



## Attendance Survey 2010

# Main Findings

In the Spring of 2010, our parish conducted an attendance survey. For ten weeks we took a register of everyone who attended every service in church. We were greatly assisted by Mr John Roberts from Thurstaston. John helped us to set up the survey and analysed the results.

The survey revealed interesting and important information about our worshipping community. It will help us to focus our work in the coming years.



# John Roberts' definitions

John Roberts, who oversaw our survey, uses a specialized jargon to describe the different groups of people who attend church:

## **Visitor**

A person whose normal place of residence is outside the parish area and who indicated on their survey card "I am a visitor".

## **Guest**

A person who indicated on their survey card "I am only attending for a special service (eg Baptism)"

## **Transient Attendee**

A person who came perhaps even routinely for a specific service or type of service, and indicated on their survey card "I usually worship at another church". Such a person is really part of a worshipping community elsewhere.

## **Member of the Faith Community**

A person who attended any regular worship service during the survey and is recognised as a regular attendee and/or who indicated on their survey card "I worship regularly at this church".

## **Casual Attendee**

Someone who attended only once during the survey.

## **Church Life Participant**

A worshipper who also takes part in other church activities.

## **Modal Member**

A person who engages in the life of the church only by attendance at worship services.

If you are interested in finding out more, please ask to borrow John's complete analysis—or download it from the Current Information page of the parish website [[www.barnston.info](http://www.barnston.info)].

# Key Survey Findings

The average number of people who attended a church service each week during the survey was: **331**

The highest attendance in any one week of the survey was **413**

The number of different individuals who came to church at least once during the survey was: **884**

It's an obvious point, but not everybody comes to church every week. The number of worshippers is much larger (2½ times greater) than the number that we see on any one Sunday.

The worshippers are spread over many regular services. There are five services each Sunday; there is Wednesday Holy Communion; and we also included the monthly Messy Church meeting. We did not include one-off services such as weddings and funerals.

The attendees can be classified in various ways:

Visitors, temporarily in the area	<b>40</b>
Guests, for example at a Baptism service	<b>241</b>
Transient attendees, who usually worship elsewhere	<b>50</b>
People who only come to Parade Services	<b>41</b>
Everyone else: "The Faith Community"	<b>512</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>884</b>

Church attendance does not tell the whole story of church membership. For example, the church has an electoral roll of people who have signed up as members, and it also has many housegroups and work groups. Some people who take part in these activities did not come to church during the survey (because they were unwell, or on holiday, or for some other reason):

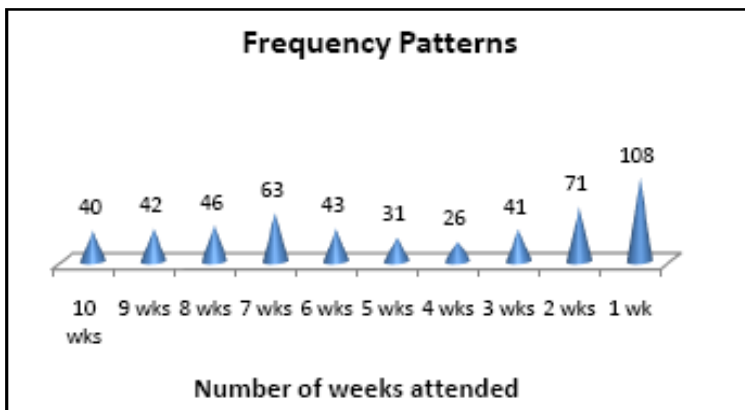
Church members who did not attend worship in the survey:

Electoral roll members	<b>114</b>
Group members, eg housegroups	<b>35</b>
Others with an official church role	<b>2</b>

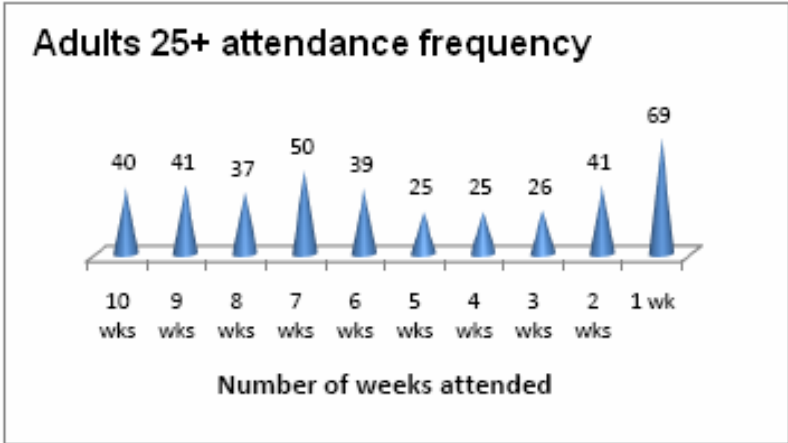
We discovered that 30% of our electoral roll did not attend church during the survey. On the other hand, 29% of the adults who attended church are not members of the electoral roll!

# Frequency of attendance

... varies very widely. Not many people had a “perfect score” of ten weeks out of ten. The chart below indicates what was recorded. Over 200 people came once a fortnight or more often; others came less frequently.



One of the most interesting and important numbers in that chart is the 108 people who attended only once during the survey. Many were children who came to just one of the three Messy Church meetings during the survey. But when we cut out the children and focus on just the older people, we still have 69 one-off attendees:



## Window-shoppers

These 69 *do not* include the out-of-area visitors, baptism guests and parade service parents. Some are regular congregation members



who just happened not to attend very often. But many of the 69 are window-shoppers: people who for whatever reason decided to give the church a try.

It has been said that “you only get one chance to make a first impression!” If we can make a good first impression, then more of our window-shoppers will decide to come back again.

So the statistic of one-off attendees (in John Roberts' jargon, "casual" attendees) is good news because of the window-shoppers who are trying to find a way into church. But it also contains a warning. The "casuals" include long-established church members who are struggling for one reason or another, and whose frequency of attendance has declined. It may be ill health; it may be discouragement.

Either way, the church needs to pay extra-special attention to any people who attend infrequently.

## Age profile

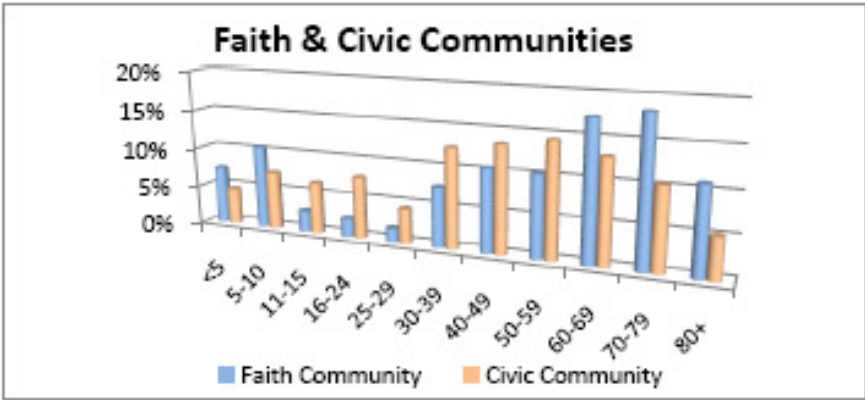
When you look at who is worshipping in any one of the services, you can get a distorted picture of the age of the faith community. Older people tend to come to church more frequently than younger people; and older people are *much* more likely to come to church twice or three times on a Sunday.

Under-60s are a majority of the faith community, but over-60s are a majority of worshippers on an average Sunday.

In the whole faith community,	
the proportion of worshippers <b>under 60</b> is	<b>53.4%</b>
the proportion of worshippers <b>over 60</b> is	<b>46.6%</b>

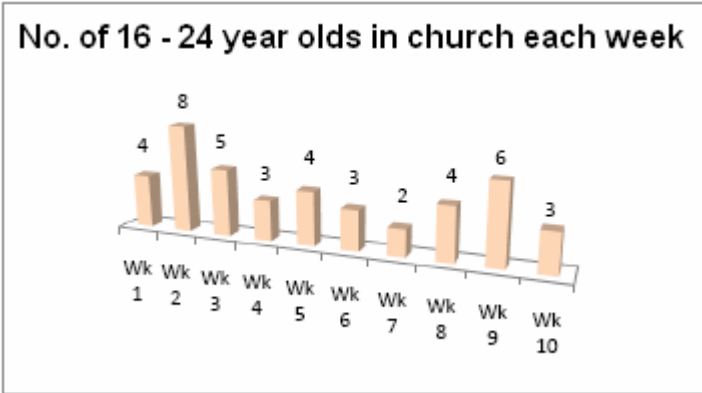
But in the average Sunday attendance during the survey.	
the proportion of worshippers <b>under 60</b> was	<b>42.3%</b>
the proportion of worshippers <b>over 60</b> was	<b>57.7%</b>

Nevertheless, our church membership is "unbalanced" by comparison with the surrounding population. We have proportionately more children from 0-10 (especially because of Messy Church), and more older people aged 60+, than the general population. But we have fewer people in other age groups. We are very poorly represented in teens and twenties.



There is an obvious reason for this: we do not have a college or university locally, and many young people move away when they finish school. However our present provision for young adults is inadequate. We can be grateful that other local churches have strong youth activities and youth congregations, and some of

our young people benefit from these: but we need to work harder at making our church attractive to young adults.



# Some other statistics

John Roberts collated the names of the people who attended against their addresses and the membership lists of other church organizations. From this he was able to make several further deductions about our congregations.

During the survey many adults attended alone (without a spouse/partner or children):	<b>174</b>
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Other adults attended with children, but without a spouse or partner:	<b>33</b>
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People aged 16+ who attended church but live outside the parish boundary comprised 24% of the faith community	<b>95</b>
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61% of faith-community members aged 16+ took part in other church activities as well as worship services: eg a housegroup, worship band, Internet Café, Mothers Union...	<b>248</b>
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## Comparison with previous surveys

This not the first time we have done an attendance survey. Previous surveys were held in 2001 and 2003. By comparing the 2010 results with these earlier surveys, we can see how the parish has changed. John Roberts made a detailed analysis of the changes from 2003 to 2010. The following are some of his observations.

The size of the faith community has increased:

in 2003: **467**            in 2010: **512**

This increased number includes the children of Messy Church. If we exclude the children, the numbers have shrunk slightly:

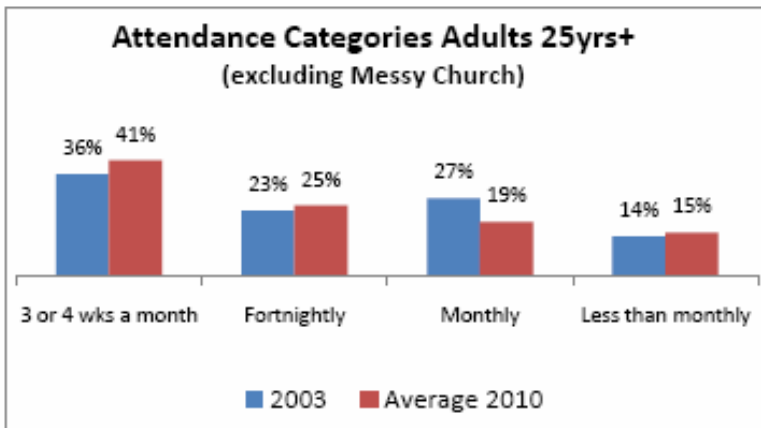
in 2003: **467**            in 2010: **439**

Those are the *numbers*. There has been a considerable change in the *individuals* who make up those numbers. We think that Wirral is a stable area, but the turnover of members of our worshipping community from 2003—2010 was **51%**.

That means that we have lost half the individuals who worshipped with us in 2003 (through moving away, or death, or for some other reason). We have replaced them with a similar number of new people.

## Adults attending more regularly

One very interesting finding is that adults are attending church more regularly now than they were in 2003:



We can see a slight increase in less-than-monthly casuals. But the members who used to attend monthly, are now attending fortnightly or better. This is rather unusual by comparison with many other churches. We must be doing something right!

# Individual congregations

John analysed the survey results for each of our congregations.

## **Traditional Holy Communion Services**

The congregations for Sunday 8.00am and 9.00am communion, and for the 10.30 Wednesday service, are older people: mainly 60+ with a few “youngsters” in their forties and fifties.

However each of these three services showed the same characteristic as the parish as a whole: that the number of individuals who attended during the whole survey was up to 2½ times greater than the number at an average service.

It is also striking that even these very traditional services still attract low-frequency attendees including casuals:

### **Total attendees at traditional communion services**

Barnston 8.00am:

62 individuals, of whom **7** attended less than monthly.

Pensby 9.00am:

82 individuals, of whom **1** attended less than monthly

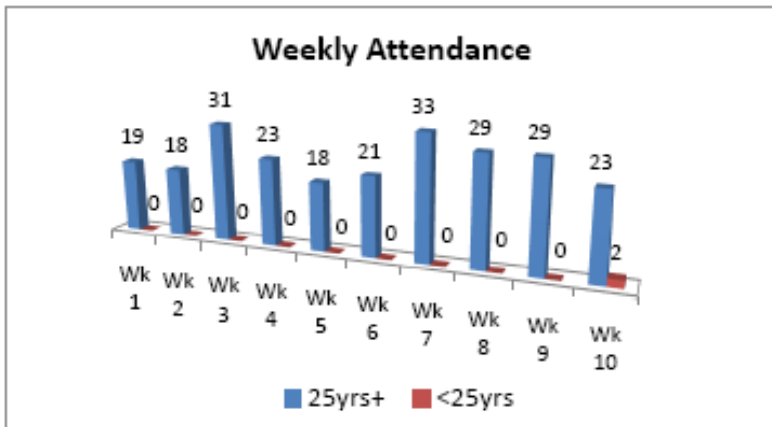
Pensby 10.30am Wednesday

61 individuals, of whom **4** attended less than monthly

That means that during the survey twelve people—at least one per week—attended such services when this is unusual for them.

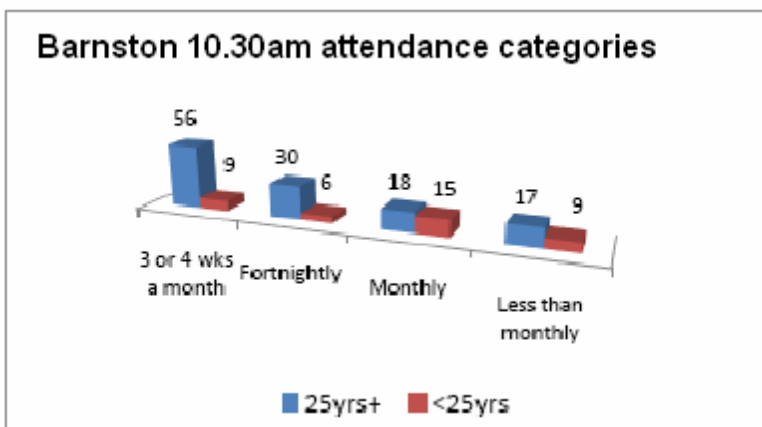
These congregations can play their part in growing the church.

Before the survey, a question was raised: do the 8.00am and 9.00am congregations increase when we have the 1662 service, and shrink again when we have a modern-language service? The survey results don't suggest this. However it is noticeable that Barnston congregations are larger on the first Sunday of the month. True, this is a 1662 week: but more significantly, this is the week that we serve breakfast in the Church Hall after the service!



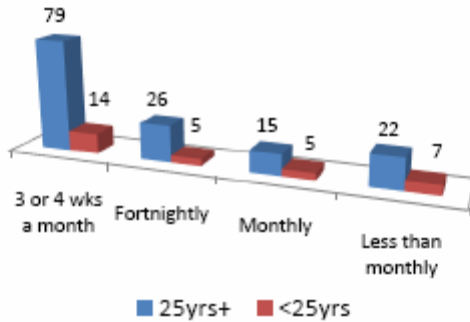
**Barnston 8.00am:** note the spike at Week 3 and Week 7, when breakfast was served after the service. There was no spike at Weeks 1, 2, 5 and 9 although these were also 1662 weeks. Moral: The way to a congregation's heart is through its stomach.

The **Mid-morning Services: Barnston 10.30am** had 160 different attendees, of whom 26 were less-than-monthly: many were casuals. If we could persuade even half of these newcomers to stay, within a few years we would need a bigger church.



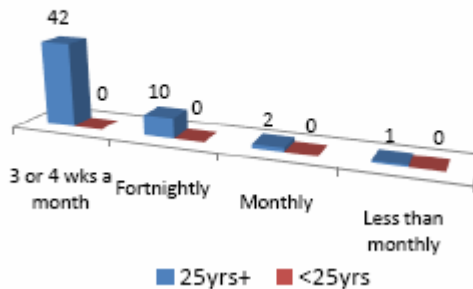
**Pensby 10.45am** was a similar picture. 173 individuals worshipped in this service; 29 of them were less-than-monthly attendees. See next page for chart:

### Pensby 10.45am attendance categories

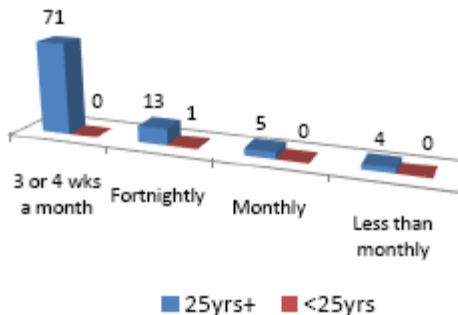


The **6.30pm Evening Service** moves between Barnston and Pensby. John Roberts analysed it in its two locations as if these were separate fortnightly services. These were the results:

### 6.30pm service at Barnston



### 6.30pm service at Pensby



Unmistakeably, Pensby is the more popular venue for this service.