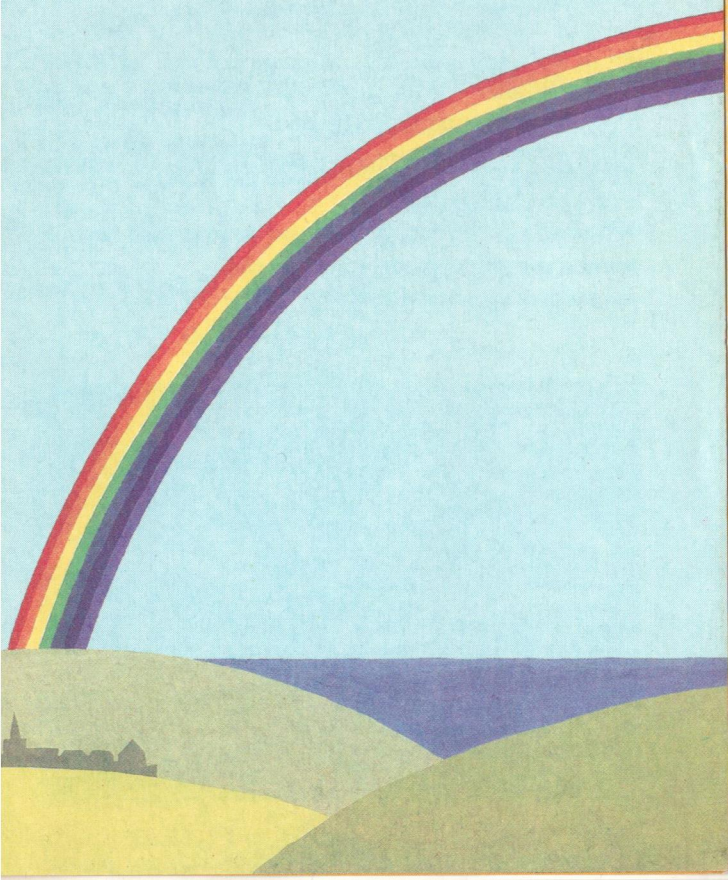


**WHAT ON  
EARTH  
IS THE  
CHURCH  
FOR?**



# 1 WHY BELIEVE IN GOD? – and go to church

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Christians believe in God and go to church because they believe they have been called and attracted by Christ. However, they also have many human needs which they hope the church will meet. How does the church meet these needs? Does it merely try to satisfy them; or does it try to transform them so that the members of the church can also witness to Christ in the community at large and serve as God's agents in the world?

## **Suggested Bible reading:**

John 6:35–40 and 60–71

## **Q Suggested questions for discussion**

*Why do you (and other people) go to church – not go to church?*

*What do you expect to get and to give as a result?*

*How does the church relate to the local community?*





# 2 WHAT DID JESUS COME FOR?

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The first seven chapters of Mark's Gospel describe what Jesus did and said in Galilee. In Chapter 8 we learn who Jesus is: the Messiah whose coming was foretold in the Old Testament. The remaining half of the Gospel describes Jesus' deliberate journey to Jerusalem, where he resolutely bears witness to God's love and justice in the public forum, is handed over to death and rises again.

The New Testament writers interpret this story in terms which their contemporaries would have understood: Jesus was the Redeemer, Justifier, Sacrifice, Saviour and Reconciler.

Jesus also gathered a group of disciples who became a community to continue his life and work as an instrument of God's purpose in the world.

## **Suggested Bible reading:**

Mark 8:22-38

## **Q Suggested questions for discussion**

*How would you try to show to someone, who was not a Christian, what the life, death and resurrection of Jesus means to you?*

*What was God's purpose in sending Christ?*

# 3 WHY DID THE CHURCH BEGIN?

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The word *church* is used in two primary senses in the New Testament: (i) the local community of Christians who gather week by week for teaching, prayer and the eucharist; and (ii) the cosmic church, the Communion of Saints, Christians of all times and places united in Christ and built upon the foundation of the apostles. The church is a sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom or Rule of God. It is described variously as the Communion of the Holy Spirit, the Body of Christ, the People of God, the Bride of Christ, the Household of God, the Servant. The local church is not simply part of the cosmic church; it is the fulness of the cosmic church trying to fulfil the purpose of God in one particular time and place.

## **Suggested Bible reading:**

Acts 2:14 and 36-47

## **Q Suggested questions for discussion**

*What picture of the church, its nature and purpose, emerges from the New Testament?*

*To what extent is the church today similar, and to what extent is it different?*

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## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

The Lent '86 Committee asks every individual, whether they are taking part in a discussion group or not, to help by returning this questionnaire.

Those not in groups are invited to return their questionnaire direct to:

*The Rev'd Canon Derek Palmer,  
Lent '86 Committee, Church House,  
Westminster, London SW1P 3DW*

**All questionnaires must be returned by 12th April 1986.**



For statistical purposes please give the personal details below, but do not put your name on the form.

If you are a member of a discussion group give your completed questionnaire to the host or leader at the final meeting. They will send it on to the Radio Station or direct to the Committee for Lent '86.

Please complete each section of the questionnaire by yourself.

PERSONAL DETAILS

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

A. Age Group (Please circle)

- Under
- 16                      1
- 17-25                  2
- 26-35                  3
- 36-45                  4
- 46-55                  5
- 56-65                  6
- over 65                7

B. Sex (Please circle)

- Female    1
- Male      2

C. Occupation .....

D. Do you go to church? (Please circle)

- Once or more a week    1
- Two or three times a month   2
- Once a month              3
- Two or three times a year   4
- Once a year                5
- Special occasions        6
- Not at all                    7

E. Name your Christian denomination, if any.

.....

F. If you are listening to the Course of a Radio Station, please give the name of the radio station .....

Please state the town in, or near which, you live .....

# 1 WHY BELIEVE IN GOD? – and go to church

## QUESTIONS TO SESSION I

Here are some of the answers people give to the question, 'What on earth is the church for?' Add any answers of your own on line 16 if you wish.

Place a tick opposite each answer in the column which most nearly expresses what you think.

	ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
A.					
1. To preach the gospel to all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. To serve those in need	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. To build up fellowship among Christians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. To prepare people for eternal life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. To speak out against injustice and evil	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. To worship God	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. To work for the conversion of individuals to Christ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. To heal the sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. To teach the faith to Christians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. To help people live and witness as Christians in their everyday life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. To work for a better society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. To be a sign of God's reconciling love for the world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. To satisfy people's religious instincts and needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. To comfort and support those who feel inadequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. To administer the sacraments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. ....					<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Are any of the answers listed above things which you think the church should not be doing? If yes, which? .....					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>
					<input type="checkbox"/>



# 3 WHY DID THE CHURCH BEGIN?

## QUESTIONS TO SESSION 3

Listed below are several senses in which the word CHURCH is used today.

Add, at Line 10, any other use of the word you wish.

Please circle up to five of the numbers on the right of the definitions which most nearly express what you take the word 'church' to mean.

		FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
A.		
1.	The building where Christians worship	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	The local congregation (assembly) of Christians	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	The diocese, district or area	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
4.	The national grouping of Christians	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The Christian household or family	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
6.	The international grouping of Christians	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The body of all Christians, past, present and to come	7 <input type="checkbox"/>
8.	Clergy and Ministers – as distinct from the laity	8 <input type="checkbox"/>
9.	The Christian denomination	9 <input type="checkbox"/>
10.	.....	10 <input type="checkbox"/>
B.		
	Which definition is the most important to you?	
	Write its number in the box	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>





# 5 WHAT NOW?

## QUESTIONS TO SESSION 5

Here are some things which some people say the local church ought to be doing.

Place a tick opposite each statement, in the column which most nearly expresses what you believe.

	ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	SHOULD NOT BE DONE	FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
A.						
1. Meeting the religious needs of those only loosely attached to the church	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Regular services of worship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. A weekly Eucharist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Prayers for the church	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Intercession for the world	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Teaching the Faith	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Helping people to pray	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Helping Christians to relate faith to daily life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Evangelism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Helping Christians to bear witness to Christ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Encouraging Christians to know and support one another	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Serving those in particular need in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Speaking out on matters of social and political justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Giving guidance on the spiritual and ethical issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Working for reconciliation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. List things you think the Churches in your neighbourhood should be doing together.						<input type="checkbox"/>
.....						<input type="checkbox"/>
.....						<input type="checkbox"/>
.....						<input type="checkbox"/>

# 4 WHY DIFFERENT CHURCHES?

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Diversity in the church is essential if God's mission is to reach the diverse needs of different peoples and cultures. However, diversity can easily become division. The early church tried to avoid division by holding Ecumenical Councils in order to agree on teaching and practice. However, division occurred between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches when they lost contact and developed in different ways. Further divisions occurred with the Reformation and the Methodist Revival, both movements aiming at the renewal of the church. The Christian scene in Britain has been enriched by the recent arrival of Orthodox and Afro-Caribbean Churches. The modern ecumenical movement is trying to renew the churches and bring them together in unity. How can Christians be enriched by diversity and yet grow together in one church?

## **Suggested Bible reading:**

I Corinthians 1:10-18

## **Q Suggested questions for discussion**

*Are the historical reasons why our denominations have been divided from one another still valid today?*

*What are the continuing causes of division?*

*What sort of diversity enriches the church and what differences cause division?*



# 5 WHAT NOW?

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We consider how different churches see the goal of unity, and then examine what it might mean for the church in our particular place. The church is called and trained. The church responds in worship and prayer – our goal should be one, united church, administering baptism and celebrating the eucharist in each place, but with a great diversity of worship, and prayer closely linked with the needs of the community. The church is sent in mission to be present everywhere, to bear witness by its deeds, its words and its readiness to suffer.

Christians need a threefold conversion – to Christ, to the church and to the world. Is there sufficient agreement on the nature of mission that Christians can covenant to work together in it?

## **Suggested Bible reading:**

Romans 12:3–13

## **Q Suggested questions for discussion:**

*What sort of unity in worship and mission do you think the church should have in your locality?*

*What would be its priorities?*

*What next steps are you able to take in order to bring it about?*