

Church of England Online Parish Return System

User Guide

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1. Background

Welcome to the new on-line data capture system for parish returns. The system is set up to receive the annual Statistics for Mission and the Return of Parish Finance for the year 1st January to 31st December. The thinking behind the system is that users at parish level input their data directly into a common database and have immediate access to a wealth of data showing how their parish has progressed over the last ten years. As soon as the data is entered at parish level the statistics become available at diocese and national church level to help plan resource allocation without the need to re-key data into a series of systems – replacing a process which previously took up to 18 months to complete!

Click on <https://parishreturns.churchofengland.org/> or type the address into your browser to access the system. This is the beginning of the journey!

2. Accessing the system for the first time

2.1 Parish Administrator

When accessing the system for the first time you need to **‘Create an account’**. Click the **‘Login to enter or view your data’** button (see [Fig. 1](#)) and a new page will appear. You then need to click on the **‘Create an account’** link before inserting the Parish Code and password issued to you. (The Parish Code and Password is used only once to authenticate your credentials as Parish Administrator.) This then takes you to a screen where you need to enter your own details including a new user name, password that is memorable to you and your email address.

- Please note that the system does not allow more than one user to use the same email address for security reasons. Once you have completed all the fields you can **‘Register’** and your login will become active. If you want to go ahead at this stage and access the system you need to re-enter your (new) username and password (make sure you remember what it is!) and this will take you into the system.

2.2 Other system users

When accessing the system for the first time you will first need the username and password provided by either your Parish Administrator or diocesan office. Click the **‘Login to enter or view your data’** button (see [Fig. 1](#)) and enter the username and password issued to you.

- Once you have entered the system for the first time, it is advisable to change your password to one that is known only by you. (See section [4. Editing your details](#), below.)

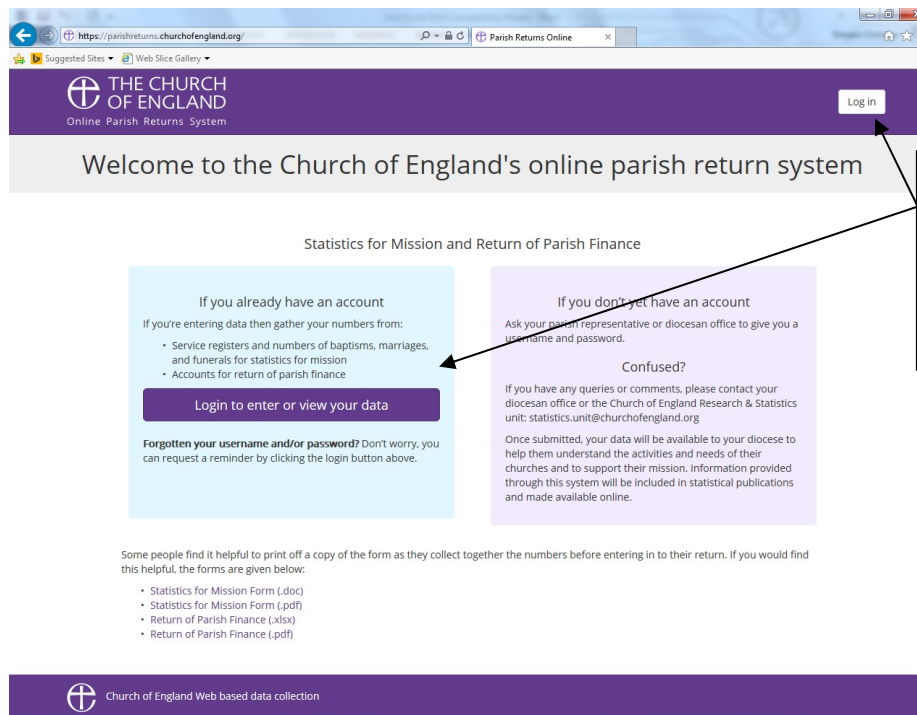


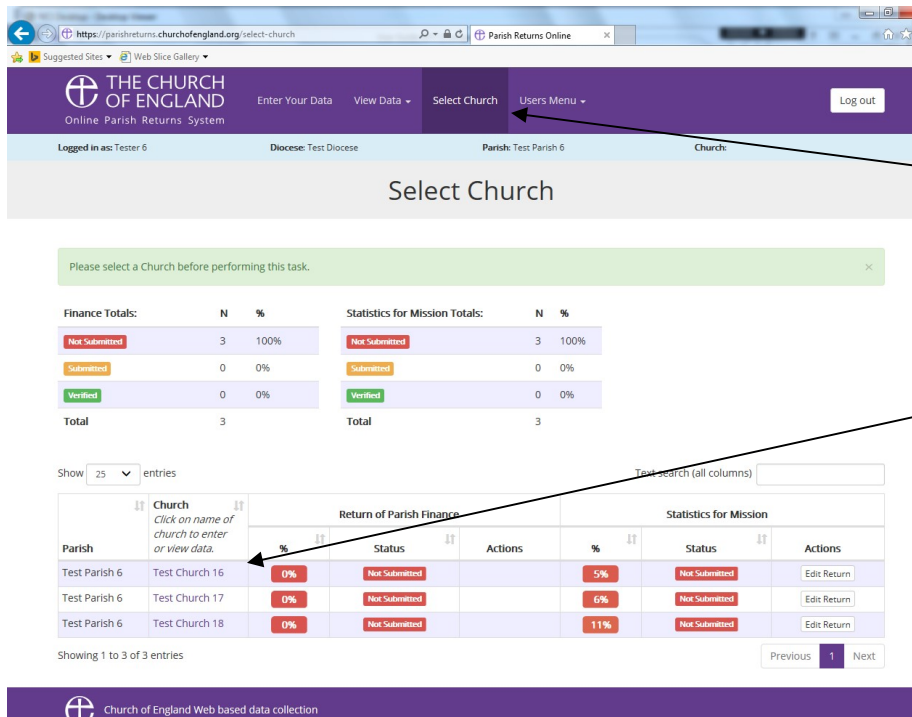
Fig. 1 – gaining access to the online system

3. Entering information onto the online forms

Once in the system, click on the **'Enter Your Data'** link or button to start the process of entering your figures.

- Please note that you will need to click on the name of a Church before performing this task (see [Fig. 2](#)).
- A number of parishes that have more than one church submit individual returns and this system allows separate submission of data. It also allows a combined submission (see [Fig. 3](#) below).

Having clicked on the name of a Church you then need to choose whether to enter the annual Statistics for Mission or Return of Parish Finance data. [Please note, the data being collected is identical to what is collected at present in paper form – you are not required to have any other information to hand in order to complete this process.]



Click 'Select Church' if you have entered data for a church and wish to enter or view data for another church

Click on the **name of the Church** you wish to enter data for, in order to gain access to the respective return

Fig. 2 – gaining access to the online forms

If you want to submit combined church data, for the Return of Parish Finance (or Statistics for Mission), you need to select the main parish church and, having got to page one of the relevant form you can tick, by way of the '**Churches Included**' section (see Fig. 3), to include one or more other church in the parish within the one return. If you don't tick the box you (or someone else) will need to do a subsequent return for the churches excluded. If you subsequently realise that the data from one or more churches should be separate, then simply un-tick the box and the data you enter will be treated as only relating to those churches still ticked!

When entering forms please ensure you complete every box – nil returns should be indicated by entering '0'. This is really important as the system records the extent to which the form has been completed and blanks will show as incomplete forms. When you have entered a page click '**Next**' to move on. (You are also able to navigate by way of the side bar short cut navigation tabs, however do note that if you have made a change you will need to click '**Next**' to save your data.) If there are blanks on the page the system will challenge you. If it is your intention to return at a later date simply click '**Next**' to override the challenge.

Some helpful tips: Throughout the forms you will find ? symbols. If you click your pointer on the ? symbol a 'help box' will appear to guide you. Look out for these as you go through the forms.

At any time, if you find a problem with the system or have a thought about how we can do things better please click on the [Report Problem / Give Feedback](#) button at the bottom right of the page and let us know what your issue is.

The side bar short cut navigation tabs provide both short cuts through the data entry process and indications of the completeness of individual sections.

- It is worth pointing out here that it is standard browser behaviour that the 'Enter' key (of your keyboard) submits the form whereas the 'Tab' key (of your keyboard) is used to tab between fields. If you therefore wish to navigate quickly between the fields of a page, you can click the 'Tab' key. On the other hand, if you wish to progress to the next page you can click the 'Enter' key.

Click the **Churches Included** check box to indicate where more than one church has been included within the return being submitted

Enter your figures directly into the online return

Click on the short cut navigation tabs, if you wish to go directly to a particular section of the return

Fig. 3 – entering information to the online forms

You may also at this stage get a second challenge. The system is designed to perform some simple logic checks and if the numbers you have entered are out of line with the figures entered in previous years it will ask you to make sure you haven't accidentally entered a wrong figure.

Please be aware that the system stores data at parish rather than individual church level therefore if there are a number of churches that make up your total parish figures you may get challenged rather more often than others with just a single church as the figures you enter will be less than the total activity for the parish and may therefore look a bit odd to the computer!


There are some other logic checks built in to the system so look out for those too. They are all designed to improve the quality and consistency of the data being submitted so please bear with us.

At any time you can save the data you have entered and return to the main menu (useful if you find you need a cup of tea half way through the process). Everything you have done will have been saved (the data you have entered onto a page is saved every time you click '**Next**' so you can flick back and forwards with some confidence that your efforts have not been wasted).

When you have completed all the pages of the form you will be presented with the option of: **<Submit Data to Diocese>**, **<Save and Return to Menu>** or **<Download report as PDF>** - and also allowed to scroll down the page and visually review the data entered. **Please note that once you press <Submit Data to Diocese> you will not be able to make further adjustments to your entry** therefore it is recommended that you take a copy of the report first and satisfy yourself that the form has been properly completed. If you select the **<Save and Return to Menu>** option you will see an indicator that tells you whether the form is complete and also reminds you of its status. When the indicator light goes green you know you have a complete form – but whether or not it contains sensible figures is up to you of course!

Once the data has been submitted (to the diocese) a gold highlighted Submitted message will appear against the record status. The data is now available for the diocese to look at and, once they are satisfied that the figures are as expected they will 'Verify' the data. You can therefore check the progress of your return.

Complete the process for each of the returns you need to submit. If this is a job being shared with others then your Parish Administrator needs to set them up as separate users (see section [8.1](#) below), if they do not already have an account, and let them know when it is their turn to do particular bits of the operation.

The job will be complete when every church for which you are responsible has a **100%** against each return and a  in the 'Status' column.

4. Editing your details

4.1 Edit you details

The system provides you with the ability to modify your account details (e.g. if you wish to change your password or your email account). You can do this from the <**Users Menu**> tab by clicking on the '**Edit Your Details**' option. Following this update the relevant onscreen fields, before clicking the '**Submit**' button.

4.2 Email settings

The system provides you with the ability to specify which return/s you are responsible for. You can do this from the <**Users Menu**> tab by clicking on the '**Email Settings**' option. Simply deselect (untick) the return you are not responsible for, to prevent reminder emails being sent to you relating to that return, before clicking the '**Save**' button.

- Please note that you must have at least one return ticked for each church/parish.

5. Finding your way around

<**Enter Your Data**> takes you to the main part of the system where you enter details of your annual returns (see section [3. Entering information onto the online forms](#), above)

- Please note that you will need to click on the name of a Church before performing this task.

<**View Data**> gives you access to the '**Charts & Dashboards**' and/or '**Archived Returns**' parts of the system (see section [6. Reports](#)).

- **Charts & Dashboards** – gives you access to two separate reports (dashboards) showing how your parish statistics have changed over the past ten years (and will be updated once you enter the current year data). These reports can also be downloaded for use in presentations etc.
 - **Census & Deprivation Data** - Upon entry of the Charts & Dashboards area of the Reports section of the system, you are given immediate access to an interactive map to see census and deprivation information mapped onto Church of England parishes.
- **Archived Returns** – gives you access to details of all submitted returns over the past ten years. These reports can also be viewed online or downloaded.

<**Select Church**> takes you to the main part of the system where you will need to click on the name of a Church before going forward (see [Fig. 2](#)).

- Clicking on the name of a Church will take you directly to the <**Enter Your Data**> page. You can also navigate directly to the respective <**View Data**> subpage without the need to further select the name of a Church again

<**Users Menu**> gives you access to the '**Edit Your Details**' part of the system and the user guide. If you are a Parish Administrator you will also have access to the '**Manage Sub Accounts**' and '**Add Parishes**' parts of the system.

- **Edit Your Details** – allows you to amend your login details (e.g. if you wish to change your password or your email account)
- **Email Settings** – allows you to specify which return/s you are responsible for, preventing unnecessary reminder emails being sent to you (see section [4.2](#))
- **Manage Sub Accounts** (Parish Administrator only) – allows you to set up accounts for others to access the system (see section [8](#))
- **Add Parishes** (Parish Administrator only) – to add other parishes to your account (see section [8](#))
- **Download Users Guide** – allows you to download/view the Church of England's online parish return system user guide

6. Reports

An important feature in the system is the ability of users to see a graphical representation of how the parish has developed over the last ten years. Additionally, you are able to access copies of returns previously submitted and view census and deprivation data.

Click on the <**View Data**> tab to access the '**Charts & Dashboards**' or '**Archived Returns**' parts of the system.

6.1 Charts & Dashboards

This section provides access to two separate reports (dashboards) showing how your parish statistics have changed over the past ten years (and will be updated once you enter the current year data). These reports can also be downloaded for use in presentations etc.

There are some **important things to understand** about these reports:

- (1) The default reporting level shows combined parish data, not individual church data, therefore if you are submitting more than one set of returns per parish the chart for the current year will not be fully populated until you have completed all the returns.

If you wish to see data at the individual church level, then please change the reporting level accordingly.

(Please note that the reporting level can be changed by clicking on the **Reporting Level** drop down arrow and then selecting the level you wish to view or download the report at.)

- (2) The charts are updated as you enter data, so they are a good way of checking whether your figures look reasonable compared to previous years **before** you press the submit button and send your returns to the diocese.
- (3) The charts will highlight readily if some of the historic data was not presented properly. At parish level it is not possible to correct previous years' figures but if you spot an anomaly which is clearly a result of poor data having been entered in previous years please inform your diocesan office. You will need to be able to tell them what the correct figures should have been!

6.2 Archived Returns

This section provides access to details of all submitted returns over the past ten years. These reports can also be viewed online or downloaded.

If you notice that the Statistics for Mission or Return of Parish Return information for previous years are incorrect or missing for your church, please feel free to provide this information either directly to your diocesan office contact, or directly to the Research & Statistics team, by emailing statistics.unit@churchofengland.org.

6.3 Census & Deprivation Data

Upon entry of the Charts & Dashboards area of the Reports section of the system, you are given immediate access to use of an interactive map to see census and deprivation information mapped onto Church of England parishes.

Click on parishes, churches and schools displayed on the map and a pop up box will appear with information.

- To view the legends (which explain what the colours and symbols on the maps refer to) click on the double arrow [>>], in the top left corner of the map, which will expand the hidden section, giving you details about the map and a tab with legends for each layer. (Click the double arrow [<<] again to collapse the section.) To see the legend for any given layer click on the 'Expand/Collapse' arrow next to the layer name, for example "Parishes."

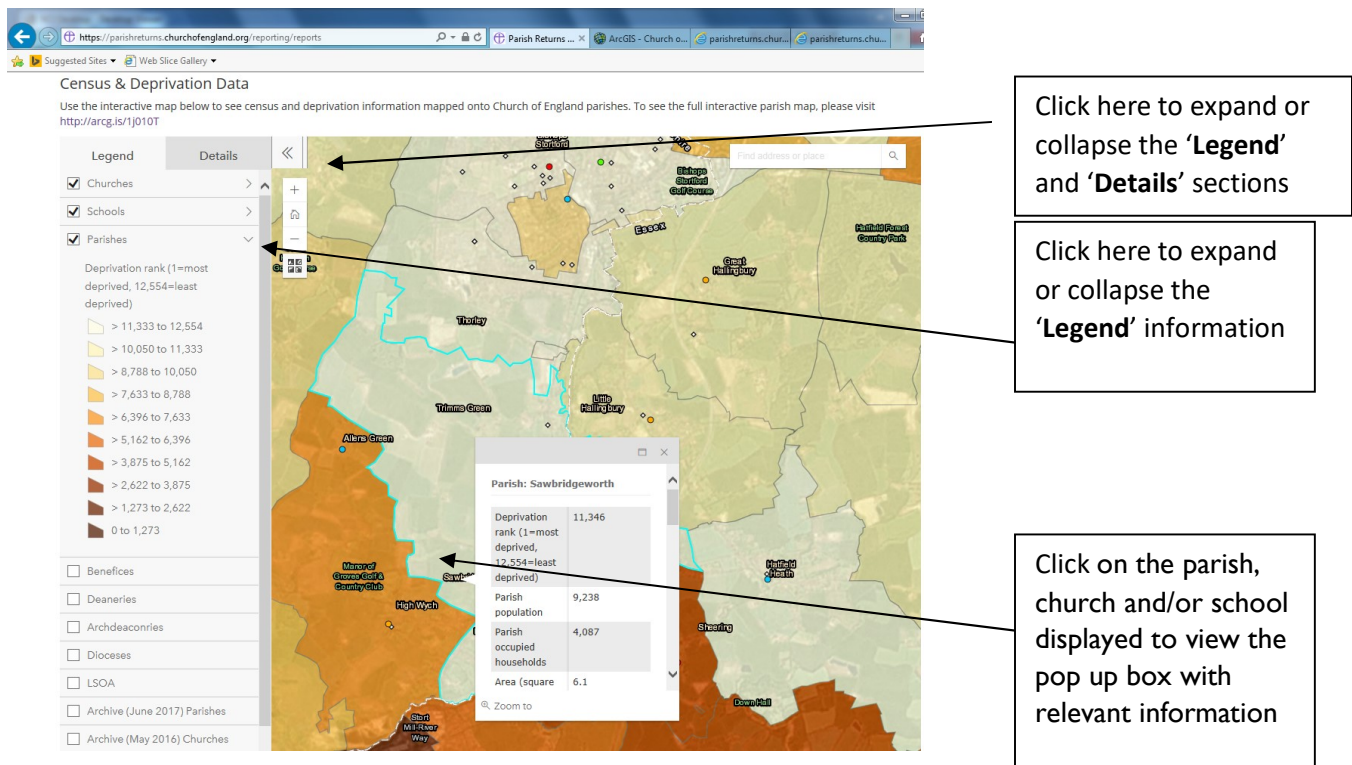



Fig. 4 – census & deprivation interactive map

7. Help

If you get stuck you can find help in the following ways:

- If it relates to how to fill in the forms click on the  symbols you will find throughout the forms
- If it relates to getting access to the system or if you want to let someone know about problems with historic data contact your diocesan office.
- If you think the system is not doing what it should be then use the [Report Problem / Give Feedback](#) facility at the bottom of each page.
- If it relates to something else, then the answer may be contained within the user guide, available via the **<Users Menu>** then selecting the **'Download Users Guide'** option. The [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section has the answer to all recurring queries.

Please note that if you do use the [Report Problem / Give Feedback](#) facility it may take a few days to get back to you as we do not have a dedicated helpline facility operating. If we discover that typical problems keep occurring we will try to get general information out to all users as soon as possible - but please bear with us as we are all learning to do this together.

8. Information for Parish Administrators

Each parish has a unique parish code and authorised users are able to access the forms relating to that parish (which may include more than one set of forms if returns are submitted for separate churches in the parish).

Linked to each parish code is a single administrator – that person acts as the Parish Administrator and is able to add other users to the account to allow them to enter data into the on-line forms and print reports etc. (but users will not be able to add or delete other users). Please ensure therefore that you only give user access to properly authorised people!

As a Parish Administrator you may also be responsible for the administration of, or entering data for, other parishes – you can enter those onto your account at the same time allowing you to access all the church records for which you are responsible without the need to keep logging in as a different user.

To add additional parishes to your account, go to the <**Users Menu**> tab, click '**Add Parishes**' then entering the respective '**Parish Code**' and '**Password**' issued to you before finally clicking '**Next**'.

8.1 Setting up other users on the system (Parish Administrators only)

As a Parish Administrator you can set up other people to have access to the online system (e.g. the treasurer, stewardship secretary etc.). You can do this from the <**Users Menu**> tab by clicking on the '**Manage Sub Accounts**' option and then clicking the '**Add a New User**' button, before completing the onscreen fields.

- Please note in order to complete the process you will need to know the individual's email address and assign a user name and password to them that they will use (although they will be able to change that once they log in in their own right).
- Once a user has been set up by the Parish Administrator they will not need to go through the 'Create an Account' routine (section [2.1](#)) but can log in directly.
- Please note that if you have access to more than one church's data you can restrict which church/es the additional users have access to by selecting the relevant church/parish within the '**Grant Access To**' dropdown list.


8.2 Deleting users from the system (Parish Administrators only)

As a Parish Administrator you can delete existing users from the online system. You can do this from the <**Users Menu**> tab by clicking on the '**Manage Sub Accounts**' option and then clicking the '**X**' (red cross), beside their name.

8.3 Editing existing system user accounts (Parish Administrators only)

As a Parish Administrator you are able to edit the account of an existing user of the online system (where you have the relevant permission). You can do this from the <**Users Menu**> tab by clicking on the '**Manage Sub Accounts**' option and then clicking on the name of that person. This will take you into their account, where you will be able to make the necessary changes.

8.4 Editing user email settings (Parish Administrators only)

As a Parish Administrator you are able to edit the email settings (see section [4.2](#)) of an existing user of the online system (where you have the relevant permission). You can do this from the <**Users Menu**> tab by clicking on the '**Manage Sub Accounts**' option and then clicking the  (envelope image), beside their name.

- Deselect (untick) the return the user is not responsible for, to prevent reminder emails being sent, before clicking the '**Save**' button.
- Please note that each user must have at least one return ticked for each church/parish.

9. Frequently Asked Questions

Q – I have tried to login, using the Parish Code and Password supplied by the diocesan office, but I get the following response;

"Username and password do not match or you do not have an account yet".

A – The error message you are seeing is displayed where there has been an attempt to login with a username and password that does not match any record held in the system. This can occur when either the username and/or password have been typed incorrectly or an account does not yet exist.

Experience has shown that this initially occurs where an attempt to login has been made using the Parish Code and Password supplied by the diocesan office, rather than using these to create your account. See section [3. Accessing the system for the first time](#) – where you will note that you initially need to create an account for yourself, using the Parish Code and Password supplied by your diocesan office.

Q – I have forgotten my username and/or password. What do I do?

A – Click the '**Login to enter or view your data**' button (see [Fig. 1](#)) and then click on either '**Forgotten Username**' or '**Forgotten Password**' as appropriate.

Q – How am I able to gain access to or see the information that was submitted for the previous year?

A – Click on the <**View Data**> tab and then click '**Archived Returns**' (see section [6.2 Archived Returns](#) for further information).

Q – I wanted to put in the financial numbers and leave someone else to put in the other information. Is this possible?

A – Yes! It is. See section [3. Entering information onto the online forms](#), however if the other person does not currently have access to the system also see section [8.1 Setting up other users on the system \(Parish Administrators only\)](#).

Q – How do I submit my Return of Parish Finance for the parish (i.e. a single return which includes all the churches within the parish)?

A – Please refer to section [3. Entering information onto the online forms](#). (Just below [Fig. 2](#) there are details on how to carry this out.)

Q – How do I register with an additional parish?

A – See section [8. Information for Parish Administrators](#).
By way of the <**Users Menu**> tab, click on '**Add Parishes**' and then enter the '**Parish Code**' and '**Password**' supplied by your diocesan office, before clicking '**Next**'.



Q – Where can I find out more regarding fresh expressions?

A – Refer to the fresh expressions website at <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/>

Q – Where or how do I indicate if any of my attendance figures are unusual for any reason?

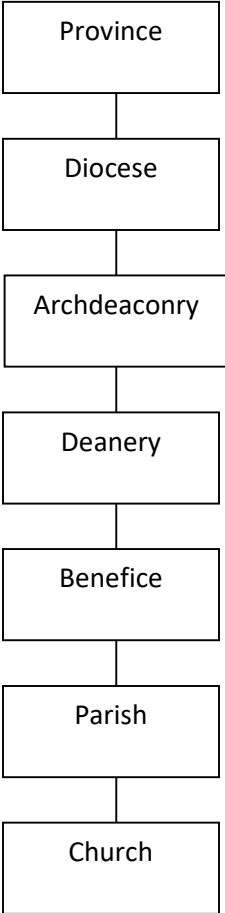
A – Indicate any unusual figures by using the free text comment box at the end of the Statistics for Mission and/or Return of Parish Finance form, headed '**Looking back across YYYY, were there any exceptional circumstances or significant changes that may have led to unusual figures?**' (Please refer to section 9 comment tab of [Fig. 3 – entering information to the online forms](#))

Q - Where can I find the Help text?

A – See sections [3. Entering information onto the online forms](#) and [7. Help](#).
To summarise, “Throughout the forms you will find  symbols. If you click your pointer on the  symbol a 'help box' will appear to guide you. “

10. Additional information

System/Church Structure



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