

Average Norwegian goes to church once a year, statistics show

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Oslo, Norway, March 17 (ENInews)--The average Church of Norway member went to church once a year in 2010, Statistics Norway reported on 15 March in the annual statistical report it sends to the church. Although church attendance has remained the same since 2000, other indicators show dwindling participation in the Lutheran state church in the past decade.

"A main reason why church attendance remains rather stable is the large number of people attending child baptisms. While these numbers are growing, the number of regular church-goers is dwindling," Bishop Laila Riksaasen Dahl of the diocese of Tunsberg, southwest of Oslo, told the daily newspaper Vaart Land. She said coming to church for baptism cannot be an entirely positive experience when few regular church-goers come.

"We should not end up as merely a ceremonial church. As Church of Norway members we have a responsibility for the congregation's life. It is evident that congregational core groups are dwindling," Riksaasen Dahl said. She said this is part of a social trend. "We want to enjoy life. What suits us and our needs gets priority. Faithful congregational life does not fit into this trend," she said.

Of Norway's five million inhabitants, 78 per cent were members of the Church of Norway in 2010, as opposed to 86.3 per cent in 2000. Out of total newborns, 66.3 percent were baptised in the Church of Norway last year, down from 81.4 per cent in 2000. The percentage of 15-year-olds being confirmed edged lower to 64.9 from 68.3. The percentage of funerals performed in church continued to be very high at 91.1, but that was down slightly from 92.5 per cent.

The total number of people attending Church of Norway services in 2010 was 6.2 million. Of these 1.1 million participated in Holy Communion, Statistics Norway reported.