

## Church membership

\* In 2003 parish electoral rolls stood at 1.2 million having experienced a small increase of two per cent in 2003 following the major revision in 2002. In some dioceses the electoral roll is larger than adult attendance over a typical month while in others it is noticeably less than adult monthly attendance. This reflects different diocesan approaches to the composition of parochial electoral rolls.

\* The ongoing pattern of reduction in numbers of baptisms and confirmations continued in 2003 but parish involvement in weddings and funerals increased by one per cent overall. Blessings in churches and cathedrals following civil marriage are becoming less popular but marriages and funerals in churches and cathedrals are growing in popularity.

\* The 19 dioceses that saw an increase in each of their Sunday, weekly and monthly attendance levels are: Blackburn, Bristol, Canterbury, Chester, Chichester, Coventry, Guildford, Hereford, Leicester, Lichfield, London, Rochester, St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, Sheffield, Sodor & Man, Southwell, Truro, Worcester and Europe.

\* Other key statistics are: 72 per cent of people in England are Christian (Government census 2001) 86 per cent of adults have attended a church/ place of worship in the past year; 63 per cent of adults would be concerned if their local church/ chapel was not there (ORB 2003).

## Archbishop commends Environment report

The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams urges Christians to recognise their duty to celebrate and care for every part of God's creation in his foreword to the report *Sharing God's Planet* which accompanied the Environment debate at General Synod in February. The debate coincided with the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol around the world.

"Receive the world that God has given", he writes of the importance of celebration. "Go for a walk. Get wet. Dig the earth."

In terms of the Christian's duty to the planet, Dr Williams stresses that for the Church of the 21st century, good ecology is not an optional extra but a matter of justice. It is therefore central to what it means to be a Christian.

The report has practical ideas for the local church to adopt at ground level, from recycling to car-pooling, and an education programme to promote this to churches is in place with government backing. But *Sharing God's Planet* also suggests that there's a spiritual dimension to be brought into Christian worship.

'Creation Care Prayers' and the use of natural materials in worship such as organic bread and wine are just some of the ideas suggested in the chapter "a practical Christian response"; ideas which the Archbishop commends in his foreword: "I have called upon our Church to undertake an ecological audit...such local, internal responses are vital."

*Sharing God's Planet* ISBN 0 7151 4068 X published by Church House Publishing, costs £5.99.