place not just in English and Welsh but also in European, Asian and African languages, and with congregations drawn from at least four continents. Churches join other denominations in ecumenical partnership and take part in several hundred fresh expressions of church. Worship takes place in schools, while youth activities, from pre-school groups for children to Scouting, attract thousands of younger ages. A lot of Good News is being preached and, given a comprehensive return for the coming year, there could be a lot of good news to tell in the triennial report.

Scope

These statistics are intended to cover the whole Methodist Connexion, including worship in schools and Fresh Expressions. There should not exist large undisclosed reserves beyond what is in the present report. It is based on the latest figures received at Methodist Church House by 14th May 2010. In order to prepare a triennial report in time for the 2011 conference, the 2010 data will need to be collated much nearer the time of collection.

Numbers in tables are generally reported to two significant figures for sub-totals and three for connexional totals. This avoids a potential over-emphasis on detail. Any cases where grand totals appear not to match their subtotals exactly will be explained by these roundings.

A note on the weather

Weather can have a surprisingly large effect on attendance and is worth noting. October 2009 had little extreme weather, being a little warmer, cloudier and dryer than the climatic norms for the time of year. The bad rainfall in Cumbria happened in November. There was no repeat of the thunderstorms in Devon or the cold and snow in Scotland that occurred in 2008 after the last Sunday of the month.

Membership

Membership by District

Membership remains a key measure of Methodist strength and the District the key means of organizing it. District returns are presented courtesy of local ministers, volunteers, administrators and District staff, particularly Membership Officers. Rounded totals for Districts are given in Figure 1.

Figure 1

District	Membership
1 The Synod Cymru	1,800
2 The Wales Synod	8,700
5 Birmingham	9,700
6 Bolton & Rochdale	7,000
7 Bristol	9,600
9 Cumbria	4,100
10 Channel Islands	1,500
11 Chester & Stoke-on-Trent	9,100
12 Cornwall	7,100
13 Darlington	6,900
14 East Anglia	7,700
15 Isle of Man	1,100
16 Leeds	7,800
17 Lincoln & Grimsby	6,100
18 Liverpool	7,100
19 Manchester & Stockport	9,100
20 Newcastle upon Tyne	9,000
21 North Lancashire	7,700
22 Nottingham & Derby	9,700
23 Northampton	12,000
24 Plymouth & Exeter	9,200
25 Sheffield	8,600
26 Southampton	11,000
27 West Yorkshire	7,500
28 Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury	9,300
29 York & Hull	9,700
31 Scotland	3,400
32 Shetland	240
34 Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire	9,500
35 London	18,000
36 South East	12,000
Connexion Total	241,000

District Membership Proportions by Category Code

Figure 2 shows how Districts are currently divided between the different categories of neighbourhood. Many Districts reported very different figures from what an outsider might suppose. For example, Scotland had the highest proportion of city centre membership, whereas Liverpool and Manchester and Stockport were predominantly suburban. Although Wales over all had a high proportion in small towns, the Welsh-speaking part had a high proportion from the villages, whereas the English-speaking drew a greater share from the cities. These numbers refer to the make-up of the Districts, not to the overall proportions from each type of neighbourhood. Changes to rural/urban category codes can be made locally via the web profile site for each church and church/Circuit post holders are encouraged to check these.

Figure 2

District	Not specified	City Centre	Council Estate	Inner City	Suburban Neighbourhood	Small Town	Village Rural
1 The Synod Cymru		1%			3%	47%	49%
2 The Wales Synod		5%	5%	6%	25%	45%	15%
5 Birmingham		6%	5%	12%	47%	22%	9%
6 Bolton & Rochdale		4%	3%	9%	55%	18%	11%
7 Bristol		4%	3%	5%	30%	40%	19%
9 Cumbria				5%	5%	59%	31%
10 Channel Islands			2%		1%	24%	74%
11 Chester & Stoke-on-Trent		7%	3%	2%	30%	27%	31%
12 Cornwall		6%			5%	37%	52%
13 Darlington		5%	9%	2%	33%	26%	24%
14 East Anglia		8%	2%	1%	13%	43%	32%
15 Isle of Man			2%			54%	44%
16 Leeds		3%	2%	8%	52%	25%	10%
17 Lincoln & Grimsby		4%	2%	2%	13%	41%	39%
18 Liverpool			5%	11%	64%	8%	11%
19 Manchester & Stockport		1%	3%	12%	56%	18%	11%
20 Newcastle upon Tyne		1%	8%	5%	37%	33%	16%
21 North Lancashire		4%	3%	3%	41%	32%	18%

22 Nottingham & Derby	4%	3%	2%	40%	31%	20%
23 Northampton	7%	5%	4%	22%	44%	19%
24 Plymouth & Exeter	10%	2%	2%	17%	42%	26%
25 Sheffield	9%	5%	7%	46%	17%	17%
26 Southampton	5%	3%	2%	42%	31%	18%
27 West Yorkshire	1%	2%	6%	40%	27%	24%
28 Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury	9%	7%	6%	46%	21%	13%
29 York & Hull	2%	4%	1%	30%	35%	29%
31 Scotland	21%	24%	8%	2%	7%	36%
32 Shetland					28%	72%
34 Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire	7%	6%	4%	34%	35%	14%
35 London	8%	2%	41%	49%	1%	
36 South East	9%	3%	1%	41%	36%	11%
Connexion	5%	4%	7%	35%	29%	19%

Congregation Sizes

The size of Methodist churches follows a typical pattern, as shown in Figure 3, below, whereby the smaller congregations are much more frequent. When the membership drops below the twelve needed for a church council, special measures are often put in place to consolidate congregations.

Figure 4 demonstrates how over half the membership, almost 150,000 Methodists, belongs to churches of below 100, and over 100,000 belonged to churches below 75 in strength. The average (mean) membership, excluding churches without any members, was 47. This caused the apparent oddity that whereas most churches were smaller than the mean, most members belonged to larger congregations. A typical member belonged to a larger-than-typical congregation.

Figure 3

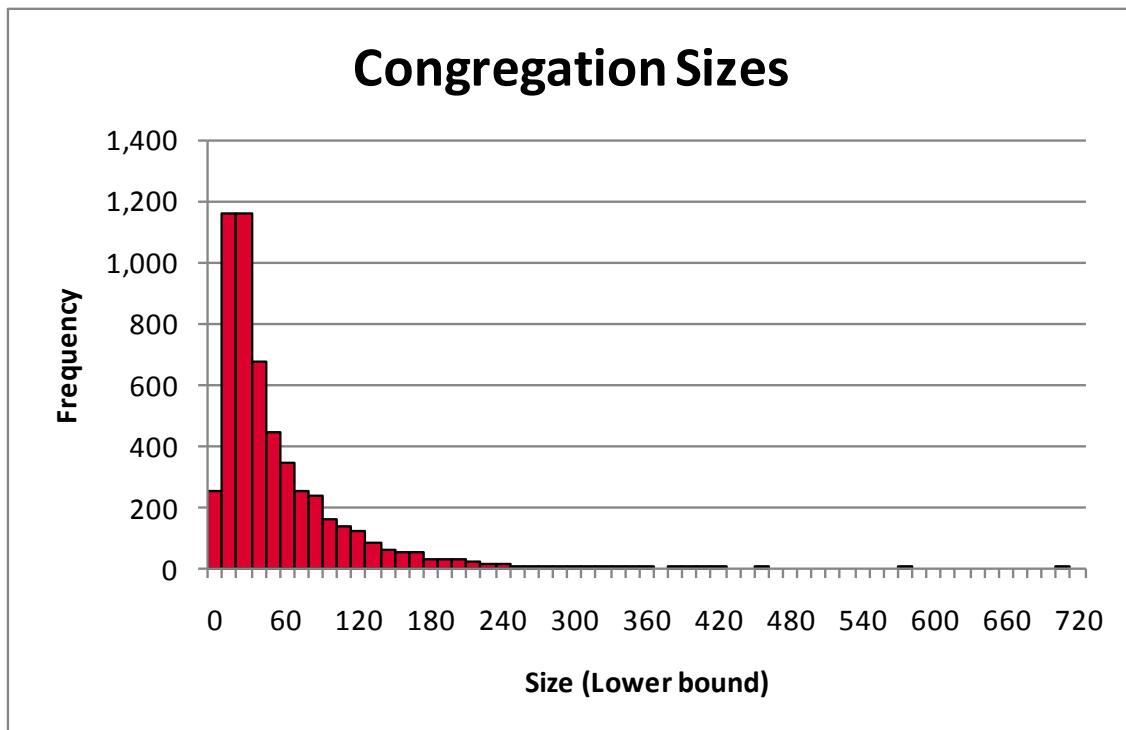
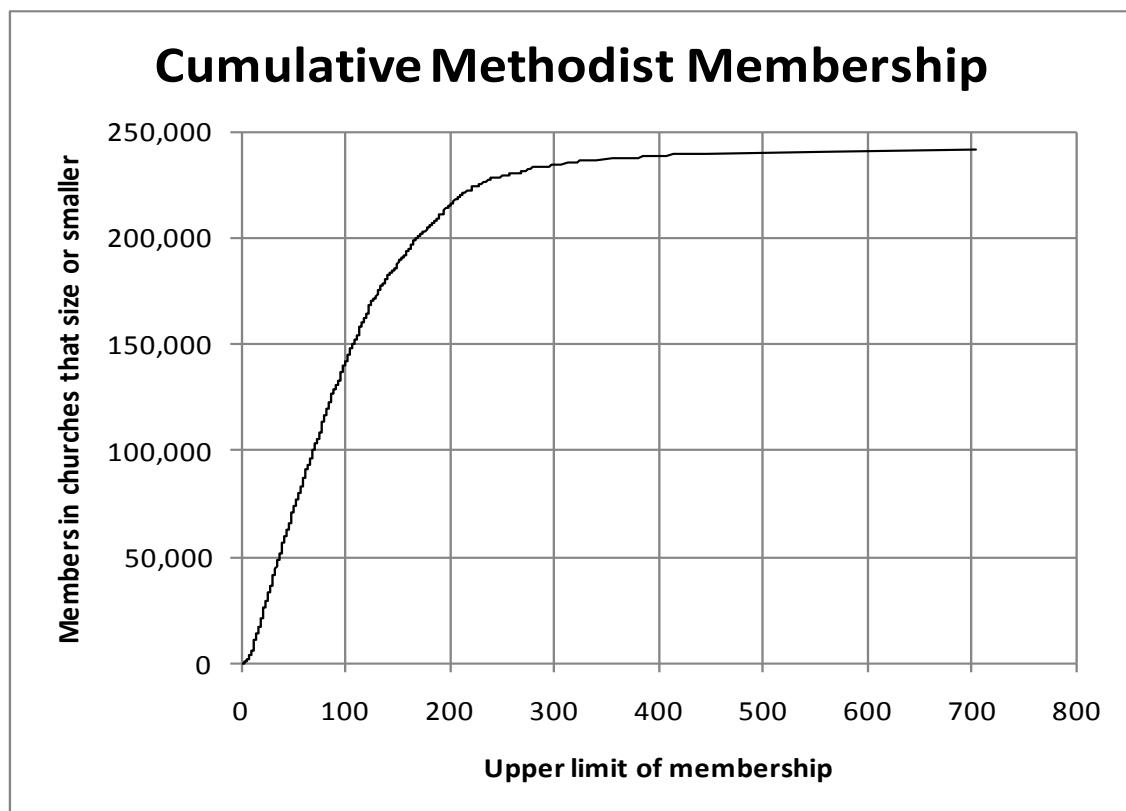


Figure 4



Attendance and Membership

Figure 5 compares average aggregate attendances in each District with the membership of that District. These numbers show the totals for each District in an average (mean) week in October. Where there is joint membership within an LEP, the overall attendance for the partnership has been scaled down, in an attempt to estimate the Methodist component.

Figure 5

District	Members	Attendance				Average all-age attendance per member
		Adult average	13 to 19 average	Under 13 average		
1 The Synod Cymru	1,800	930	0	42		53%
2 The Wales Synod	8,700	6,700	720	600		92%
5 Birmingham	9,700	7,700	410	690		91%
6 Bolton & Rochdale	7,000	4,900	740	730		91%
7 Bristol	9,600	7,700	410	720		92%
9 Cumbria	4,100	3,300	210	280		93%
10 Channel Islands	1,500	1,200	130	140		100%
11 Chester & Stoke-on-Trent	9,100	7,700	500	720		98%
12 Cornwall	7,100	6,400	420	610		104%
13 Darlington	6,900	5,100	380	420		85%
14 East Anglia	7,700	7,900	480	600		117%
15 Isle of Man	1,100	430	20	91		49%
16 Leeds	7,800	5,800	310	650		87%
17 Lincoln & Grimsby	6,100	5,300	450	340		100%
18 Liverpool	7,100	5,000	310	590		83%
19 Manchester & Stockport	9,100	6,500	1,300	790		95%
20 Newcastle upon Tyne	9,000	7,600	570	710		99%
21 North Lancashire	7,700	5,600	430	620		86%
22 Nottingham & Derby	9,700	8,100	800	760		99%
23 Northampton	12,000	9,600	720	910		96%
24 Plymouth & Exeter	9,200	8,800	560	630		108%
25 Sheffield	8,600	7,700	850	720		108%
26 Southampton	11,000	8,900	970	760		98%
27 West Yorkshire	7,500	5,600	390	650		89%
28 Wolverhampton &	9,300	8,000	890	640		102%

Shrewsbury					
29 York & Hull	9,700	8,100	770	650	98%
31 Scotland	3,400	2,000	120	180	68%
32 Shetland	240	320	14	36	152%
34 Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire	9,500	7,900	960	950	103%
35 London	18,000	13,000	570	1,900	84%
36 South East	12,000	9,500	580	950	89%
Connexion	241,000	193,000	15,900	19,100	95%

Figure 6 shows the same information subdivided by category of neighbourhood. This is an example of how these categories allow an individual church or Circuit to see what is typical of churches in similar situations across the whole Connexion, rather than just making comparisons with churches nearby. The members and those attending were not always the same people. High village attendance (relative to membership) was being recorded even when a church did not hold a service every week.

Church Category	Members	Attendance			
		Adult average	13 to 19 average	Under 13 average	Average all-age attendance per member
Not specified	720	210	0	37	34%
City Centre	13,000	10,000	640	810	92%
Council Estate	8,700	7,800	1,200	1,000	115%
Inner City	17,000	13,000	640	1,600	87%
Suburban Neighbourhood	85,000	65,000	7,000	7,100	93%
Small Town	71,000	54,000	3,600	4,600	87%
Village Rural	46,000	43,000	2,900	4,000	110%
Connexion	241,000	193,000	15,900	19,100	95%

Average weekly attendance, shown in Figure 7, typically ran below levels of membership. For every five members, the average weekly adult attendance was four. Only by including children's and teenagers' attendance as well did the weekly attendance exceed the Methodist membership, and then only in Districts such as East Anglia, Sheffield or Plymouth and Exeter. Churches in Council Estates or Rural Village locations had the highest levels of attendance relative to membership.

Figure 7

Church Category	Adult attendance per member	Adults attending per young person under 20 years
Not specified	29%	6
City Centre	81%	7
Council Estate	90%	4
Inner City	74%	6
Suburban Neighbourhood	76%	5
Separate Town	76%	7
Village Rural	95%	6
Connexion	80%	6

Although typically one child or teenager attended for every six adults, in Suburban Neighbourhoods it was close to one for every five and in Council Estates one for between three and four. For Council Estates this represented an average attendance of some 2,200 children and teenagers. The low figures for Council Estates and Suburban Neighbourhoods suggest above-average proportions of young people in the congregations. This reinforces the message that a low membership figure, especially in a council estate church, does not rule out a healthy turn-out.

Midweek Extra Attendance

Midweek attendance was collected where it was additional to turn-out on Sundays. Among adults, the extra attendance was small, relative to Sundays, adding one person for every nine present on Sunday. The proportional difference was far greater among children and teenagers. Midweek children's activities involving an element of Christian nurture and school communities accounted for a far greater proportion, contributing to an average of two more under 13s for every three present on Sunday and one further midweek teenager for every Sunday two.

Figure 8

Church Category	Adult extra	Under 13 extra	13 to 19 extra
Not specified	5%	0%	0%
City Centre	16%	59%	48%
Council Estate	16%	93%	82%
Inner City	11%	29%	30%
Suburban Neighbourhood	11%	80%	61%
Small Town	11%	62%	49%
Village Rural	11%	62%	53%
Connexion	11%	67%	53%

Differences again showed up between categories of location, though much less between Districts. Midweek adult attendance made more difference in Council Estates and City Centre churches, providing one in six extra against the average of one in nine. In Council Estates, midweek attendance among the under 20s almost equalled that on Sunday, whereas the extra in Inner City churches was only 30%. To these numbers must be added an unknown number that also attended on the Sunday. However, the totals are not large. Midweek services and nurturing activities added a weekly average of 16,000 under 20s across the whole connexion.

Wider Influence of Churches

The “Pastoral others” section of the October Count records those linked with the church but not formally members. In 2009 the Connexion recorded 302,000 people under that definition in wholly Methodist congregations, and a further 27,000 belonging to LEPs. Reducing the LEP component to an estimate of the Methodist-only component gave a total for the Connexion of 315,000. Added to the Membership, this gave an estimate for the total pastoral roll of 556,000.

Special services, such as baptisms and thanksgivings, weddings, blessings and funerals may also be considered as evidence of the church’s wider influence. Here there are two points to consider. Firstly, baptisms after infancy and thanksgivings for the birth of a child may well be evidence of a deeper than peripheral involvement, which is also perfectly possible with an infant baptism.

Data were collected towards the end of 2009, requesting totals for the previous twelve months. In that time, there were 5,460 recorded infant baptisms, with a further 852 taking place in Local Ecumenical Partnerships. There were 336 thanksgivings for the birth of a child, plus 169 more in LEPs.

Close to 20,000 funerals took place, 23,000 including LEPs, split fairly evenly between those in churches and those elsewhere. 3,304 marriages were solemnized and a further 408 blessed.

Figure 9 shows these measures of the Church’s wider social influence in descending order of penetration. The comparisons are intended to show what proportion of Great Britain is marking special events in the Methodist connexion. They are the most recently available statistics for England, Scotland and Wales, with small adjustments for the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Estimates are calculated from data published by the Office for National Statistics, the General Register Office for Scotland and the government of Jersey. Where churches from Gibraltar and Malta have been included in the South East District, no special allowance has been made for those populations.

Figure 9

Measure	Comparison	000s	Rate per 1000
Funerals (including LEPs)	23,000 British deaths 2008	570	40
Funerals (not LEPs)	20,000 British deaths 2008	570	35
Marriages plus blessings (including LEPs)	3,700 British marriages 2008	260	14
Baptisms under 13 plus thanksgivings (including LEPS)	10,000 British live births 2008	770	13
Marriages plus blessings (not LEPs)	3,100 British marriages 2008	260	12
Baptisms under 13 plus thanksgivings (not LEPS)	8,500 British live births 2008	770	11
Pastoral roll (including LEPs)	570,000 Total British population	60,000	9.5
Pastoral roll (not LEPs)	530,000 Total British population	60,000	8.8
Adult attendance (allowance for LEPs)	190,000 British adult population	46,000	4.2
13 to 19 attendance (allowance for LEPs)	16,000 British 13 to 19 population	4,500	3.5
Under 13 attendance (allowance for LEPs)	19,000 British under 13 population	9,700	2.0

Funerals still had the greatest take-up. It will surprise no-one that associations with the Methodist Church remained strongest among older age-groups. In each case of special services, the true rate is likely to lie somewhere between the rate without LEPs and the rate including them, since it is so difficult to tell whether it is the Partnership or the Methodist component that attracts people. More certainty is possible with regular attendance, so only one figure has been provided for these measures. Unlike the other comparisons, the comparison for marriages is not universal, since not every relationship is distinguished by a marriage.

Most striking is that the rates for thanksgivings and baptisms of under 13s were greater than those for the pastoral roll. These special services were drawing people to Methodist churches even when the church had not recorded even an informal link.

The last two rates in the table, for regular weekly attendance among children and teenagers, suggest a number of possibilities. The rate for children was less than half that for adults, but that is to be expected where the congregation boasts more grandparental age-groups than parental. (This assertion can be supported with reference to extra age-related data supplied by Manchester and Stockport District). The 13 to 19 rate appears remarkable. There were some returns from schools, where attendance at worship was compulsory, but there were 200 congregations reporting an average weekly attendance of 24 or more. These congregations clearly have something to tell about keeping a group of young people worshipping together.

Later Baptisms and Confirmations

It is disappointing that the number recorded as having ceased to meet, 3,435, was greater than the number of confirmations in 2009, which was 2,565. Nevertheless, confirmations continue to show people making a new commitment in the Methodist Church, and baptisms at the age of 13 or above give a similar message. There were 650 mature baptisms. At least 369 deferred confirmation until later. Of the remaining 281, there were at least as many candidates for confirmation in the same churches, some of whom will have undergone both ceremonies. Only a minority of churches, 1,030, witnessed either a confirmation or a mature baptism.

Figure 10

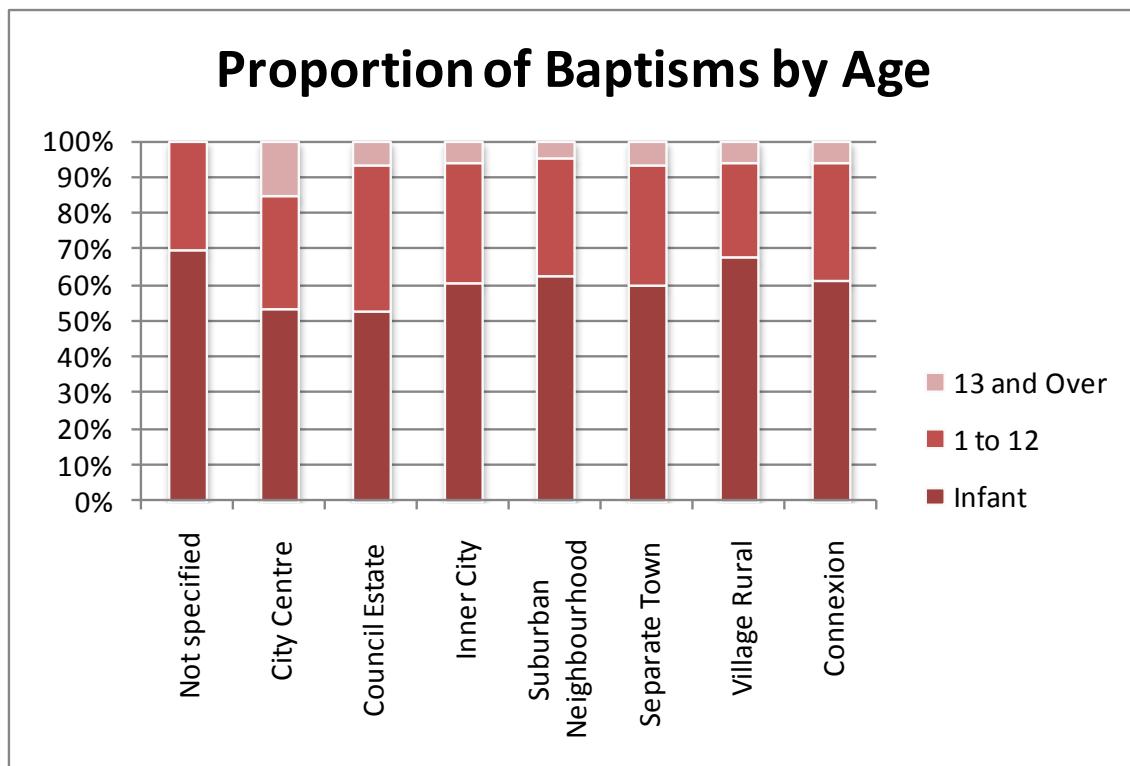


Figure 10 above shows that the most common time for baptism remained infancy, especially in rural locations, where it accounted for two thirds of ceremonies. Childhood baptism enjoyed its greatest popularity in Council Estate congregations, and baptism in maturity its greatest popularity in City Centre churches. However, the graph also shows that baptism can occur at all ages and in all locations.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships

16,500 (6.8%) of the connexional membership were recorded as belonging to Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs). They were spread fairly evenly around the Districts, with no District exceeding 15% of its membership, and only four Districts having none at all.

428 churches are recorded as having non-Methodist members. Of these, 16 had no Methodists in 2009, but continued to be reported as having some potential Methodist presence. One explanation for this is that some partnerships agree to consider all members as belonging to the same denomination as the minister at the time. The most frequent partnership in terms of congregations was with the United Reformed Church, with 248. In terms of people, the strongest partner was the Church of England, with 10,195 recorded as belonging to partnerships.

Figure 11

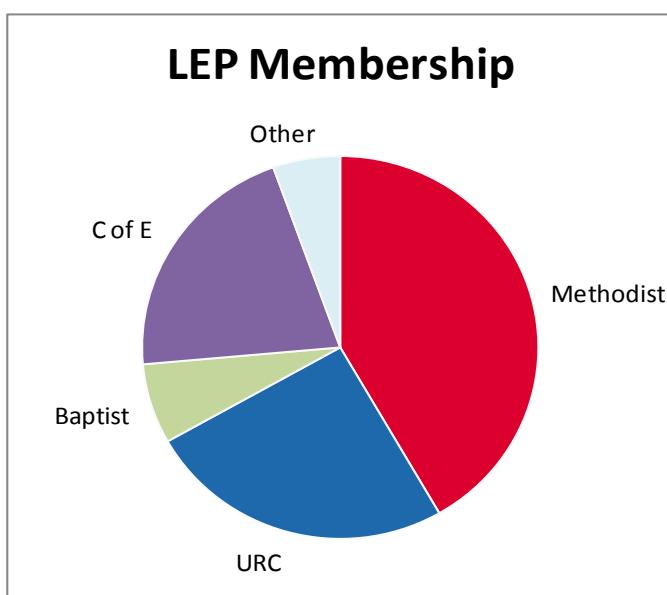


Figure 11 illustrates the denominational proportions within total LEP membership across the Connexion. The chart counts individual members of LEP congregations and shows the proportions of people from each denomination who worship together in all recorded LEPs that have a Methodist involvement.

Lay Office Holders

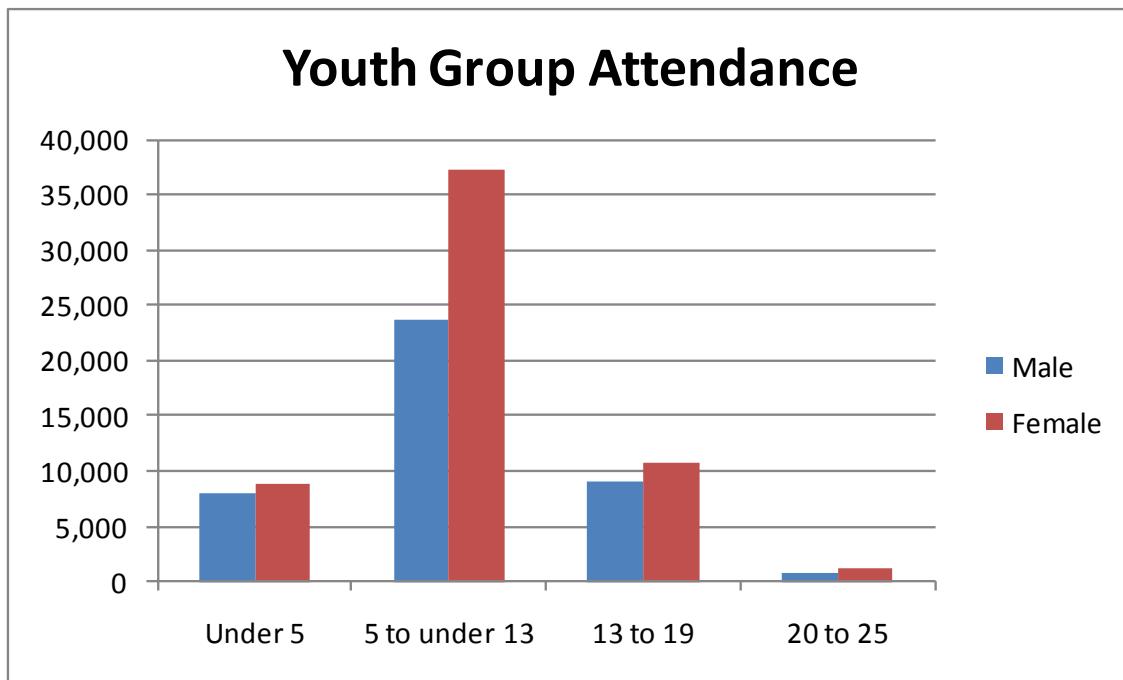
Figure 12

District	Lay Office Holders	Of which Under 24	Proportion Under 24
1 The Synod Cymru	290	0	0.0%
2 The Wales Synod	1,900	41	2.2%
5 Birmingham	2,200	17	0.8%
6 Bolton & Rochdale	1,400	27	2.0%
7 Bristol	2,300	35	1.5%
9 Cumbria	1,100	6	0.6%
10 Channel Islands	430	5	1.2%
11 Chester & Stoke-on-Trent	2,000	41	2.1%
12 Cornwall	2,100	15	0.7%
13 Darlington	1,300	17	1.3%
14 East Anglia	2,300	13	0.6%
15 Isle of Man	75	0	0.0%
16 Leeds	2,000	14	0.7%
17 Lincoln & Grimsby	1,600	14	0.9%
18 Liverpool	1,000	31	3.0%
19 Manchester & Stockport	2,100	25	1.2%
20 Newcastle upon Tyne	2,000	20	1.0%
21 North Lancashire	1,700	23	1.4%
22 Nottingham & Derby	2,500	46	1.8%
23 Northampton	3,400	36	1.0%
24 Plymouth & Exeter	2,400	32	1.3%
25 Sheffield	2,400	36	1.5%
26 Southampton	3,200	48	1.5%
27 West Yorkshire	1,400	14	1.0%
28 Wolverhampton & Shrewsbury	2,000	25	1.3%
29 York & Hull	2,300	38	1.7%
31 Scotland	800	11	1.4%
32 Shetland	74	8	10.8%
34 Bedfordshire, Essex & Hertfordshire	2,500	23	0.9%
35 London	3,500	115	3.3%
36 South East	2,500	30	1.2%
Connexion	56,600	806	1.4%

Figure 12 illustrates the number of office holders in churches. In Shetland, 8 lay office holders under 24 out of a total of 74 constituted 11%. Elsewhere, the average was around one in 70, with only two smaller Districts (Cymru and Isle of Man) reporting none and London having the most at one in 30. In total, 806 lay office holders were under 24.

Youth Activities and Support

Figure 13



Very close to 100,000 children and young people took part in Methodist youth groups in the year before the 2009 statistics were collected. Even allowing for the differences in the size of the age-bands, the five to under 13 age-group was substantially the most attended, accounting for over 60% of the total. In all age-groups, female attendance exceeded male.

Figure 14

Youth Group Attendance	Under 5	5 to under 13	13 to 19	20 to 25
Male	8,080	23,600	8,990	795
Female	8,870	37,200	10,700	1,110

No comparable figures were received from the Manchester and Stockport District, which in 2008 provided from 2.4% to 6.0% of the attendance, depending on the age-group. Including Manchester and Stockport would yield a total between 104,000 and 105,000.

Scouting organizations (Beavers, Rainbows, Brownies, Cubs, Scouts and Guides) accounted for over a quarter of the recorded attendance, at 26,000. Boys and Girls Brigades and other uniformed groups enjoyed recorded attendance of over 15,000. Nearly 10,000 attended Junior Church, with the majority in the 5 to under

13 age-group. Among under 5s, children's midweek groups were the most attractive, attended by 8,650 boys and girls. This category also attracted over 6,000 in the 5 to under 13 age-group. The only other groups attracting thousands of under 5s were categorized as Miscellaneous. Groups previously under the banner of MAYC and other Circuit or church-led Youth Clubs were attended by nearly 19,000, attracting both male and female in the age groups from 5 to 19. A complete set of comparable data for 2010 will make for more meaningful comparisons in the triennial report.

Youth work benefited from 19,099 volunteers and 466 paid staff appointed exclusively to single churches and a further 350 posts shared within the Circuit or in other arrangements. By that definition, one worker deployed in two Methodist churches counts as two posts.

Language and Ethnicity

89 churches ran worship or fellowship in a language other than English or Welsh. By far the greatest number, 25, were in London. Of the 23 other Districts with such services, none had more than four.

The complete list is impressive. Contributors offered Afrikaans, Akan, Cantonese, Portuguese, Lingala, Eritrean, Farsi, Fijian, Filipino, French, Ga, Ghanaian, Hindi, Korean, Ibo, Indian, Kerala, Krio, Malayalam, Mandarin, Mende, Punjabi, Shona, Yoruba, Swahili, Tamil, Twi, Fanti, Urdu, Vietnamese and Zimbabwean.

Some responses raised questions about the intent of the survey. The congregation worshipping in Cornish may wish to see their language deemed as everyday as the English or Welsh that the question excluded. Six congregations mentioned forms of signing. They are worth mentioning, but that was probably not the full extent of signing in the Connexion, or the only form of ministry to the disabled that could usefully be surveyed. Especially, popular languages were Cantonese and Mandarin, sometimes described less specifically as Chinese, Shona, (also Zimbabwean), Korean, Hindi and regional languages of India. French and Portuguese, spoken also by communities with African and South American heritage, were the most popular European languages.

90 churches hosted services for predominantly black or minority ethnic congregations. 35 of them were the same churches that worshipped in other languages, sometimes but not always ministering to the same ethnic groupings. Again, London was the prominent District, with 30 churches, but there was also substantial activity in Birmingham (11 churches) and Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire (8 churches).

Nigerian, Ghanaian and Zimbabwean fellowships were specifically surveyed. Of 24 Nigerian congregations, 13 were in London and the remainder in eight other Districts. London had 23 of the 36 Ghanaian congregations, with eight further Districts contributing. Fifteen Districts had Zimbabwean congregations, with only 10 of the total 30 in London. Eleven churches had minority congregations but not from any of the three specific countries. Again, there is a long list of different communities, some more broadly defined than others and with a lot of overlap:

African, Caribbean, Cantonese, Congolese, Eritrean, Indian, South African, Zambian, Liberian, from Cameroon, Portuguese, Chinese, Filipino, Sierra Leonian, Kenyan, Tongan, Jamaican, Guyanese, Gujarati, Pakistani, Gambian, Asian, Black British, Korean.

Fresh Expressions

The Methodist Fresh Expressions team have already worked to summarize the 2009 returns. They suggest that some local reports have overstated the number of Fresh Expressions. The data have been adjusted according to the assumption that the number of people attending was entered in place of the number of "Expressions". Every District except the Channel Islands was represented, with 893 Fresh Expressions altogether. They have identified four major types as Café Church, Messy Church, Third Place and Cell Group. Messy Church and Café Church existed in the majority of Districts, whereas Cell Churches were missing from some populous Districts such as London and the South East, and there were no 3rd Place expressions in several Districts in northern England. When comparisons over time are made as part of the triennial report, the Fresh Expressions data will be valuable in determining what initiatives have made and can make the greatest contribution to mission.

Glossary of Terms

Triennium

Every three years a more extensive statistical analysis of data from three years goes into a report to the Methodist conference. 2010's data will complete the three years. This year as in the past, many Methodist officers have taken pains to provide the detailed information for this analysis. The result in 2008 was a report with the potential to show patterns leading to growth and rejuvenation. The more complete this year's returns, the more confidence may be placed in next year's conclusions. Thanks are due to all the volunteers collecting data at churches and sending them to the central Connexional team.

Postcode and Category Code

"The World is my Parish" but each church has a postcode. It is becoming increasingly possible to analyse data geographically. If each church's postcode is known and correct, it is possible to place them all on the map. The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands may find that Grid References or Latitude and Longitude are more applicable to them.

Churches are asked to give themselves a category code to describe how rural or urban they consider themselves to be. This is used as a basis for a lot of analysis. Before next year, it will be helpful to assess how well the categories match each church, especially when compared to others in the District and across the Connexion.

Membership Roll

Membership is the central figure in most Methodist statistics. For all-Methodist congregations, it is simple. For Local Ecumenical Partnerships, churches supply separate figures for wholly Methodist membership and for the assumed Methodist portion of any joint LEP members. Adding these together gives the Methodist Membership Roll for the church.

Community Roll

Community roll is the sum of Methodist Membership and Pastoral Others.

Attendance:

Monthly high and Monthly low

Thinking about individuals, we may want to categorize worshippers in groups attending every week or every month. From a four-week census, this is not quite possible. The closest estimate is that the lowest week's attendance in the month, termed "monthly low", has the core of people attending each week, with a minimum of less frequent attenders. The "monthly high" is the week when the highest number of less frequent attenders came to the service. If October is a typical month, then "monthly high" represents slightly fewer than the total of people that attends at least once a month, missing only those whose monthly attendance happened in a less popular week. This statistic has more relevance to individual churches than for a larger grouping, where people may attend more than one church during the month.

Circuit attendance

Average weekly numbers for a single church should divide by the actual number of services (i.e. 1 to 4), not the maximum possible number of services (i.e. always 4). Aggregations are different. Within a Circuit, there is a small chance that no churches will hold a service on a particular Sunday, but it will generally be fairer to divide the total attendance over four weeks by four.

Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), wherein several Christian congregations share ministers, buildings and services in varying degrees, represent churches in which Methodists are full members. In considering the size of the Methodist connexion by itself, “Membership” is the proportion of the membership that may be considered Methodist, rather than the whole congregation. For attendance at services, the whole attendance is given, as the usual ethos of the partnerships is that the people worship together. It is also possible to estimate the Methodist component of the attendance. Although it makes less sense in the context of the partnership, it does address the issue of the overall size of UK Christian churches, where it would be wrong to count people twice for attending a single service.

Midweek attendance

Calculated from “whole week” less Sunday only. It is worth monitoring this figure both in its own right and as a proportion of attendance for the whole week. If a church is pursuing a plan to enable midweek attendance then the results should appear here. If midweek attendance rises without any deliberate policy, then it may suggest a path to explore.

Connexional Report prepared by Nigel Williams for the Methodist Church of Great Britain, on behalf of Research and Statistics, Archbishops’ Council and the Research Officers of the Connexional Team.

07/10/2010.