

# Paper X1

National Synod of Scotland  
The Fourth Scottish Church  
Census

United Church 2017  
Church 2017  
Reformed Church 2017  
Church 2017

# Paper X1

## National Synod of Scotland

### The Fourth Scottish Church Census

#### Basic Information

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<b>Action required</b>	For information
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To set the scene for a presentation on selected outcomes, particularly in relation to URC life, of the 2016 Scottish Census of churches, following publication of the Census outcomes in April 2017
<b>Main points</b>	Introducing the census (in this paper) At Mission Council in May 2017, a presentation giving: A snapshot of Scottish church life in 2016 Trends in Scottish church life 2002 to 2016 Key outcomes of the Church Census Selected insights for the URC
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Minutes of Mission Council, March 2016, referring to Paper M4 on Church Census
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	The author, Peter Brierley The General Secretary, John Proctor

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	n/a
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	n/a

# Report on Outcomes of the Fourth Scottish Church Census

## The Census was held

1. In May 2016 a Census was held of Scottish Church attendance. This was the fourth such census in Scotland, following previous Scottish Church censuses in 1984, 1994 and 2002.

## The Rationale

2. The rationale for holding this census included assessing the impact on church attendance of some trends revealed in the government Population Censuses of 2001 and 2011. These show that whilst the population of Scotland grew by 4.6% to a record 5.3 million people, those who identified themselves as Christian fell from 65% in 2001 to 54% in 2011, however, the government's census didn't record attendance. A new Scottish Church Census would give an insight into attendance and trends, according to denomination and potentially what is termed 'churchmanship' referring to the broad approach of the church such as charismatic, pentecostal, liberal etc, and an insight into trends in demography, gender and other factors. Such information is likely to provide a vital picture of church life for local and national church leaders, which would help them to plan strategically.

## Methodology

3. Planning and preparation were undertaken by a Steering Committee including representatives of a number of denominations in Scotland who prepared a budget and agreed costs, with some organisations sponsoring questions. The Census was conducted by Brierley Consultancy, [www.brierleyconsultancy.com](http://www.brierleyconsultancy.com). Work was undertaken to identify every church in Scotland, including their contact details. It drew on information from previous church censuses, contemporary denominational data and web searches. Each church identified was subsequently sent a census form comprising two sides of A4, with 24 main questions, several with options and subsections. The chosen date was Sunday 8 May 2016, selected because it was a regular Sunday, not being a Bank Holiday weekend nor in school holidays, and less likely to be at risk of inclement weather which might skew results on a one-off basis. Churches with an anomalous congregation that day, for example due to having many visitors for a baptism, were invited to undertake their count on a Sunday which more normally represented their congregation.

## The Results

4. The results are due to be published in April 2017. Permission has been granted to the URC to share pertinent insights at our May 2017 Mission Council.

