

Lichfield Diocese Mission Statistics 2023

Executive Summary

2023 mission statistics show a small increase on attendance figures from 2022 to 2023. This increase continues the recovery in attendance since the 2020-1 lockdown period, and is reflected in all of the three main measures used.

Aggregated attendance figures across the diocese remain lower than for 2019.

Attendance figures are not currently projected forwards. However, some measures (e.g. October Count on page 6) appear to show that the line of growth post-Covid may soon traverse the downward trend of the previous decade. If this continues, we may be seeing a new trend for Anglican church attendance in the diocese, though not currently a strong one.

After two years of growth in occasional offices, the number of baptisms, weddings and funerals all fell in 2023. The number of confirmations continued to grow.

Further reports will be published looking at New Worshipping Communities, Larger Churches, Growing Churches, and Occasional Offices.

We remain indebted to Richard Barrett, Executive Assistant to the Mission Team, for the vast amount of work that goes into gathering and managing this data, and to the national Church.

Simon Foster (Mission Team) June 2024

Mission Statistics in Lichfield Diocese

Each year parish churches submit Mission Statistics to the national Church of England Research and Statistics Department.

Aggregated data is provided to us from the Research and Statistics department and provides the basis of this annual report.

The diocese is a partner in this activity, promoting and supporting data collection. We have some say over what data is collected within this diocese.

Data is collected for the calendar year (January-December).

Data Collection

The diocese relies on the commitment of clergy and lay people to provide Mission Statistics. Some complete them directly online onto the national Parish Returns system, some complete standalone forms in either soft or hard copy form, some submit those figures by phone or zoom to the Mission Team. Every submitted return is checked, and those with significant issues are re-checked with the parish. Parishes which have not submitted Mission Statistics are reminded to do so.

This year the overall total of verified returns from our churches decreased fractionally, from 87.6% of churches in 2022 to 87% for 2023. Informally, we are aware that some dioceses exceed 90% in their verified returns, but some have significantly lower return rates, and some manage little checking of their own.

Where no data is submitted by a church in a given year, the Mission Team Executive Assistant records instead the most recent figures for that church. While this means a less accurate picture, it provides that figures across deaneries, archdeaconries and the diocese that are not distorted by lack of data. Only in a very few cases does the same church consistently not submit data across a period of multiple years.

Alterations to data collection in 2023

The 2023 form saw no significant changes to the core questions asked from 2022, but this year's additional one-off question asked churches whether they had launched any new Worshipping Communities in 2023.

Report Contents

This report provides data for the diocese against the measures used by the national Church:

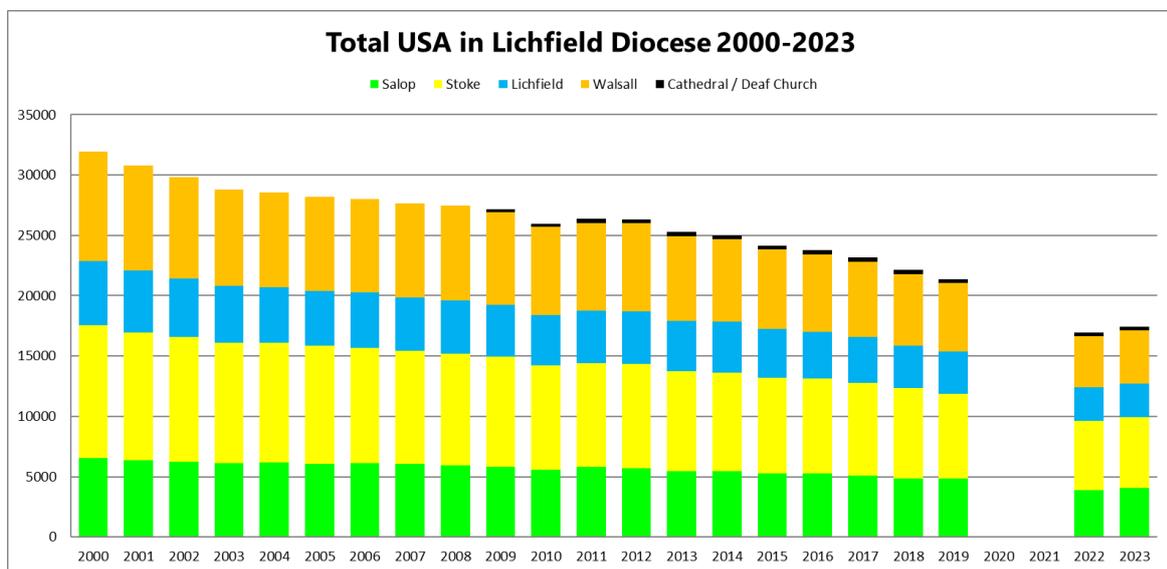
- Usual Sunday Attendance
- October Count
- Worshipping Community
- Joiners and Leavers
- Electoral Roll
- Easter
- Christmas
- Baptisms, Thanksgivings and Confirmations
- Weddings
- Funerals and Committals
- Church at Home (Virtual Worship)
- New Worshipping Communities

Usual Sunday Attendance

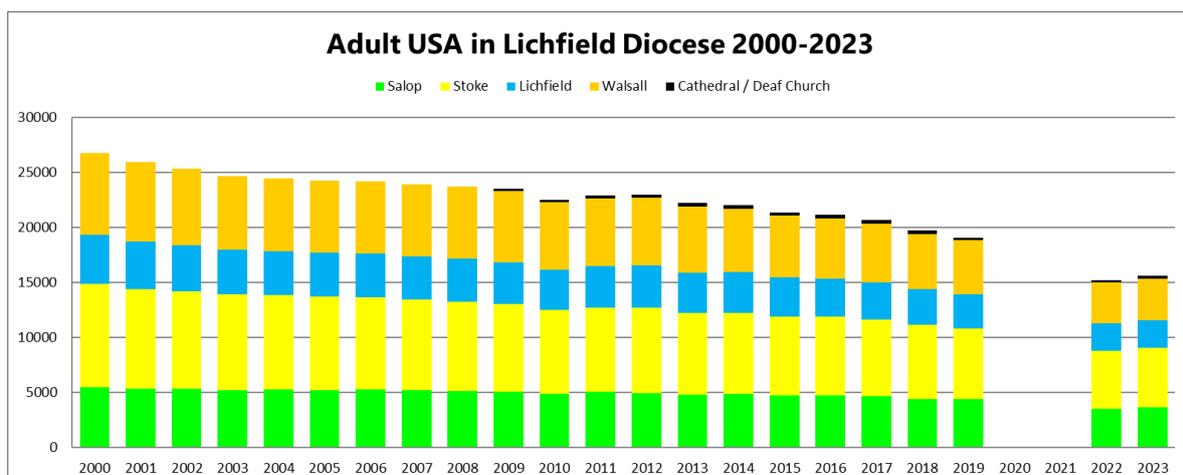
Guidance for those registering Usual Sunday Attendance no longer asks for a calculation of mean average attendance, but some churches continue to find that helpful. Others give their best assessment they can of the numbers they may expect to see on a 'usual' Sunday.

This measure and the October Count takes adults to be those aged 16 and over (unlike Worshipping Community which uses 18 as the age boundary).

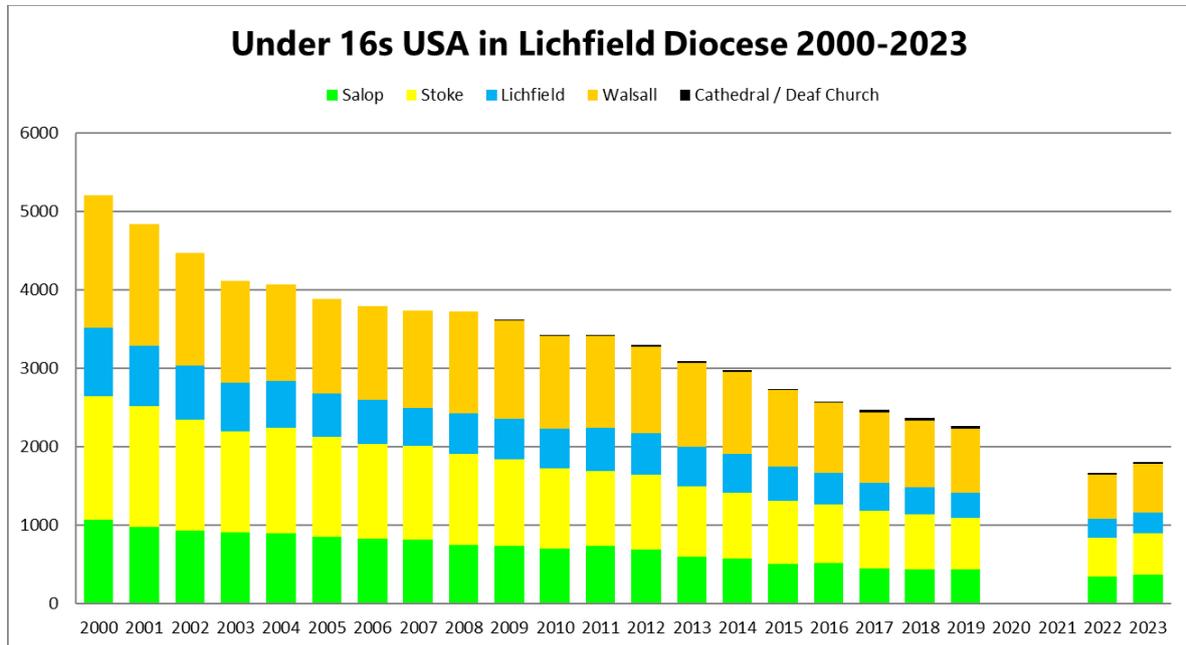
This measure was not requested in 2020 or 2021 due to covid. 2023 saw total Usual Sunday Attendance increase for the first time since 2011, from 16,917 in 2022 to 17,399 in 2023, an increase of 482 people or 2.8%



The increase in Adults was one of 347, from 15,254 from 15,601, amounting to 2.3%



Under 16s increased by a more significant margin, from 1663 to 1798, the increase of 570 equal to 8.1%;

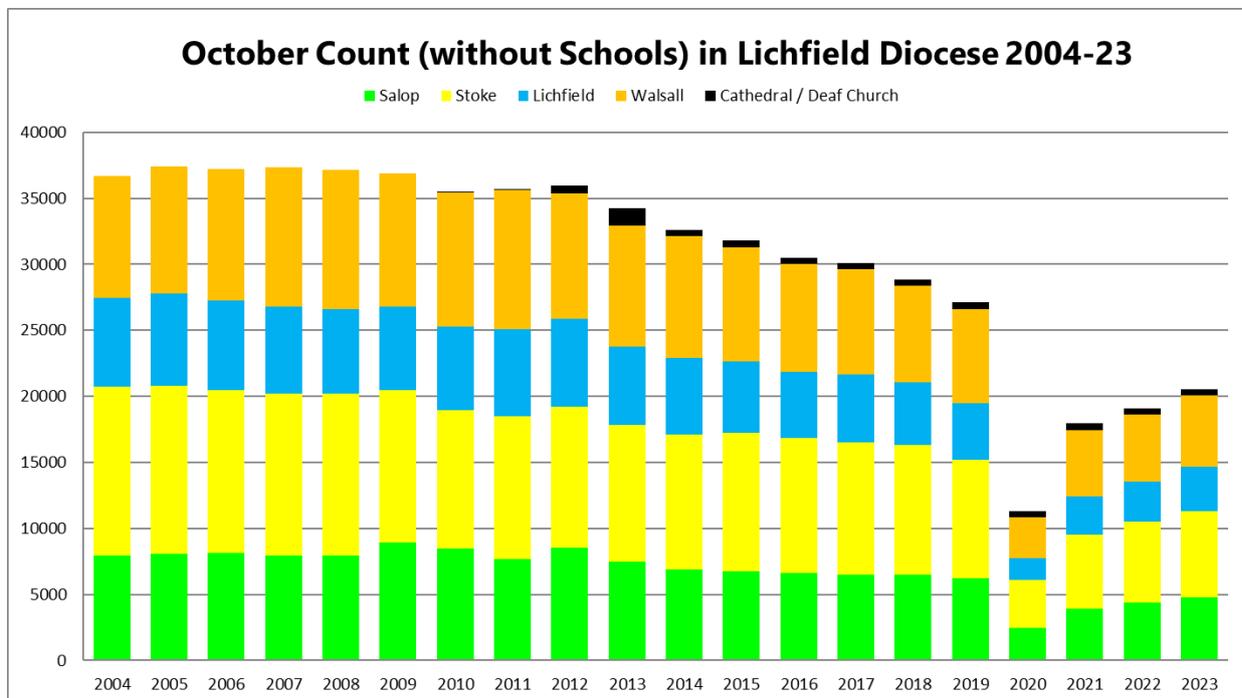


October Count

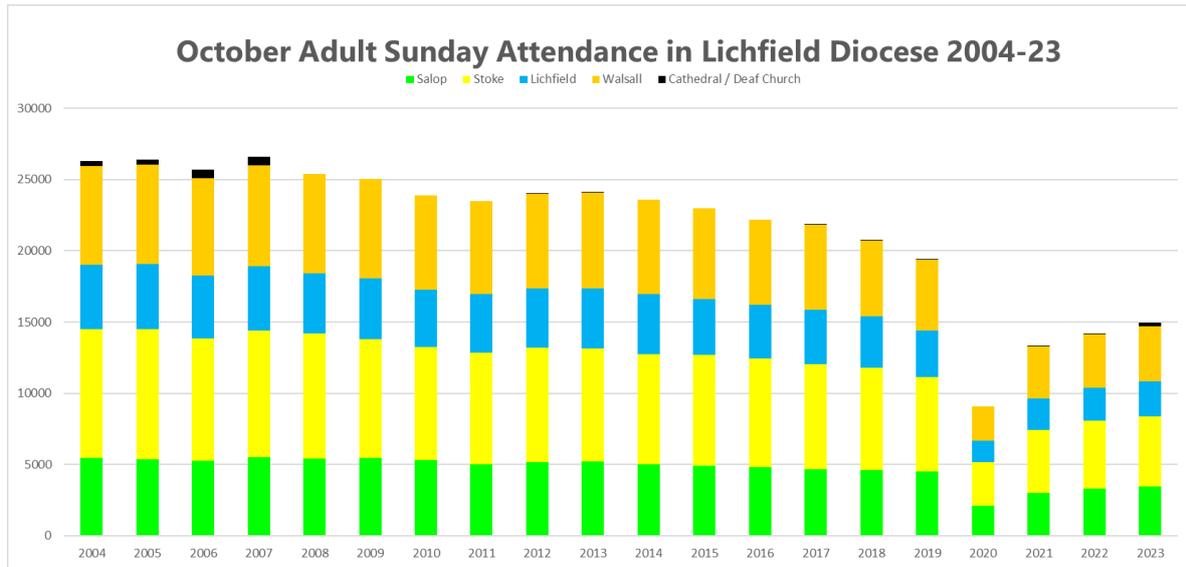
This measure counts the total people attending services in the first 4 Sundays of October in each year, and at any midweek services in the following week. The totals of those people receiving Home Communion should also be included in this measure.

This measure can be impacted by such vagaries as whether a church celebrates Harvest at the end of September or beginning of October. The national Church considers the October Count a significant measure and assumes such discrepancies evened out over the full data set.

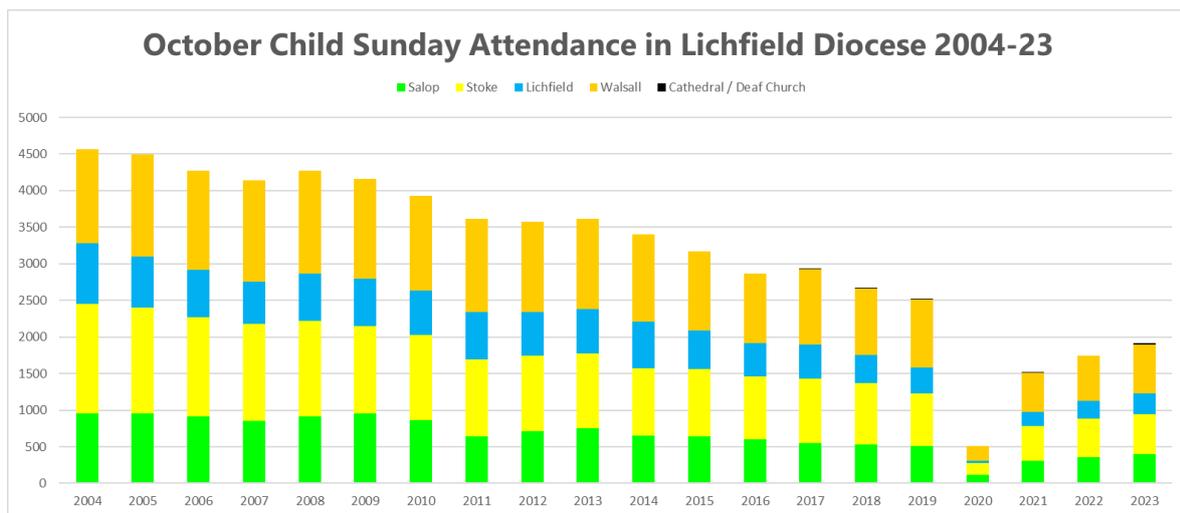
The October Count includes three sub-categories: 'Church', 'Fresh Expressions', and 'School'. Figures for schools were not gathered prior to 2013 and in order to provide comparable data are left out of the chart below.



This measure increased for the third straight year from the covid low point of 2020, this time by 1,460 from 19,056 to 20,516, an increase of 7.7%.



Adults attending worship on October Sundays increased by 744 from 14,179 to 14,960 since last year (5.5%).

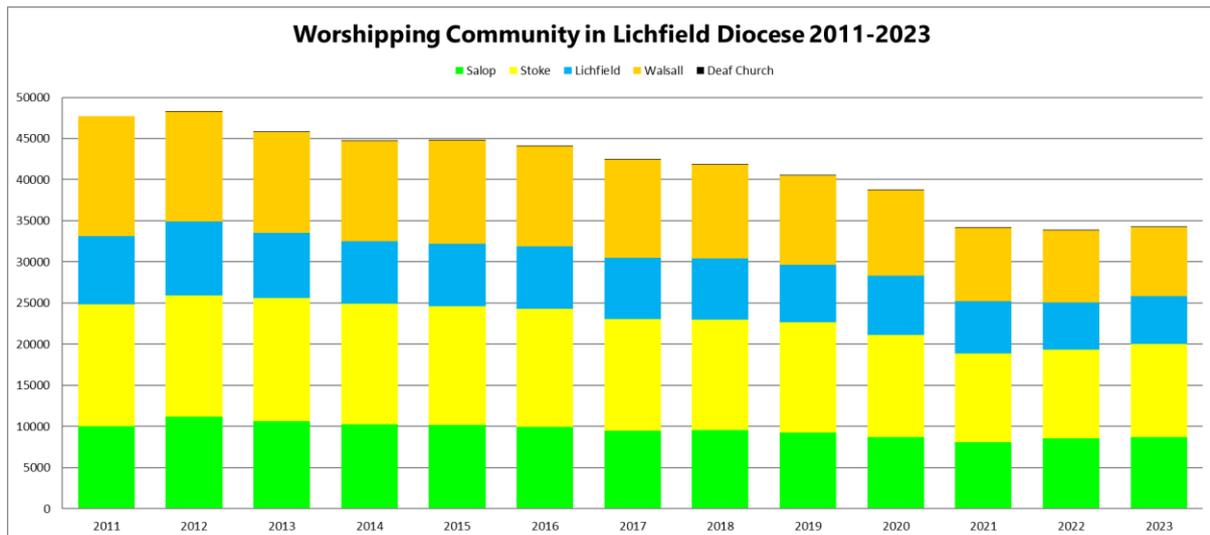


Under 16s increased by 179 from 1,739 to 1,918 since last year (10.3%).

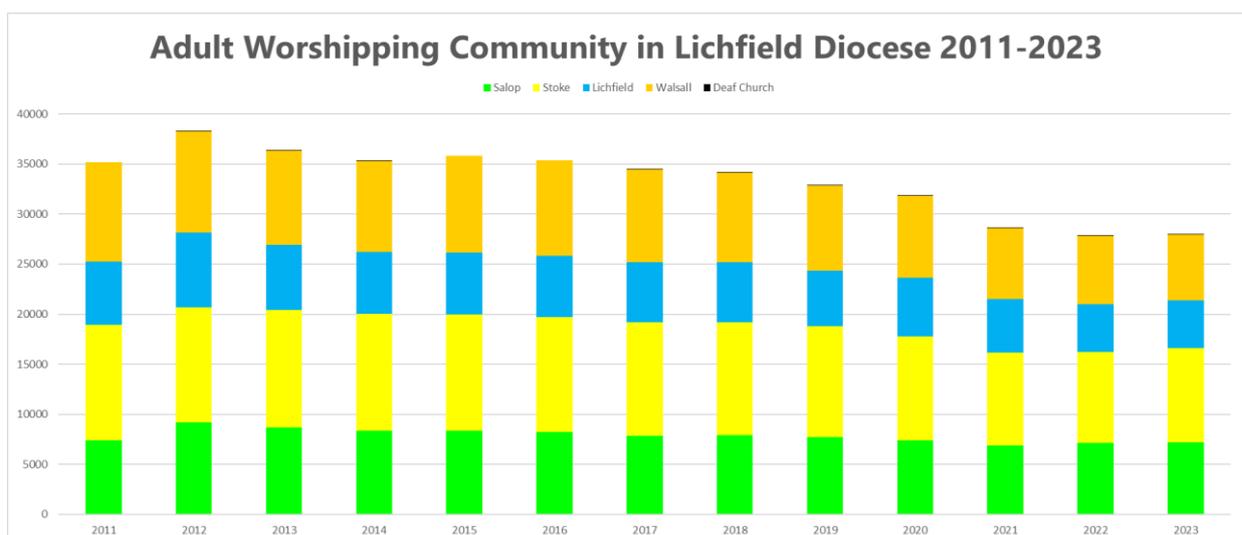
Worshipping Community

This measure attempts to count all those people that a church would consider part of their flock; so that would include regulars at Sunday and midweek services, fresh expressions, and those who receive home communion. A more detailed description is available at the www.lichfield.anglican.org/stats page.

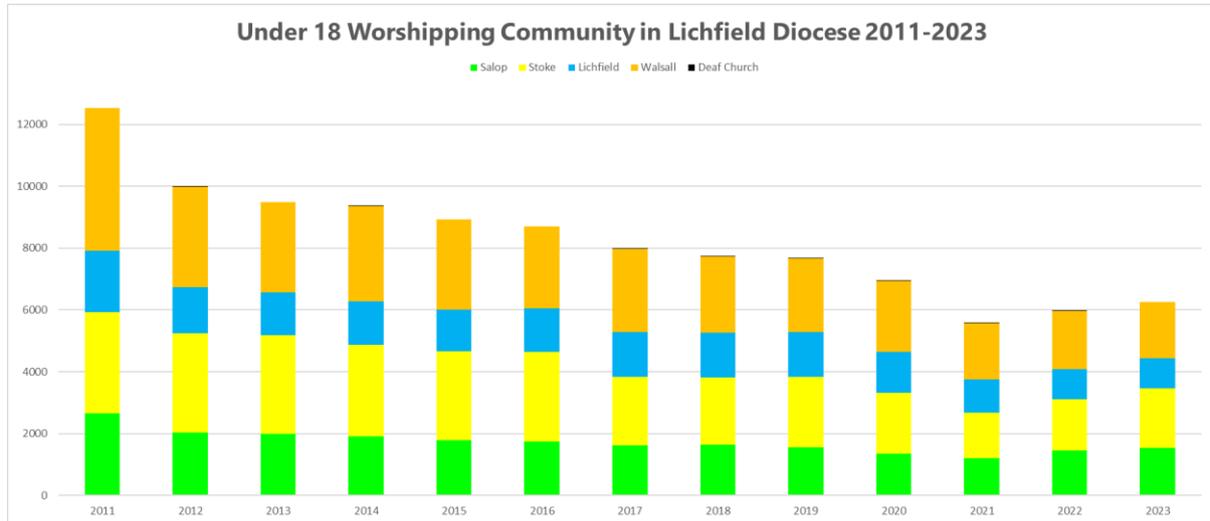
In 2023 the total worshipping community across all of the diocese's churches increased for the first time since 2015, from 33,839 to 34,282, an increase of 443 people (1.3%);



Adults increased slightly from 2022 to 2023 by 155 people from 27,879 to 28034 (0.6%);



Young People (under 18 years of age) increased by 288 people, from 5960 to 6248, an increase of 4.8%.



Within the measure of Worshipping Community, churches are asked, 'How many of the people in your worshipping community are entirely or predominantly 'Church at Home' worshippers?' This question was introduced in 2021. In 2023 the number of Church at Home worshippers was 1182 (3.4% of the diocesan total Worshipping Community). This was a slight decrease from the 2022 total of 1265.

Joiners and Leavers

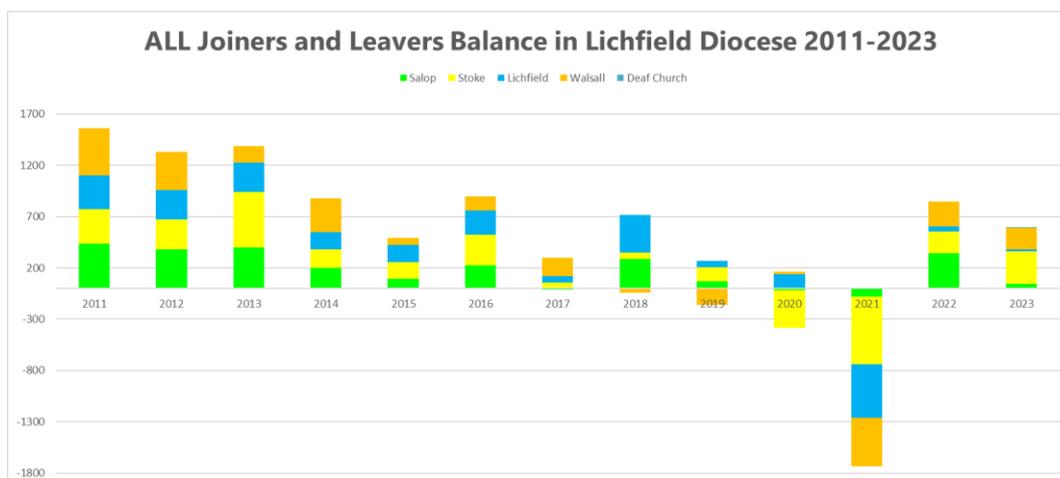
This measure asks clergy to identify the numbers of people they're aware have joined and left their congregations.

The balance of joiners and leavers will ideally triangulate with the change in Worshipping Community. Looking at Joiners and Leavers, a consistent picture apart from 2020 and 2021 had been that churches have identified more Joiners than Leavers, while the Worshipping Community totals have consistently slipped. 2023 has proved the closest match to date with both indicating that overall our churches gained more people than they lost in 2023.

Where not triangulated, the assumption is made that the Worshipping Community figures are more accurate than the joiners and leavers balance.

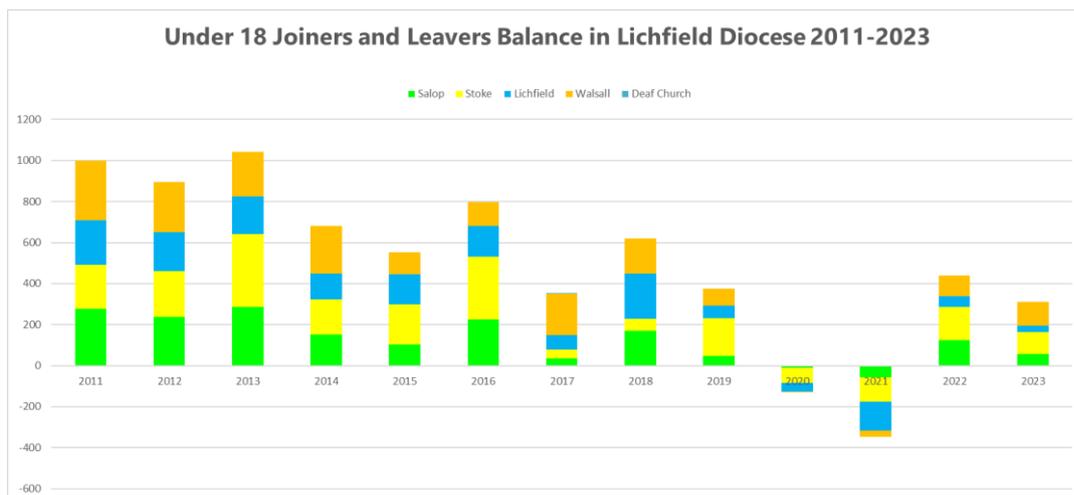
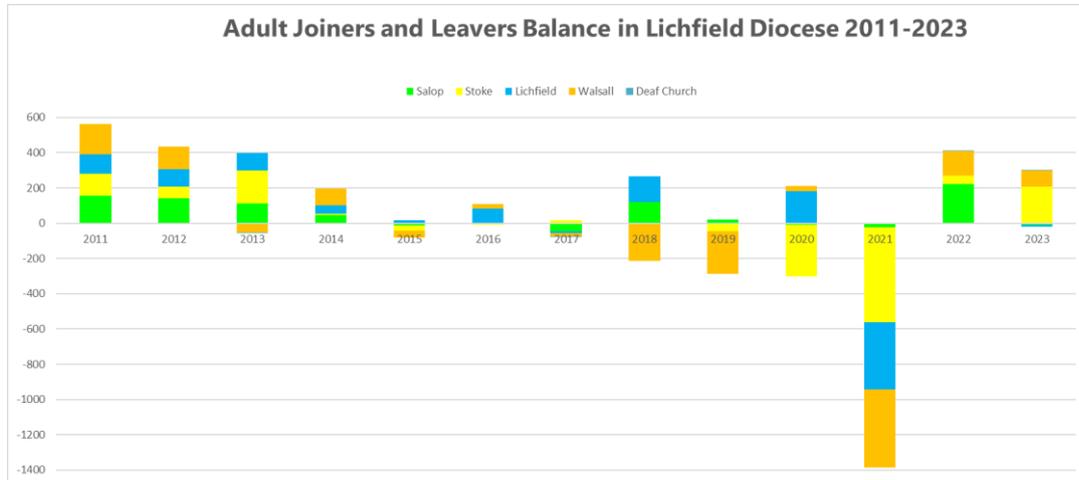
Difference in Worshipping Community and Joiners/Leavers Total Changes

Year	WC Change	J/L Change	Difference
2011-2012	595	1,332	737
2012-2013	-2,429	1,385	3,814
2013-2014	-1,131	877	2,008
2014-2015	124	491	367
2015-2016	-699	862	1,561
2016-2017	-1,665	291	1,956
2017-2018	-590	672	1,262
2018-2019	-1,378	108	1,486
2019-2020	-1,499	-215	1,284
2020-2021	-4,574	-1726	2848
2021-2022	-365	843	1208
2022-2023	443	594	151



Joiners and Leavers (adults and under-18s)

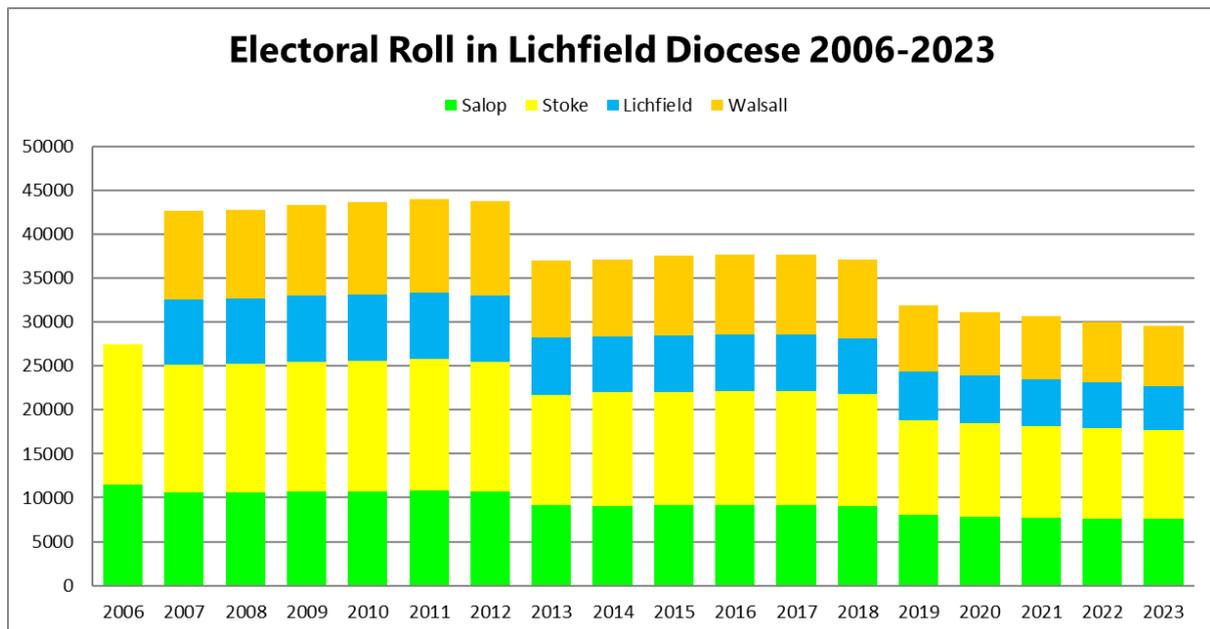
Joiners and Leavers can be further analysed by two age brackets: adults and under-18s;



Electoral Roll

This measure records the number registered on the parish’s electoral roll as declared at the previous APCM. The data shows relative stability, with gradual growth followed by a sharp fall when the roll has been renewed in 2012-13 and 2018-2019.

This year’s fall of 404 people (1.3%) is small, but follows the comparatively recent trend of also showing decline in non-renewal years

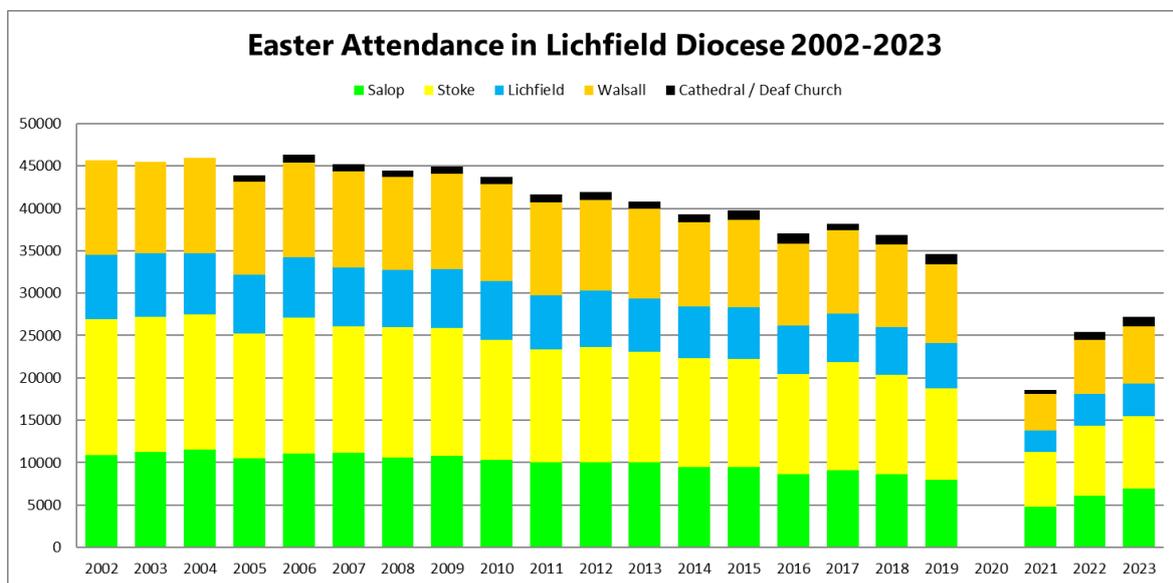


Easter

Our Easter Attendance is the total number of individuals attending in-person worship at a service on either Easter Eve or Easter Day. Figures are requested for individuals rather than attendances, with the intention of avoiding double-counting, but it is uncertain that double-counting is avoided where an individual attends more than one service.

2021 had seen the return of in-person Easter worship after the lockdown of 2020; while there was no lockdown at Easter 2021, continuing covid restrictions and concerns meant that 2021 was still a long way from 'normal'.

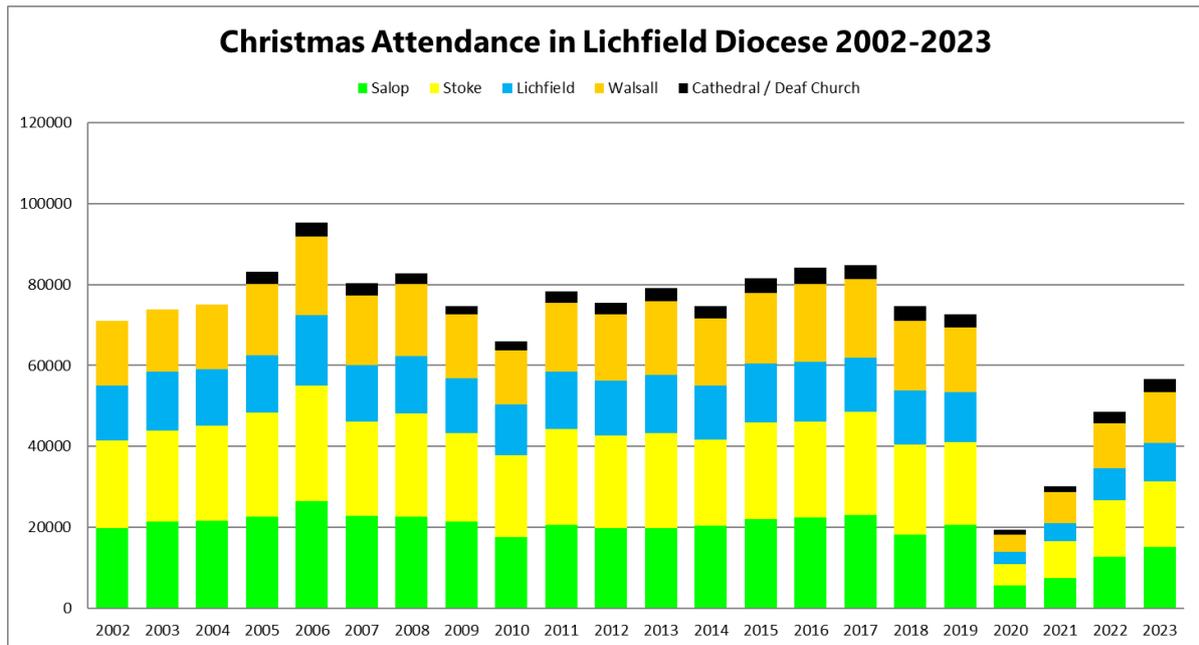
2023 built on 2022's increase with a further increase of 1766 people, 6.9%, from 25,422 to 27,198



Christmas

Christmas Attendance records the total number of individuals attending in-person worship at a service on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

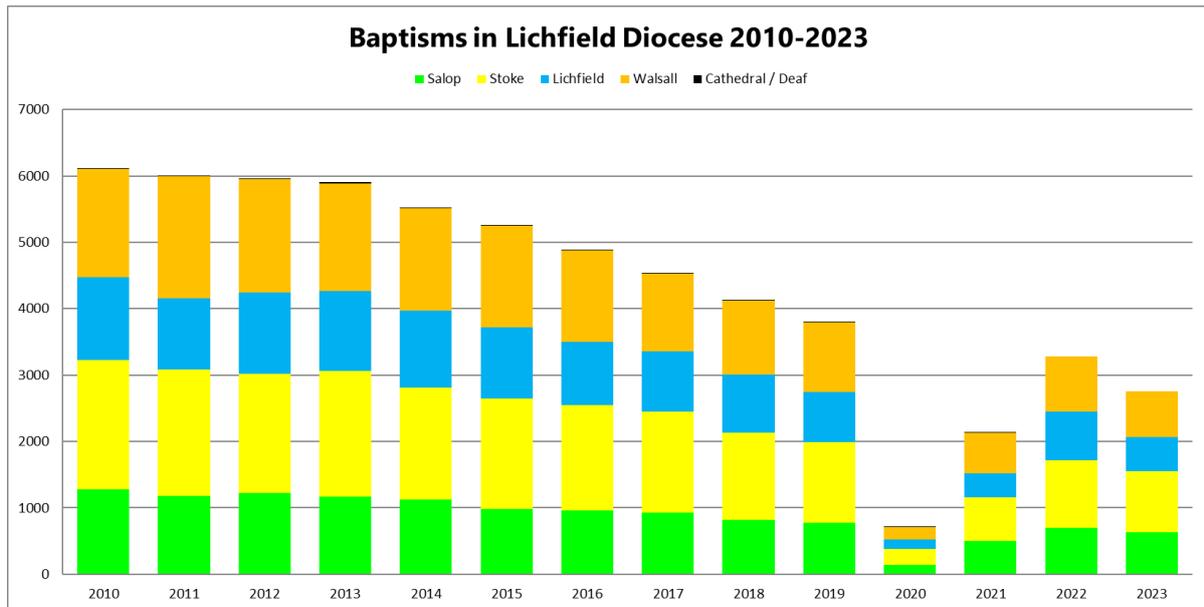
Christmas attendances have been continuing to rebuild from the covid-affected low points of 2020 and 2021; 2023's total was an increase of 8198 people from 48,495 to 56,693, or 16.9%.



Baptisms

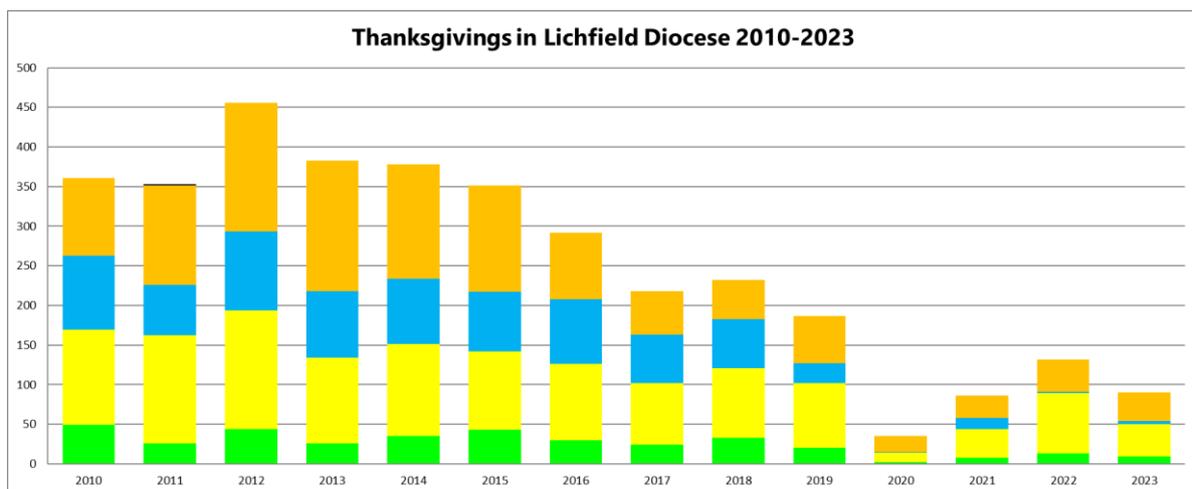
The total number of Baptisms across the diocese is recorded each year. This year the number of baptisms was 2758, a decrease of 526.

There was some anecdotal evidence from some clergy who advised that their number of baptisms and weddings were boosted in 2022 with people holding back on such celebrations during the covid-affected years of 2020 and 2021.



Thanksgivings

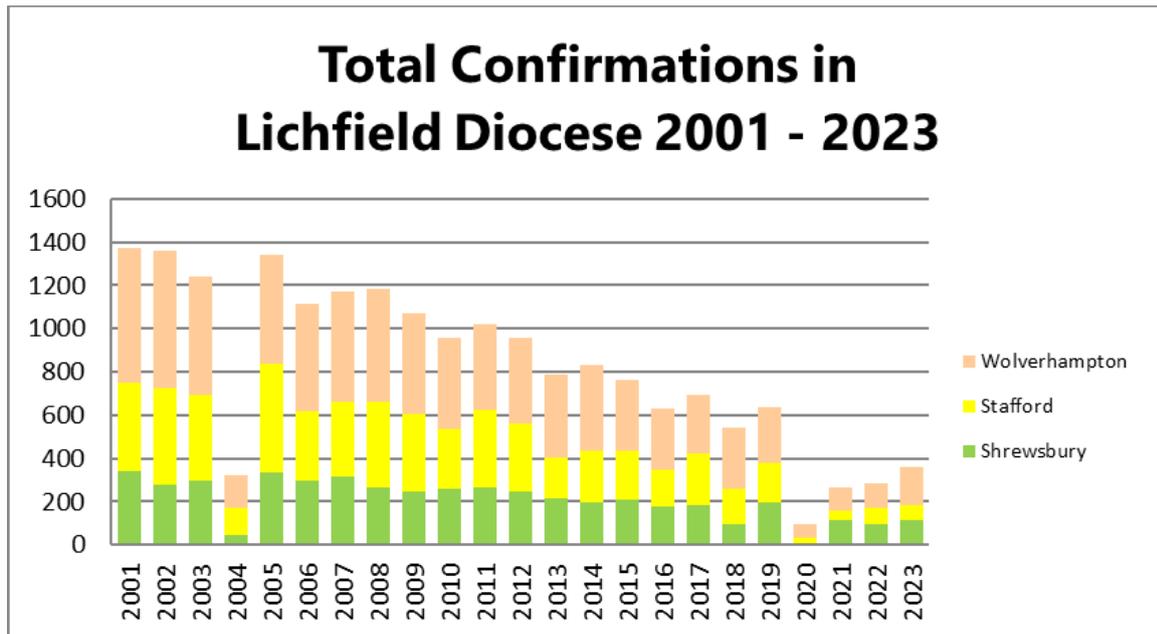
The total of Thanksgivings held this year was 90, a decrease of 42 from 132 in 2022.



Confirmations

Confirmations are not recorded in the national survey of Mission Statistics. These figures are provided by the Bishop of Lichfield's office.

In 2023, 361 people were confirmed, at 45 confirmation services. In 2022, 282 people were confirmed, at 55 confirmation services.

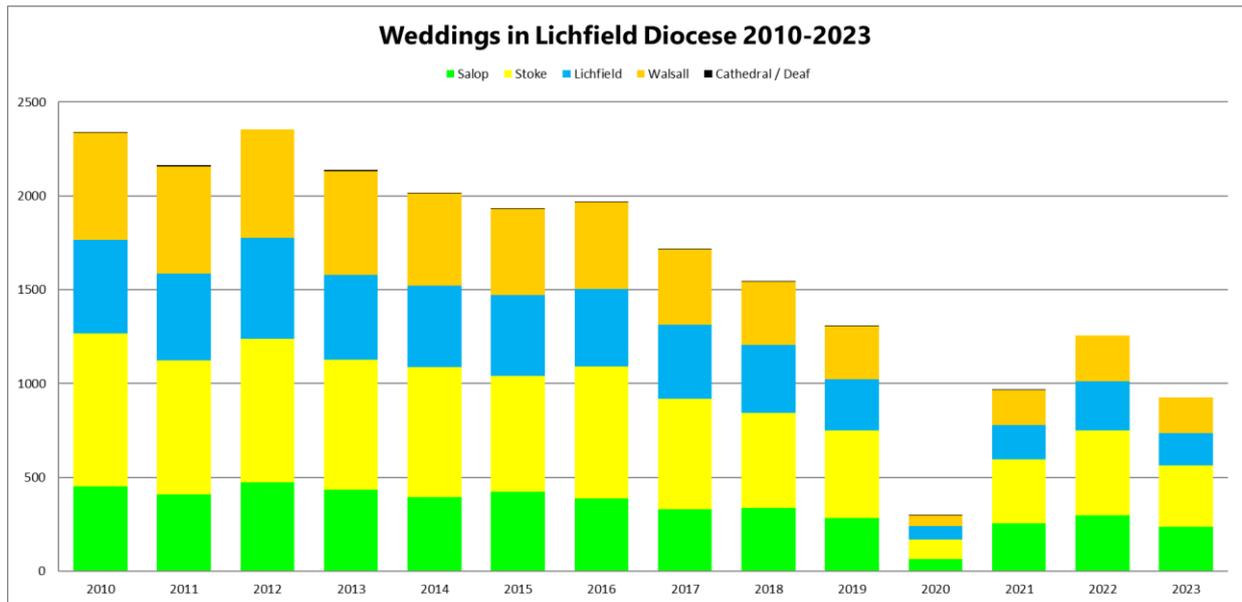


(2004 is anomalous due to the greater part of that year's figures being misplaced)

Weddings

The number of weddings in churches is also recorded. In 2023, 927 weddings took place, a significant decrease of 328 or 26.1% on the 2022 total of 1255.

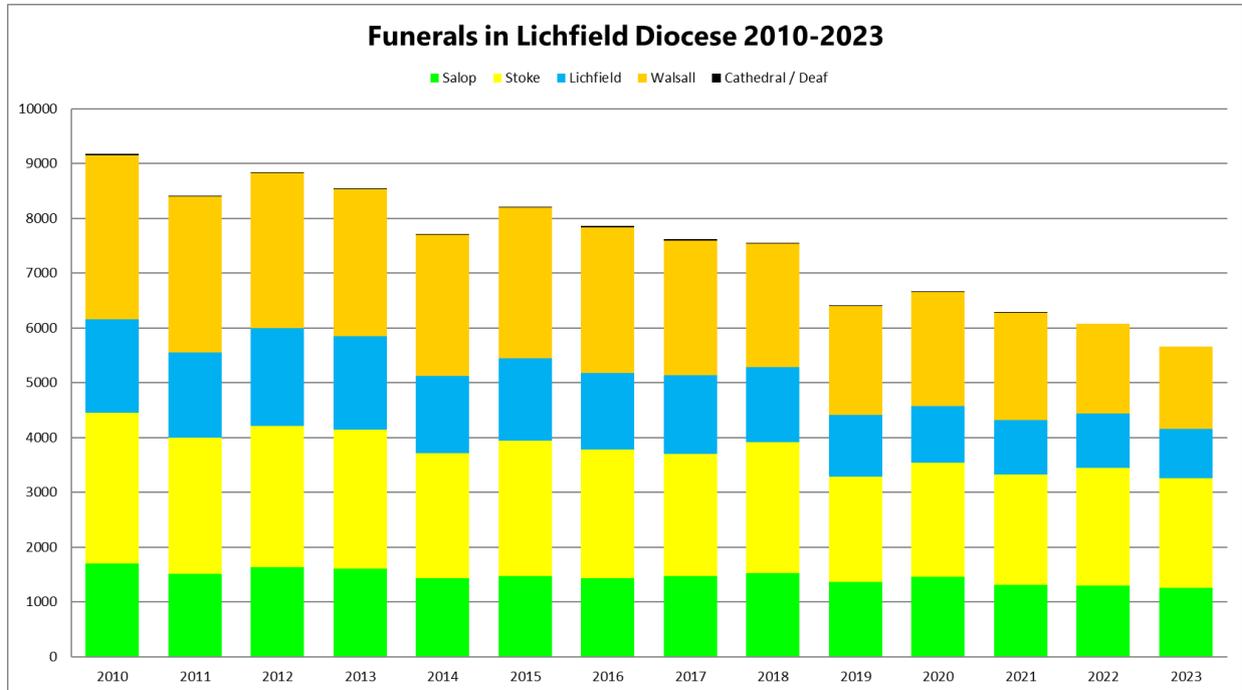
Similarly to Baptisms, there have been some anecdotal evidence that 2022 figures were boosted by people saving their celebrations until after covid, but this 2023 figure is also marginally lower than 2021, when some restrictions were still in place.



Funerals

The number of funerals conducted by CofE clergy linked to diocesan parish churches is recorded, including those conducted at churches and crematoria.

This year, 5655 funerals were recorded, a fall of 418 (6.9%).



3715 funerals took place at church; 1953 took place at a crematorium or other setting. Church funerals have exceeded crem funerals every year except 2020.

Committals

Figures for committals have been collected since 2019. 2022 was the first and so far, only year when the total has fallen. The figure for 2023 was 1056, a slight increase of 24 committals or 2.3% from 1032.

Church at Home (Virtual Worship)

In 2020 the CofE Research and Statistics Team developed a prototype measure for virtual worship in consultation with dioceses including Lichfield, and this measure was included in the collection of Mission Statistics in 2020 and 2021. In 2020 this measure asked about Church at Home in the first lockdown and during October. Since 2021 only data for October was requested.

Church at Home could include:

- Online services
- Telephone services
- Downloadable services
- Printed/Posted services
- Referring their congregations to services offered by other sources (e.g. other churches, the cathedral).

14,412 people were reported as participating in Church at Home in October 2020 amidst the pandemic in October 2020. Since then, the number has been steadily decreasing, to 7478 people in October 2021, 3213 in October 2022, and in October 2023; 2833 people.

The breakdown of people participating in Church at Home during October 2023 per deanery, archdeaconry, and episcopal area is given on the following page.

Deanery	Deanery Total	Archdeaconry	Archdeaconry Total	Episcopal Area	Area Total
Edgmond and Shifnal	159	Salop	452	Shrewsbury	452
Ellesmere	6	Salop		Shrewsbury	
Hodnet	14	Salop		Shrewsbury	
Oswestry	45	Salop		Shrewsbury	
Shrewsbury and Wrekin	114	Salop		Shrewsbury	
Telford	114	Salop		Shrewsbury	
Wem and Whitchurch	0	Salop		Shrewsbury	
Alstonfield	0	Stoke	968	Stafford	968
Cheadle	35	Stoke		Stafford	
Eccleshall	29	Stoke		Stafford	
Leek	161	Stoke		Stafford	
Newcastle	129	Stoke		Stafford	
Stafford	307	Stoke		Stafford	
Stoke on Trent	209	Stoke		Stafford	
Stone	35	Stoke		Stafford	
Tutbury	56	Stoke		Stafford	
Uttoxeter	7	Stoke		Stafford	
Lichfield	209	Lichfield		369	
Penkridge	118	Lichfield	Wolverhampton		
Rugeley	24	Lichfield	Wolverhampton		
Tamworth	18	Lichfield	Wolverhampton		
Trysull	172	Walsall	1044	Wolverhampton	
Walsall	528	Walsall		Wolverhampton	
Wednesbury	30	Walsall		Wolverhampton	
West Bromwich	56	Walsall		Wolverhampton	
Wolverhampton	41	Walsall		Wolverhampton	
Wulfrun	217	Walsall		Wolverhampton	
TOTAL	2833	TOTAL		2833	TOTAL

Church at Home participants: October 2023

New Worshipping Communities

This year the 'extra question' asked by the national church asked if they had launched any new 'worshipping communities' under the following definition;

A "new congregation" or "new worshipping community":

- *Has as its purpose the worship of Jesus Christ and helping people grow in their faith. Its practices will include two or more of: prayer, scripture, praise, sacrament, and acts of service.*
- *Aims to reach people who were not previously attending church regularly and to make new Christian disciples.*
- *Meets at least once a month on any day of the week, in your church building or elsewhere (such as in a café, in a school, or online). It is connected with the wider Church through the parish church, deanery, or diocese.*

Churches identified 52 of these, broken down by Archdeaconry as follows;

- Lichfield – 7 (at least 1 from each deanery but Tamworth)
- Salop -19 (from every deanery but Wem and Whitchurch)
- Stoke – 13 (from 6 out of 10, but not Alstonfield, Eccleshall, Leek, or Uttoxeter)
- Walsall – 13 (from every deanery but Wolverhampton)