

Coronavirus, Church & You Survey

Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

Report of Results October 2020

What was the survey?

The *Coronavirus, Church & You* survey was initiated in the UK after the Government lockdown in response to the Covid-19 virus outbreak on 23 March 2020. Churches in the UK were closed for worship, and during the lockdown clergy and lay ministers had quickly to find new ways of fulfilling their duties to care for their congregations and the wider community. This involved learning how to do things in the virtual, online world, as well working out what things were essential and what things could be done safely without risk of spreading the virus. As the UK survey was launched we also launched a survey that was tailored slightly to the different context of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf (DCG). We kept questions the same where we could but changed the wording or omitted questions where they would not make sense to worshippers in this particular diocese.

This sudden crisis was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the lockdown severely restricted ministry in areas such as pastoral care, fellowship groups, and serving the community. On the other hand, for those with online access, worship took on new and creative forms. Many clergy and ministry teams rose to the challenge of operating in the virtual environment. The crisis proved to be a tragedy but also an opportunity.

The aim of the UK and DCG surveys was to try to reach a large sample of churchgoers, clergy and lay people, and ask them not just what they did but also what they felt about the experience, and what they thought the future might hold. How well did people cope with the pandemic? Did it strengthen or weaken their faith? How was it for clergy and ministry teams trying to work in this new environment? How have those receiving ministry found this novel experience? Will virtual ministry become part of the post-pandemic landscape, and will this be a good move for churches?

In April we consulted with bishops, clergy and lay people and put together the UK online survey which we entitled *Coronavirus, Church & You*. We used previous experience of surveys in the *Church Times*¹ to launch it through that newspaper, which happened on 8 May. We also asked bishops and clergy to promote it directly, and other denominations also joined in. After the launch, we were asked to create versions specifically aimed at Roman Catholics in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and for people in the DCG. This report is based on responses from DCG survey, which was launched on 6th April and closed on the 26th August. Where possible it compares results with results from the Church of England in the UK, which can be found on the [York St John website](#).

¹ For information about these see: Village, A. (2018) *The Church of England in the first decade of the 21st century*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan and Francis, L. J., Robbins, M. and Astley, J. (2005). *Fragmented faith? Exposing the fault-lines in the Church of England*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press.

Who took the survey?

When the survey closed there were 148 responses, but a number of these were too incomplete to use, and the sample size was lower for some answers. Two-thirds (67%) of the sample were women, this rose to 70% when the 16 ordained clergy were excluded from the calculation. When it comes to age, we might expect an under-representation of older groups, who may be less likely to spend time online. For lay people, 25% were under 50, 36% were 50-69, and 40% were 70 or older. The small sample of clergy had a slightly different profile with equivalent figures of 50%, 38%, and 13%.

The survey asked people to indicate their household status, and 29% said they lived alone. Of 105 in family households, 7% included children under 6, 9% children aged 6-12, 7% teenagers, 49% at least one other adult under 70, and 26% at least one other adult aged 70 or older.

Working patterns are complex and can be difficult to capture because many people combine several roles. The survey asked about work before lockdown and allowed respondents to tick more than one category. For 114 lay people, 35% were in full or part-time work, 17% homemaker/carer, 2% unemployed, 1% student and 47% retired. For clergy, 19% were retired.

Ministry in the Church is also more complex than it used to be, with many more varied roles for lay people especially. Of 130 who responded to the question, 12% were ordained, 19% were lay people in some sort of authorised ministry, and 69% were lay people not in authorised ministry roles. The 24 lay ministers included Readers (9 lay ministers), Licensed lay workers (3), Pastoral assistants (5), and Worship assistants (9).

Experience of the pandemic

How people experienced the pandemic may depend on whether they, or people they knew, caught Covid-19 and whether they had to self-isolate in a more extreme way than most. In this sample, 2% definitely had the virus, though a further 7% were not sure if they had caught it or not because the symptoms can be mild or non-existent. These proportions are similar to those reported from the larger sample of people from the Church of England who completed the survey. A much higher percentage of the present sample (50%) reported that they self-isolated, over and above the normal social distancing and restricted movements imposed on the general population. Just under a third (30%) knew someone who had suffered from the virus. In most cases these people were either general acquaintances (58%) and/or people from church (14%), but for some these were close friends (22%), immediate (6%) or wider (8%) family. The sample was small and the circumstances no doubt very different, but the levels of reported infections were similar to the UK sample, though self-isolation may have been more frequent.

Effects of the pandemic on well-being

The survey assessed the effects of the lockdown down using a simple scale (negative change (-), no change (0), or positive change (+)) applied to a wide range of aspects of well-being. Responses to each item are shown in Table 1, with results from the Church of England sample for comparison. As with that sample, the DCG results varied considerably between items, but general picture was for slightly more positive outcomes- lower stress, more positive mood and feeling closer to others, especially family.

Table 1 Well-being items assessing changes during the lockdown

Stress	% Responding:			
	-	0	+	
More stressed	26 (34)	37 (43)	37 (23)	Less stressed
More exhausted	21 (35)	43 (43)	36 (22)	Less exhausted
More fatigued	31 (44)	39 (39)	30 (18)	Less fatigued
More anxious	27 (38)	41 (44)	32 (19)	Calmer
Negative Affect				
Less excited	28 (34)	61 (57)	11 (9)	More excited
Unhappier	20 (24)	52 (59)	28 (16)	Happier
More bored	29 (25)	50 (58)	22 (17)	Less bored
More frustrated	34 (43)	45 (46)	21 (11)	Less frustrated
Positive affect				
Less thankful	4 (4)	28 (39)	68 (57)	More thankful
Less hopeful	16 (18)	44 (54)	40 (28)	More hopeful
Less neighbourly	12 (5)	52 (33)	36 (61)	More neighbourly
Less trusting	12 (11)	71 (68)	18 (21)	More trusting
Relating to others				
Further from others	31 (40)	32 (35)	37 (25)	Closer to others
Further from church	27 (40)	41 (38)	32 (22)	Closer to church
Further from family	15 (36)	32 (34)	53 (30)	Closer to family
Relating to God				
Less prayerful	8 (13)	41 (39)	51 (48)	More prayerful
Further from God	6 (9)	41 (50)	53 (41)	Closer to God

Note: Based on a sample of 115 from DCG. Figures in parentheses are the equivalent from 4701 reported from the Church of England.

It was not possible to repeat the analysis done for the UK sample (see Table 2 in the report, but omitted here), but there was some evidence to suggest similar findings in some case. In particular, younger people may have had lower well-being than older age groups, and this has been a common pattern across all the CC&Y surveys.

[Table 2 Summary of differences in response to lockdown between various groups (OMITTED)]

Experiences of receiving and giving ministry

The experience of people giving ministry is different from the experience of people receiving it. We decided to separate these two groups in the survey and ask them questions that were most relevant to them. Rather than make the split between clergy and others, we decided to ask the question 'Have you been acting in a ministry capacity (ordained or lay) during the lockdown?' and use that instead. We did not want to be too specific about what a 'ministry capacity' might be because we might otherwise have missed important work that would not normally come under the category of 'Christian ministry'. It also allowed lay ministers, who may have been busy during the lockdown, to share their experiences. The downside was that some people who offered ministry in a limited way (such as reading the Bible or doing intercessions for an online service) may have gone down the 'giving ministry route' and then struggled to relate to questions about wider service provision. Some people may have both offered and received ministry, but we did not want them to have to complete both sections in what was already a rather long questionnaire. In general, the procedure seemed to work satisfactorily, though we recognise it was not perfect.

As you might expect, the profiles of those who gave and received ministry were rather different, but the pattern was similar to the large UK sample (Table 3). The proportion of lay people among those who offered ministry in the lockdown was higher than in the UK (68% versus 41%) suggesting a greater dependency on lay ministries, which may have been true before the lockdown.

Table 3 Profiles of those receiving and giving ministry during lockdown compared with UK sample

		Received ministry		Gave ministry	
		DCG	UK	DCG	UK
	Number:	87	2462	28	1910
			%		%
Sex	Male	30	37	39	45
	Female	70	63	61	55
Age	< 50	22	20	43	30
	50-69	32	45	50	55
	70+	46	35	7	15
Ordained	No	97	93	68	41
	Yes	3	7	32	59

Receiving ministry

Accessing online worship

Of the 88 people who received rather than gave ministry in the lockdown, 84% accessed services online, slightly lower than the 91% from the UK sample. This high figure undoubtedly reflects the fact that this was an online survey: accessing the experiences of those who were free from the entanglements of the virtual world will require different sorts of survey work.

Those who did access online worship used a variety of sources (Table 4). Though a much smaller sample, the figures are surprisingly close to those from the UK.

Table 4 Sources of online worship during the lockdown

	DCG (n = 74)	UK (n = 2276)
	%	%
Own church	82	82
Another church in your denomination	34	46
Church from another denomination	19	19
Diocesan service	14	22
Your Church nationally	4	18
A broadcaster	23	30
Individuals	4	5
Other	8	6

Participation in online worship

Participation is obviously an issue for online worship. We asked people whether they had been invited to do various things and if they had participated when they were. The most obvious activities were praying, reciting liturgy, or singing (Table 5).

Across both surveys, invitation rates seemed relatively low for things such as prayer or reciting the liturgy, though most who were invited to do so did join in. It might be a something that churches could improve as they learn more about what it is like to be on the receiving end of services launched into the internet.

Table 5 Participation of 74 people from the DCG who accessed online services compare to 2276 people from the Church of England in the UK

Activity:	Not invited		Invited Not participated		Invited Participated	
	DCG %	UK %	DCG %	UK %	DCG %	UK %
Recite liturgy	57	48	18	15	26	37
Sing	81	58	8	15	11	27
Pray	66	46	14	14	20	40
Light a candle	96	75	1	11	3	14
Type in prayer requests	88	82	10	12	3	6
Take Holy Communion	92	82	4	9	4	9
Other	97	93	1	2	1	5

Invitation and participation rates were generally lower for the those from the DCG sample.

A small proportion (8%) were invited to participate in Holy Communion, presumably taking bread and wine at home as the priest did online. This was a controversial subject: we asked people specifically about their views on this matter using four statements with which they could disagree or agree. There were some striking differences in the UK between traditions in who agreed with what (Table 6)

Table 6 Percentage agreement with various practices of Holy Communion during the lockdown

	% Agreeing			
	DCG	AC	BC	EV
It is right for clergy to celebrate communion alone in their own homes without broadcasting the service to others	29	49	34	25
It is right for clergy to celebrate communion at home if they are broadcasting the service to others	56	72	62	51
It is right for clergy to use virtual technology to concelebrate communion together in their various homes	57	41	50	49
It is right for people at home to receive communion from their own bread and wine as part of an online communion service	57	23	43	56

Note. Based on samples lay people and clergy in the DCG ($n=108$) and Church of England in the UK ($n=4701$) surveys. Church of England in the UK: AC = Anglo-catholic; BC = Broad church; EV = Evangelical.

In the UK sample there were clear differences between traditions, with those from the Broad Church or Evangelical traditions being more relaxed about lay people receiving communion at home using own bread and wine. A slight majority (57%) of the DCG sample seemed to share such views.

Quality of worship and future practice

People generally appreciated the quality of the services: 67% felt they made full use of the medium, 26% felt they made some use, and only 7% felt they made little use. Similarly, 61% felt services were professionally presented, and only 4% that they were amateurish. Despite this, few (13%) thought that online was better than normal, 59% felt there was not much difference, while 19% felt worship was worse. These figures suggested the DCG were generally more positive about the quality of worship on offer than were the UK sample.

What might happen after lockdown when churches re-open (fully)? Two thirds (66%) said they would revert back to services in church, but 28% said they would use online worship sometimes if it was available. There seemed little danger of a mass exodus to the virtual world, with only 2% thinking they would worship mainly or entirely online.

It seems that virtual worship during the lockdown has been generally well received. While it may remain something that some people might dip into in the future, few would stop attending church altogether. As lessons are learnt about how to manage specific activities it may be that we can become better at encouraging participation and finding new ways of doing that.

Contact with ministers and receiving support

Of 88 who answered the question, 73% said they had had contact with clergy or lay ministers (compared with 82% on the UK survey). For these people this contact included 'just checking' (53% of the 88 received this sort of contact), pastoral support (28%), practical help (19%), prayer (19%), and church administration (34%). The means of contact varied slightly depending on the reason: email seemed to predominate, especially for administration as you might expect. Phone calls were also used to check that people were doing OK and to offer pastoral support, though not as often as email. Presumably, email is more efficient if it can be used to send out general messages of support, though phone calls may be more effective for particular cases.

How did the support received from the church during the lockdown compare with that received from other sources? It was difficult to separate those who received no support, because that source was not relevant to them, from those who looked for support but did not get it. Instead we have concentrated on looking at the relative use of different sources and what proportion of those that used the support felt they were supported well (Table 7).

Table 7 Sources of support during lockdown for 88 receiving ministry during the lockdown

Source	DCG			UK	
	Used this source of support		Were well supported ²	Used	Well
	Number	%	%	%	%
Friends	80	91	61	87	56
Family elsewhere	74	84	62	79	58
Members of your church	76	86	46	76	49
Local clergy	72	82	42	67	51
Neighbours	70	80	27	72	48
Household	69	78	80	74	86
Medical services	60	68	37	42	44
Diocese	60	68	15	37	28
Volunteers	56	64	4	17	35
Social services	48	55	4	5	22

Note. Ordered by percentage of the sample that drew on this source of support.

Friends emerged as the most drawn on source of support- presumably because those who lived alone had no immediate household support, and many people may network more closely with their friends than with distant family members. Local clergy were a source of support for over 80% of the sample and, of these, 42% felt they were supported well. This compares well with most other sources except family and friends. Fellow congregants were an even more important source of support (86%) and a similar percentage of those who received support felt well supported (46%). Fewer people needed medical support, and 37% those that did felt well supported. The DCG results were again pretty much in line with the large UK sample.

² Using the base of the number who used this source of support.

This evidence suggests that the people in the survey who received ministry from the church did so partly through support from clergy and partly from other members of their congregation. In terms of the level (and perhaps quality) of this support, it was about the level of good neighbours, which is what you might expect and hope for.

Giving ministry

Providing online worship

The DCG survey collected data from only 28 people who offered ministry in the lockdown, which is too small a number to draw any meaningful conclusions. In the main survey we used stipendiary parochial clergy responses to gauge the level of service and support offers, but there were very few of these in this survey.

Given the similarity of the results to the UK sample in other respects where there are enough to make some sort of comparison, it seems reasonable to guess that responses from clergy would be similar in the two samples. For interest, the corresponding section of the main report is reproduced here.

FOR CoE in the UK

The menu and frequency varied between traditions as you might expect, with Anglo-catholics tending to offer more communion services and daily worship (Table 8). There was an interesting difference between Anglo-catholics and others with Sunday communion, where churches from that tradition were much more likely to offer a service where the celebrant only received the elements. Services where people were invited to join in at home with their own bread and wine were much less frequent (not least because this had been expressly forbidden by the Church hierarchy), but Evangelicals seemed the most likely to offer this on some, but not all, Sundays.

Table 8 Reported frequencies of various sorts of Sunday and weekly services

	Anglo-catholic			Broad church			Evangelical		
Number:	612			909			392		
Sundays:	No	Some	Every	No	Some	Every	No	Some	Every
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Service of Word	45	11	44	34	14	53	22	10	68
HC (Celebrant only)	45	13	42	63	16	21	68	17	15
HC (People at home)	85	6	9	83	10	7	77	17	7
Weekdays:	No	Some	Every	No	Some	Every	No	Some	Every
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Morning Prayer	55	23	22	55	27	18	50	25	25
Evening Prayer	66	20	14	70	20	10	69	19	11
Weekday HC	73	19	9	85	14	1	88	11	1

During Holy Week, the Anglo-catholic churches tended to offer more services overall, though for Good Friday and Easter Day there was little difference between traditions (Table 9). Overall, 72% reported Good Friday services were produced, and 81% reported that there was an online service on Easter Day. These figures were from those who offered ministry anyway, but they do suggest that by Easter, the third Sunday of the lockdown, fourth fifths of churches were able to provide some online access to worship.

Table 9 Services offered in Holy Week and Easter by tradition

	AC	BC	EV	ALL
Number:	612	909	392	1913
	%	%	%	%
Monday of Holy Week	53	39	34	42
Tuesday of Holy Week	53	39	34	42
Wednesday of Holy Week	55	42	36	45
Maundy Thursday	71	62	63	65
Good Friday	75	68	75	72
Holy Saturday	47	27	25	33
Easter Day	81	79	84	81

Note. Based on the number of ministers from that tradition who reported that services were offered on that day. AC= Anglo-catholic; BC = Broad church; EV = Evangelical.

Giving care and support

Parish ministry is much more than offering worship, and we wanted to find out how far those who offered ministry were involved in other kinds of work. The pandemic created the need for more practical help (such as delivering food or medicines to those who were sheltering), but also created difficulties in offering pastoral care. The impossibility of visiting patients with the virus in ICU wards, or the severe limitations on funerals, were widely publicised. We asked about various forms of ministry and, in each case, participants were asked to say what their church had been doing, or tried to do during the lockdown. A consistent difference was between ordained and non-ordained people offering ministry: not surprisingly, the latter may not have known so fully what was going on, so they were more likely report that a ministry had not been tried.

To get a clearer picture it was better to focus on the people who were most likely to know what churches were doing: parish clergy. There were 705 stipendiary parochial clergy who answered this part of the survey, and their churches seem to have been busy with many different tasks (Table 10).

Table 10 Care and support offered by churches during the lockdown as reported by stipendiary parochial clergy

	Not tried	Tried not possible	Some days	Most days
Category of support:	%	%	%	%
Praying FOR people	6	0	10	84
Supporting core members	6	0	31	63
Supporting the elderly or lonely	6	0	31	62
Supporting occasional attenders	7	5	64	25
Praying WITH people	8	9	48	35
Supporting the bereaved	7	1	62	30
Supporting the sick	9	6	60	26
Delivering food	11	17	52	19
Supporting other clergy	10	13	60	17
Delivering medicine	16	23	47	14

Note. Sorted by frequency of being done on most days

Most churches had tried to do most of the things listed in Table 10, and it was unusual for them not to be able to if they had tried. Delivering food and medicine were practical tasks that were probably done by parishioners. Support for the vulnerable seemed to have been the main tasks for churches on some or most days.

A second question asked more specifically about how well individuals had felt they could carry out various ministries. They were asked to tick only those things that they had tried to do, and to indicate if they have found it impossible, felt it had been done mostly poorly, or felt it had been done mostly well. Table 11 again shows the results for stipendiary parochial clergy and is sorted according to tasks that rated most often as either impossible or done most poorly. Things near the top of the list were those that involved networking in the wider community, such as working ecumenically or being a spokesperson, or which were requested but not possible, such as weddings. Funerals were low on this list, so despite the restrictions imposed by crematoria on numbers, clergy generally seemed to have managed well.

Table 11 Difficulty of doing tasks during lockdown

Task	Number trying to do this	% Found it difficult	% Done mostly well
Working with other denominations	529	69	31
Baptisms	508	67	33
Being a spokesperson	451	63	38
Weddings	543	61	40
Supporting fellowship groups	529	48	52
Eucharistic ministry	529	48	52
Outreach and mission	599	45	55
Working with the local community	613	36	63
Daily worship	550	35	65
Supporting the sick or dying	599	34	66
Your own spiritual life	649	29	70
Bereaved	613	29	71
Doing theological reflection	635	28	73
Supporting work colleagues	613	23	77
Funerals	620	16	84
Holy Week /Easter	635	12	89
Prayer / spiritual support	649	11	89
Supporting your congregation	656	11	89
Supporting your household	571	9	91

Note. ‘Found difficult’ is the proportion that tried this and either found it was not possible or felt it was done mostly poorly. Based on reports from stipendiary parochial clergy.

Ministers receiving support

A final question for ministers was about the support they received during lockdown. They were asked to indicate if they had no support, some support, or were well supported by a range of people listed in Table 12. They were asked to tick only rows that applied to them, so these were people or places that might have been expected to offer some sort of support for clergy during the lockdown. Again, we focus here on parish clergy, and the table is ordered by those sources that seemed to offer the most support.

Where clergy had others in the household, this was by far the best form of support. Their ministry team (if they had one) and their congregation were the next best sources of support, and funeral directors ranked alongside these in terms of the quality of support when they were needed. Support from the diocese and bishop was next, with over a third of clergy feeling well supported. The figure was lower for the national Church, and here a quarter felt no support from this source. There was some support from the public and IT experts (perhaps needed more than usual for coping with online service production), but sadly around 20% felt they had no support from either of these sources.

Table 12 Sources of support for stipendiary parochial clergy during the lockdown

Source	Number expecting support	% No support	% Some support	% Well supported
Household	586	3	15	82
Ministry team	614	7	34	59
Congregation	660	6	44	50
Funeral directors	604	16	36	48
Bishop etc.	652	13	48	39
Diocese etc.	662	9	55	36
Public	618	28	44	28
IT experts	604	30	42	28
church nationally	648	25	51	24
Hospitals / medical	442	45	34	21

Overall, the picture that emerges from those who gave ministry is that churches were offering a wide range of support during the lockdown, and that most had found ways of maintaining ministry despite the restrictions. The most difficult tasks were either related to specific restrictions (for example on weddings or baptism) or perhaps things that tend not to be done very often anyway (such as being a spokesperson, working ecumenically, outreach and mission). Familiar parts of routine ministry such as supporting family or congregation, offering worship, and prayer support seemed to happen on most days in many places, and were the things that clergy felt they did best. About half the parish clergy felt well supported by their ministry teams and congregations, but less well supported by more distant parts of the church or by the public.

Attitudes to the lockdown

As the lockdown came into force it was clear that a number of related but slightly different issues would confront churches during and after the pandemic. The sudden switch from long-established patterns of ministry to a new world of 'virtual church' was accompanied by the closure of churches for worship. Ministers for whom daily work involved face-to-face contact, pastoral work in homes, schools, prisons or hospitals, worship in buildings, and social gatherings around shared food and drink found themselves having to find new ways to express their vocations. Lay people were shut out of their churches and found that going to church on Sunday meant a trip between rooms rather than a morning walk or car journey. People who met only at church lost contact, and questions were raised about the role of buildings in helping Christians to express their faith.

The survey tried to tap into these questions by measuring attitudes to a range of different issues that were surfacing in April. Chief among these were the decisions to close churches, the role of buildings in the life of faith, and the possibility of virtual church becoming more important in the future. A well-known method of assessing attitudes used by scientist is to produce statements that respondents can agree or disagree with. By offering statements that take a positive or negative stance on slightly different aspects of an issue it is possible to build up a more accurate picture than would be obtained by asking a single question. Those who received and gave ministry were mostly given the same items, though a few were tailored to reflect their differing contexts.

Analysis of response patterns suggested there were three core attitudes being measured:

Attitude toward the lockdown of church buildings

Three items were specifically about the decision to close churches as the lockdown began. Responses suggested mixed views, but a majority felt closing churches was the right decision (Table 13). The questions were originally developed for the Church of England, where clergy were excluded early on from their churches. Fewer people in the DCG agreed that clergy should always be allowed into their churches compared with the UK sample (54% versus 81%) but figures for the other two items were similar

Table 13 Attitude toward the lockdown of churches

	DCG	UK
	% Agree	% Agree
Churches should stay open, whatever the crisis	21	26
Clergy should always be allowed into their churches	54	81
Closing churches to everybody was the right thing to do	66	61

Note. Based on 105 people who responded to all the items in the DCG survey, compared with 1885 from the UK sample.

There were two items that were only in the DCG survey that related to relationships with other faiths:

The pandemic has brought faiths together (41% agreed, 13% disagreed, and 46% were not certain)

Virtual church will reduce barriers between faith (14% agreed, 31% disagreed, and 55% were not certain)

It may be that common cause in the crisis may have reduced the barriers between people of different faiths, but few thought that the move to virtual church would *per se* make any difference in the long run.

Attitude toward church buildings generally

The specific act of closing church buildings during the pandemic raises the issue of how central they are for the Christian faith. Given the difficulties of maintaining church buildings, it would not be surprising if closing these places permanently would come as a welcome relief to some. Yet for others these as sacred spaces that convey profoundly the presence of God. We tried to capture some of this diversity of views within the survey (Table 14).

Table 14 Attitude toward church buildings

	DCG	UK
	% Agree	% Agree
Church buildings are central to our witness in the community	70	80
Many people will lose faith without church buildings in which to gather for worship	25	34
The local church building is crucial for my identity as a Christian [Minister]	27	48
I need the church building to fully express my faith [vocation]	29	49
The lockdown has shown that church buildings are an unnecessary burden	7	3
Forced closure of churches has focused us on proper priorities	38	32

Note. Based on 105 people who responded to all the items in the DCG survey, compared with 1885 from the UK sample. Words in square brackets were those used for people who gave, rather than received, ministry.

Large majorities rejected the idea that buildings are an unnecessary burden and agreed that they are an important witness. Opinion was a little more divided on how central the building is for faith expression or Christian identity, and whether the lockdown had actually helped the church to focus on more important matters. The idea that people might lose faith without churches to go to was not well supported, but a quarter of this sample thought that might be so. Looking at the UK figures, it seems that the DCG sample felt slightly less strongly about the importance of buildings for the life of faith. In this respect they were more similar to the Broad Church or Evangelical traditions in the UK than the Anglo-catholics, who felt keenly the loss of sacred worship spaces.

Attitude toward virtual church

The flurry of creative work on finding ways of harnessing the internet in the service of the mission and ministry of the Church brought to the forefront a growing phenomenon. The issue of 'virtual church' has been discussed for some time, and before the pandemic there were already churches that existed only as networks of people who worshipped and socialised entirely online. As many others were introduced to this way of being church, it was interesting to see what they made of it. Would they simply return to business as usual when all this is over, or might this be exactly what the Church needs to propel it firmly into the 21st century? Table 15 shows responses to eight items related to this issue.

Table 15. Attitude toward virtual church

	DCG	UK
	% Agree	% Agree
The lockdown has helped the Church to move into the digital age	68	71
Online worship is a great liturgical tool	61	66
It has been good to see clergy broadcast services from their homes	70	36
Online worship is the way ahead for the next generation	22	14
Social media is a great pastoral tool	44	58
Social media is a great evangelistic tool	39	53
The lockdown is a great chance to re-think the Church's future	51	54
Virtual Church will be more effective	16	10

Note. Based on 105 people who responded to all the items in the DCG survey, compared with 1885 from the UK sample.

While over two-thirds of the sample recognised that the lockdown had helped move the Church into the digital age, less than a fifth thought online worship was the way ahead for the next generation. This was seen by many as an opportunity to think about the future, but fewer imagined it would necessarily be a better way of being church. Only 16% thought virtual church would be more effective. In some cases the figures were similar to the UK samples, but there were a few marked disparities. There was much more enthusiasm for seeing clergy celebrate communion in their homes, but less enthusiasm about social media as a pastoral or evangelistic tool.

Conclusions

The DCG survey was an offshoot of the main *Coronavirus, Church & You* survey that was run in the Church of England during the pandemic lockdown. Although the sample was much smaller, in many cases the results seemed to mirror those for Anglicans in the UK. There were some disparities, which may reflect the particular contexts, ethos and traditions of this unusual diocese.

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