

Faith in Wales

Counting for Communities

GWEINI

Serving the Christian Voluntary Sector in Wales



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Summary of Findings

Until now, Wales has lacked statistical evidence about the role of faith communities in the wider communities of which they are a part.

This new report provides new information on the services provided by faith communities to the wider community, the numbers of volunteers they mobilise, and the rooms and halls they make available. The survey on which it is based achieved an exceptional response rate of just over 49%, with almost a third of the replies in the Welsh language.

Here are just some of the highlights – for full details see www.gweini.org.uk.

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Using standard techniques, the economic benefit impact of just part of the services provided to local communities is estimated at **£102M per year;**

The range of services faith communities provide is enormous, including **many services governments are not well equipped to deliver;** such as hospital visiting, lunch clubs and coffee bars, and personal support for the bereaved;

In addition, many faith communities are already working in areas of emerging need and opportunity; such as employment training, alcohol and drug awareness, and **personal finance** issues: many more aspire to work in these areas in the future;

Over **42,000** volunteers work on behalf of the wider community in activities organised by faith communities. This represents just under 80,000 hours a week, equivalent to a little under 2,000 full-time workers, of which around 97% are provided by churches;

In addition, faith communities employ around **1,400** staff to work with the wider community, representing a further 23,000 hours a week, equivalent to another 570 full-time workers;

Many faith communities provide accommodation for the wider community. Over 600 operate purpose-built community centres;

1,800 rent out rooms to outside groups;

and 1,100 supply accommodation free of charge;

Faith communities in Wales maintain a vital part of the national heritage,

as they maintain an estimated **1,600 listed buildings.**

They also welcome over **2.5 million tourists** every year;

Faith communities offer considerable support for the **Welsh language.**

For example, around 130 churches are involved in running Welsh language classes;

Wales has a remarkable number of faith communities – **one for every 670**

in the population (roughly double the ratio for Great Britain as a whole). Over 98% of them are churches;

Over any given week, around **7%** of the population of Wales attend a religious service. However, adding up the numbers at the single most-attended services over the year raises the figure to

15% and many more

than this attend over the course of a year.

Churches are dotted over the whole of Wales, including all the rural areas. However, they are particularly concentrated in areas of higher population density, including many **urban areas now suffering high levels of deprivation.**

And, of course, this is only part of the impact of faith communities. For example,

over 300

faith communities are strongly involved in their local Community Strategy. And many faith communities have set up projects and charities now running independently from them.