



BENEFACT  
TRUST

# Hope beyond research

Church survey results



# Survey response summary

**During June 2020, an electronic survey from Benefact Trust was e-mailed via the Qualtrics platform to churches, Christian charities, dioceses and cathedrals who had benefited from an Benefact's grant since 2016.**

**A total of 840 survey responses were received, although not all respondents answered every question.**

The aim of the survey was to give a deeper insight into what beneficiaries of the Trust's open and recurrent grants programmes think the needs of communities coping with the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus crisis will be over the short and long term, and the benefits and barriers they anticipate in meeting those needs. Respondents were asked to select a top five from long lists, in some cases ranking these in order of importance. We also asked about how their methods of communication have changed during lockdown, and how those experiences might change the way they work and connect with their stakeholders in future.

The findings have been analysed and have informed the development of a new grants programme – Hope Beyond. This programme aims to support churches and Christian charities to feel more confident and better equipped to embrace new ways of working and offer support and activities to better meet the changing needs of their communities as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic becomes clearer. A big thank you to all of those beneficiaries who took the time to complete the survey, providing us with their experience and insights and helping us to develop our own approach.

As churches made up 76% of the total respondents to the survey, this report focuses on the key CHURCH RESULTS only\*.

*\*The full survey results can be made available on request*



- **638 churches** completed the survey
- **89% of churches** were **based in England** (the South East, South West and East of England had the highest number of respondents), 5% in Wales, 3% in Scotland, 2% in Northern Ireland and 1% Republic of Ireland
- **57% of churches** said they served a **mainly rural population**, and 50% a mainly urban population (some churches served an equal rural and urban mix)
- In terms of denominational spread, **66% of churches** said they were **Church of England**; 8% Methodist; 6% Baptist. Other respondents represented a range of denominations, were ecumenical or non-denominational
- In terms of level of need, **41% of church respondents** said the **level of deprivation** that exists in their community was low, 39% assessed the level as medium and 20% low

*\*Note that church respondents did not necessarily answer every question*



“One of the biggest needs is to provide an appropriate means of sharing spiritual support to those that do not have access to the internet or any means of technology in the new normal.”

“We need to think about being able to stream services and also help some of our older congregation with the tech.”

“Support for the BAME and asylum seeker/refugee community will be needed.”

“We need to rebuild physical as well as online communities.”

# Anticipating community needs

**Q: Looking three months ahead, what do you think the biggest needs in the community served by your church are likely to be as a direct result of the Coronavirus pandemic (please select a top five)?**

<b>78%</b>	Loneliness and isolation
<b>53%</b>	Adult mental health and wellbeing
<b>40%</b>	Physical health needs for those who are still at risk/vulnerable/older
<b>38%</b>	Spiritual input
<b>37%</b>	Worship
<b>32%</b>	Continued demand for online worship
<b>30%</b>	Re-building community cohesion
<b>29%</b>	Food poverty
<b>26%</b>	Financial advice/debt support
<b>25%</b>	Bereavement support

*\*625 churches answered this question*

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**Q: Looking a year ahead, what do you think the biggest needs in the community served by your church are likely to be as a direct result of the Coronavirus pandemic (please select a top five)?**

<b>58%</b>	Loneliness and isolation
<b>49%</b>	Adult mental health and wellbeing
<b>46%</b>	Spiritual input
<b>39%</b>	Worship
<b>37%</b>	Re-building community cohesion
<b>33.07%</b>	Financial advice/debt support
<b>32.74%</b>	Physical health needs for those who are still at risk/vulnerable/older
<b>26%</b>	Food poverty
<b>23.6%</b>	Young people's mental health and wellbeing
<b>23.4%</b>	Continued demand for online worship

*\*623 churches answered this question*

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“When we have appointed our own vicar, I am sure we will need to be supporting our locality to accept/develop technology skills if they can and also raise awareness with the communications companies of the lack of internet/data availability in our area.”

“It’s too soon to tell. We have no resources.”

“We’re planning to build on the better co-ordination with volunteer groups we’ve established during the pandemic.”

“We have no plans as yet as we cannot meet to discuss what is really needed. We are an ageing population and very few of our congregation are online to have that discussion.”

# Planning to respond to community need

**Q: What kind of support and activities does your church or organisation have plans to offer in direct response to the changing needs caused by the Coronavirus pandemic (select all that apply)?**

<b>70%</b>	More online worship
<b>60%</b>	Initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation among older people
<b>59%</b>	Prayer groups/bible groups
<b>44%</b>	Foodbank or other food provision
<b>35%</b>	Additional online activities
<b>25%</b>	Additional online support groups
<b>22%</b>	Mental health and wellbeing groups for adults
<b>21%</b>	Digital/online training for older members of congregation/community
<b>20.5%</b>	Initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation among young people
<b>20.3%</b>	Technology equipment/resources to help people access online services/support

*\*625 churches answered this question*

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**Q: If the necessary funding and resources were available, what kind of support and activities would your church like to offer as a direct response to the changing needs caused by the Coronavirus pandemic (please select a top five)?**

<b>59%</b>	Initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation among older people
<b>41%</b>	More online worship
<b>29%</b>	Technology equipment/resources to help people access online services/support
<b>29%</b>	Mental health and wellbeing groups for adults
<b>27%</b>	Digital/online training for older members of congregation/community
<b>27%</b>	Prayer groups/bible groups
<b>23%</b>	Foodbank or other food provision
<b>22%</b>	Project to grow online communities
<b>18%</b>	Initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation among young people
<b>17.70%</b>	Additional online support groups

*\*610 churches answered this question*

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**“Support and help for the community will be the need going forward. Yes, spiritual guidance is required but practical help is currently more important.”**

**“The main benefit would be that we were increasing the support we give to our community. Everything else is ancillary.”**

**“We have plans to develop open-access space facilitating social distancing, to develop the refectory and space at the back of the nave for various activities. These plans have had to be put on hold because of the pandemic, but we are optimistic that changes will allow us to proceed even further, as reordering was designed to enhance access.”**

# Benefits and barriers

**Q: What do you think would be the main benefits to your church of running the support and activities you selected (please select up to five)?**

- 69%** Church or charity would be more relevant to the community
- 63%** Potential for church growth
- 60%** Church would feel they are fulfilling God's purpose
- 53%** Open the eyes of the community to the benefits of faith/spirituality
- 52%** Break down barriers between the church and the community
- 45%** Increased energy and new ideas within the church
- 42%** Build a more resilient church for the future
- 37%** Provide activities for local people not being provided elsewhere
- 21%** Help to future-proof your church
- 15%** A good story to tell locally about the impact of your church

*\*612 churches answered this question*

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**Q: What do you think would be the main benefits to your community of your church running the support and activities you selected (please select up to five from nine options)?**

- 64%** Your community will grow in faith
- 62%** Increase community cohesion
- 61%** Community will feel more connected
- 58%** Improvement in community mental health and wellbeing
- 49%** Build a community that is more resilient to future challenges
- 45%** Opportunity to access support and activities not being provided elsewhere
- 37%** Provide vital support and services for families and young people in need
- 32%** Improve self-worth/confidence of community
- 29%** Local people less likely to reach crisis point

*\*603 churches answered this question*



“To broadcast services from church, special equipment is needed. The aim would be to enable those who find it very difficult to travel to church to participate ‘remotely’.”

“We’re worried about providing meeting space when not sure we can comply with requirements for sanitising all the time.”

“I feel that we are living through a real mess, with so many needs it is painful to watch.”

# Benefits and barriers

More than a quarter of churches said that if the funding and resources were available, they would like to offer digital/online training for older people; and almost a third would like to offer technology equipment and resources to help people access online services.

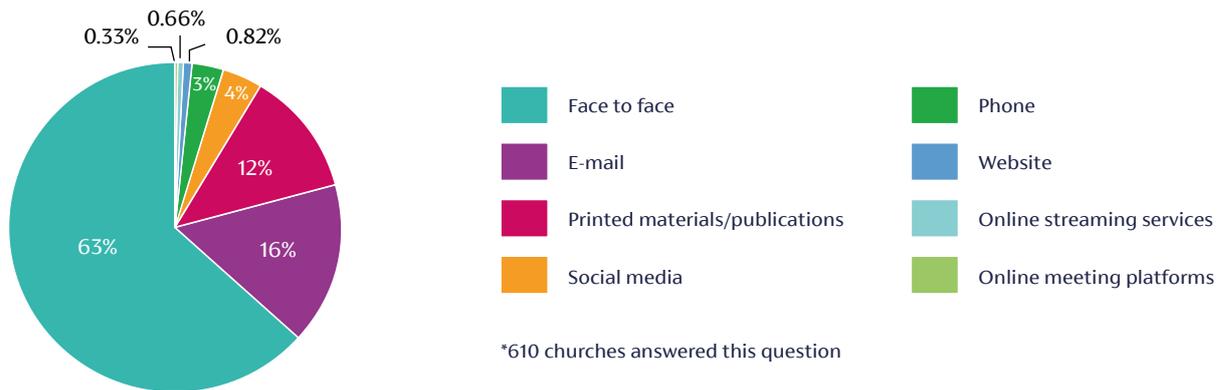
**Q: What challenges do you think you will face as a church that will make it difficult to meet the needs/challenges of your community in direct response to the Coronavirus pandemic in the next year? (Please select a top five)?**

<b>71%</b>	Lack of funding
<b>50%</b>	Lack of volunteers
<b>43%</b>	Anxiety from community about visiting physical premises/gathering in groups
<b>36%</b>	Maintaining buildings
<b>32%</b>	Lack of staff resources
<b>27%</b>	Difficulty in running both online and physical worship services
<b>26%</b>	Community reluctance to engage with church
<b>24%</b>	Insufficient or inappropriate space in buildings 20% Lack of digital knowledge among staff/volunteers
<b>19%</b>	Equipment that is not fit for purpose

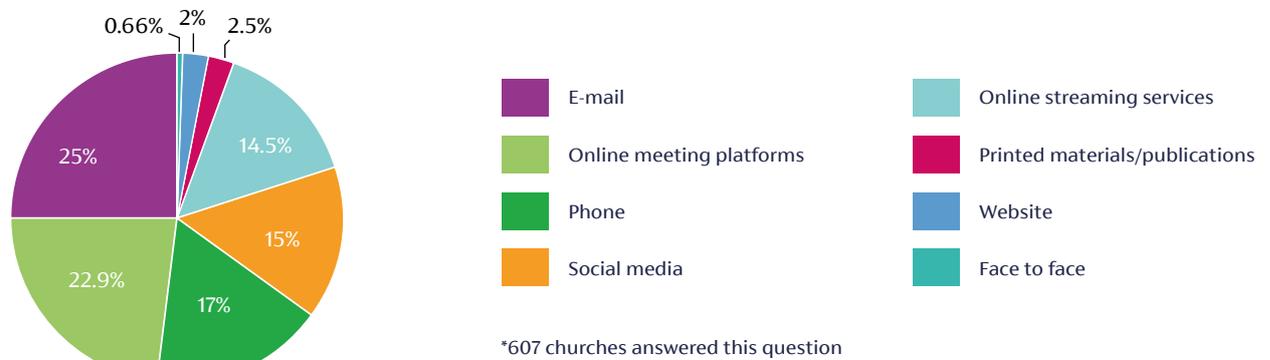
*\*614 churches answered this question*

# The changing face of church communications

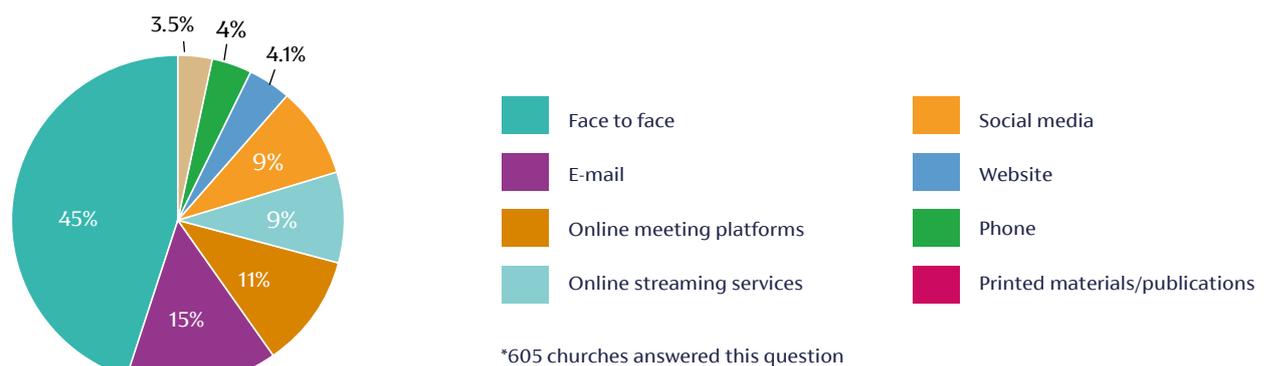
**Q: What form of communication did you use THE MOST BEFORE the Coronavirus lockdown?**



**Q: What form of communication did you use THE MOST DURING the Coronavirus lockdown?**



**Q: What form of communication do you plan to use THE MOST in the next year?**





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