

What is the Church?



Make a list of the things you think of if someone says the word "church."

Then divide the list into things that are about the building and things that are about the people of the church.

Sometimes when people think about the "church" they mean the building where people meet to worship God. However, the church is not a building, it is the people who meet together to learn more about Jesus.



Someone once said, "the church is what you have got left when you take the building away". What do you think that person meant? Talk about it!

St Paul said Christians are the Body of Jesus

In one of his letters to the Christians at Corinth he said:

Take the example of the human body. The body is one body, but it has many parts. Though there are many different parts of the body, they all together form one body. Jesus, risen to life, is like that. It doesn't matter who we are - Jews or Greeks, slaves or freemen. When we became friends of Jesus, we became one 'body' inspired by one Spirit, and we all share in that one Spirit.

Look at the human body: one body, but many parts, not just one part.

Suppose all the parts of the body got jealous of one another.

Suppose the foot said: "I'm not the hand", so I'm not going to be part of the body; it's still a foot, part of the body, isn't it? Suppose the ear said: "I'm not an eye, so I'm not going to be part of the body"; it's still an ear, part of the body.

If the whole body were just one big eye, how would we hear? If the whole body were just one big ear, how could we smell anything? What God has done, you see, is to make the body out of many parts, arranging each part as he thought best. If all we had was one big ear or leg, there wouldn't be any 'body' at all. As it is, there are many parts, but that means that we can have something very different from the parts in themselves - a 'body' which does all sorts of thing which none of the parts of the body, by themselves, could do at all.

All of you together are the 'body' of Jesus, and each one of you is part of his 'body'. It works out like this. God has given everybody his own work to do, as a friend of Jesus.

In the United Reformed Church and as is the case in most churches we believe that everyone has a special part to play in the life of the church. Some people may like music and can share that, other people like to visit people and help them in hard times, other people are good at reading and

sharing ideas about God and Jesus, some people like to do things with children or teenagers or older people, while some people are good at repairing the building. All of these things are important and need to be done. If any of the parts are not done or are done badly, then the whole body of the church is affected. If the church only had people who like music, then there would be no one to lead worship or look after people or take care of the building.

It is just the same with your body, if you trip over a stone and stub your toe then you need your voice to shout out, you need your hands and arms to try to catch yourself and you need your eyes to see where you are falling. It would be not good if your body was just a toe, and it would be much harder if other parts were missing.

Now think about things you either enjoy doing or are good at doing. Get together with a friend or friends and compare your lists. Then draw the outline of a body and label it with all your talents and interests and see if you can find ways in which you could share your talents with others. (For example, if you are good at football, perhaps you could teach someone how to dribble the ball, or if you are good at writing or drawing you could make a picture or book for someone else. Think of some more ideas, write them down and try to put them into practice.

That is the way the church works. People who want to learn more about Jesus and be more like Jesus try to meet regularly. They are people of all ages and from many different places who have lots of things to share. They usually meet in a church building, but can meet also be in someone's home, a community centre or in the open air. They meet together to worship God, to share ideas about how they can follow Jesus better and to find out how they can help each other and the people they meet everyday.

