

Decline in Rural Churches

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Source : The Times

Ruth Gledhill reported in The Times that

"attendance at Anglican churches in the countryside has collapsed by more than a third in the past 10 years with average congregations now down to just 14, according to a report to be published next week.

"Across all denominations, rural congregations have declined at twice the rate of those in towns and cities and churches in remote areas have lost up to 42 per cent of worshippers."

The statistics have been compiled by Christian Research on behalf of Rural Ministries.

According to the Times

"The survey found that in the 10 years from 1989 to 1998, the most recent year for which figures are available, church attendance throughout England fell by 22 per cent. In towns and cities attendance was down from 3.7 million to 3.1 million, a fall of 17 per cent.

In the countryside, attendance fell by 39 per cent, from more than 1 million to 632,000. In the more remote rural churches, there was an even steeper fall of 50 per cent over the same period.

"Only evangelical churches bucked the trend. In commuter belts their congregations grew by 5 per cent and even in remote rural areas the decline was only 37 per cent.

"As a result, in both commuter belts and remote rural areas, the evangelical wings of all denominations grew as a proportion of the whole from a fifth to a third.

"The Church of England was the worst hit. Anglican parishes make up 57 per cent of all rural churches and their problems can be especially severe, with some vicars struggling to manage as many as 10 or 12 different churches with just a handful of worshippers in each. In remote areas the average Anglican congregation fell from 38 to 14.

"In the Roman Catholic church, the average congregation size in remote areas fell from 208 to 124, and across all other denominations the average fall was from 43 to 33."

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