

Cathedral attendance up, says Church of England

by [Trevor Grundy](#) in the [May 31, 2011](#) issue

Five days after one of Britain's great churches, London's Westminster Abbey, was seen on television by millions as the site of a royal wedding, the Church of England released statistics showing that weekly attendance at its 43 cathedrals rose by 7 percent in 2010.

"Attendance

at services outside Sundays has grown more significantly by 10 percent over the past year. Steady growth since the beginning of the millennium is encouraging cathedrals to explore the unique position they hold in the life of the nation and is restoring confidence in mission," commented Lynda Barley, head of research and statistics at the Archbishops' Council, in a news release.

About 15,800 adults and

3,100 children and young people attend Sunday services at cathedrals, while over the whole week the figures rise (by 73 percent) to 27,400 and 7,600 respectively. Westminster Abbey—which is not a cathedral, but a "royal peculiar" under the direct supervision of the monarch—adds, on average, 1,800 people each week to those numbers.

On April 29,

Queen Elizabeth II's grandson, Prince William, married Kate Middleton at the abbey. Asked if he thought cathedrals might become even more popular because of the royal nuptials, Simon Burton-Jones, archdeacon of Rochester, said: "I think we're going to have to wait a year or so to see just how the wedding impacted on people. Last week, at Westminster Abbey, the Church of England was on display, and I think we put on a pretty good show."

Cathedrals continue to have a "treasured place in the heart of the nation" and are actively used at key moments in individual lives and on public occasions, said Barley in an interview.

Lisa

Emanuel, a spokeswoman for Canterbury Cathedral, said that it's not unusual to welcome more than 20 nationalities at services.

"We

love sharing this holy and very special place and are delighted with the recent figures released by the Archbishops' Council. Apart from its own daily services, Canterbury Cathedral hosts some 300 specially arranged services on behalf of the diocese and other organizations," she said.

Canterbury Cathedral, located in Kent, southeast England, is considered the "mother church" of the estimated 80-million-member worldwide Anglican Communion, and it welcomes more than 1 million visitors every year.

—ENInews