



The Parish of All Saints, Leek Wootton.

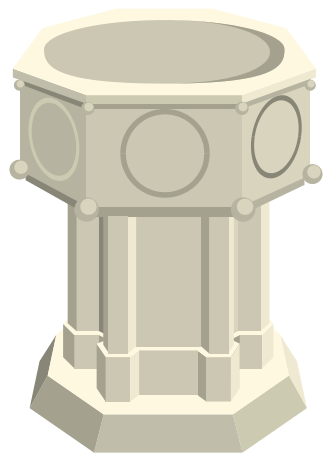
The Baptism of Children

We bring children to baptism knowing that Jesus died and rose again for them and trusting in the promise that God hears and answers prayer. We pray that in Jesus Christ they will know the forgiveness of their sins and the new life of the Spirit.

As they grow up, they will need the help and encouragement of the Christian community, so that they may learn to know God in public worship and private prayer, follow Jesus Christ in the life of faith, serve their neighbour after the example of Christ, and in due course come to Holy Communion and Confirmation.

As part of the Church of Christ, we all have a duty to support them by valuing them as individuals and fellow Church members, and by prayer, example and teaching.

Parents and Godparents have the prime responsibility for guiding and helping them in their early years. This is a demanding task for which they need the help and grace of God, and the care and encouragement of the Church.



Minister Faith is the gift of God to his people. In baptism the Lord is adding to our number those whom he is calling. People of God, will you welcome *these children* and uphold *them* in *their* new life in Christ?

All With the help of God, we will.

The minister then says to the parents and godparents:

Minister Parents and godparents, the Church receives *these children* with joy. Today we are trusting God for *their* growth in faith. Will you pray for *them*, draw *them* by your example into the community of faith and walk with *them* in the way of Christ?

P & G With the help of God, we will.

Minister In baptism *these children* begin *their* journey in faith. You speak for *them* today. Will you care for *them*, and help *them* to take *their* place within the life and worship of Christ's Church?

P & G With the help of God, we will.

Minister In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:
Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

P & G I reject them.

Minister Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

P & G I renounce them.

Minister Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

P & G I repent of them.

Minister Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

P & G I turn to Christ.

Minister Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

P & G I submit to Christ.

Minister Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

P & G I come to Christ.

The minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each child, saying:

Minister Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his cross.

When all the children have been signed, the minister says:

Minister Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.

All Fight valiantly as disciples of Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life.

Minister May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness, restore in you the image of his glory, and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ.

All Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE WATER

The minister and the families gather at the baptismal font.

Minister Praise God who made heaven and earth,

All who keeps his promise for ever.

Minister Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Minister We thank you, almighty God, for the gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life.

Over water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water you led the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land. In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us from the death of sin to newness of life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we baptize into his fellowship those who come to him in faith.

Now sanctify this water that, by the power of your Holy Spirit, they may be cleansed from sin and born again.

Renewed in your image, may they walk by the light of faith and continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

All Amen.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

The minister addresses the entire congregation:

Minister Brothers and sisters, I ask you to profess together the faith of the Church.
Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All I believe and trust in him.

Minister Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All I believe and trust in him.

Minister Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

All I believe and trust in him.

Minister This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.
We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

BAPTISM

Minister N, I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Minister May God, who has received you by baptism into his Church, pour upon you the riches of his grace, that within the company of Christ's pilgrim people you may daily be renewed by his anointing Spirit, and come to the inheritance of the saints in glory.

All Amen.

GIVING OF A LIGHTED CANDLE

The Minister or another person may give each of the newly baptized a lighted candle.

Minister God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and has given us a place with the saints in light. You have received the light of Christ; walk in this light all the days of your life.

All Shine as a light in the world
to the glory of God the Father.

WELCOME AND PEACE

Minister There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism: by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.

All We welcome you into the fellowship of faith;
we are children of the same heavenly Father;
we welcome you.

Faithful and loving God, bless those who care for *these children* and grant them your gifts of love, wisdom and faith. Pour upon them your healing and reconciling love, and protect their home from all evil. Fill them with the light of your presence and establish them in the joy of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

All God of grace and life,
in your love you have given us
a place among your people;
keep us faithful to our baptism,
and prepare us for that glorious day
when the whole creation will be made perfect
in your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Minister We are all one in Christ Jesus. We belong to him through faith, heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

All And also with you.

All may return from the font.

What is Baptism?

Baptism ISN'T.

It isn't a ceremony that turns a person into a Christian.



It isn't a declaration by the baptised person that he/she is a Christian, but that may be a part of the overall ceremony.



It isn't a ceremony that makes a person a member of a particular fellowship or denomination.



It isn't an opportunity to thank God for the birth of a baby.



It isn't an excuse for a family party.



It isn't the 'done thing'.



Baptism IS

It is a symbol of the grace and the love of God.

It is a declaration of what Christ has done for us through his death on the cross and his resurrection.

It is an acknowledgement of our need to receive inner cleansing from him because we are unable to cleanse ourselves, and it is a visible symbol of that inner cleansing.

It is a declaration by the Church that the baptised person is welcomed as a member of Christ's Church.

It is a ceremony of 'Initiation', a starting point, which Jesus himself commanded his Church to perform.

It is a mark of unity and humility all Christians should be baptised, and you have to rely on someone else to baptise you.

The Baptism Service



The normal pattern in the Church of England is that children are baptised while still babies. They are brought by their parents and godparents (traditionally 3 two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex). The service proceeds with the assumption that parents and godparents are Christians and so able to make the vows and promises in good faith.

They make them not only for themselves, but also on the child's behalf, having declared their intention to "draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ" and to "help them take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church.

In the Baptism service, parents and godparents - speaking also for the child - make statements about their life and their faith. These are deep and powerful statements and highlight a recognition of our own imperfection, our need of the forgiveness that only Christ can offer us, and our determination to truly follow Christ in a personal relationship rather than as a moral code.

Later in the service, they join with the whole congregation in professing their faith (= belief + trust) in the foundation doctrines of the Christian Church: in God as Trinity [one God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit]; in the Virgin birth, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and promised return of Jesus Christ; in the universal nature (catholicity) of the Christian Church; in the true hope of eternal life in heaven for all those who have received God's offer of forgiveness and justification.

The child is then baptised with or in water, which has been blessed for that purpose. In the prayer of blessing of the water, five ideas that the water symbolises are mentioned.

These are:

Sustaining: None of us can live long without water. It is essential for life. Jesus described the Holy Spirit within the Christian as being like an everlasting spring of life-giving water.

Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14)

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:37-39).

Refreshing: Though we tend to prefer the sunshine, we should recognise how refreshing a shower of water can be. God's blessings and his words are sometimes described as being like a refreshing shower. There are times in everyone's life when there is a sense of staleness or dryness - the blessings and opportunities that baptism opens us to are always being showered upon us if we are prepared to put away our umbrellas of stubbornness, bitterness and rebellion.

Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. (Deuteronomy 32:2)

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. (Acts 3:19)

Cleansing: As we use water to wash outwardly, so the water of baptism symbolises the inner cleansing which the Holy Spirit performs in the Christian.

And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:4-8)

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. (Acts 2:38).

Rescue: When Moses led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land, he had to lead them through the Red Sea, which miraculously parted to let them through. As we 'pass through' the waters of baptism, we symbolise Christ leading us from being a slave of sin to being free in Him,

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen--the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. (Exodus 14:21-31)

*They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
(1 Corinthians 10:2)*

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.
Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to
it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
(John 8:3-36).*

Union: The idea of being united with Christ in his death and resurrection is seen more when baptism involves total immersion, but it is still there however much water is used!

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (Romans 6:3-5)

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12).

Faith and Commitment

In the Baptism service, what do Parents (and Godparents) say about their commitment to the child's spiritual development?

Trusting God for the child's growth in faith, and drawing on God's help and support themselves, parents and godparents assent to fulfil these declarations:

- ❖ **Pray for their child.**
- ❖ **Draw them by personal example into the community of faith.**
- ❖ **Walk with them in the way of Christ.**
- ❖ **Care for them.**
- ❖ **Help them to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church.**

By this, it is clear that parents (and godparents) should be seeking to discover the fullness of Faith in Jesus Christ for themselves so that their child can see the reality and relevance of such a living faith to everyday life. In addition, for a number of years, a child will depend on their parents for both the permission and the ability to attend Sunday worship, 'Sunday School' or other midweek clubs and groups which are aimed at helping children to grow in faith. The promises you make at Baptism therefore are long-term commitments to your child.

What do the declarations within "The Decision" mean?

These six questions are a recognition of what is involved in *dying to sin and rising to new life in Christ*. Another way in which this is often summarised is as four steps to life:

STEP 1: GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR EACH OF US - PEACE AND LIFE

Because God loves us, he wants us to experience inner peace and eternal life. The Bible says:

"...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

To think about - Since God planned for us to have peace and a full life, why are so many people (including many Christians) apparently not having them? How might our 'rebellion' destroy our peace? What causes you to feel anxious or depressed?



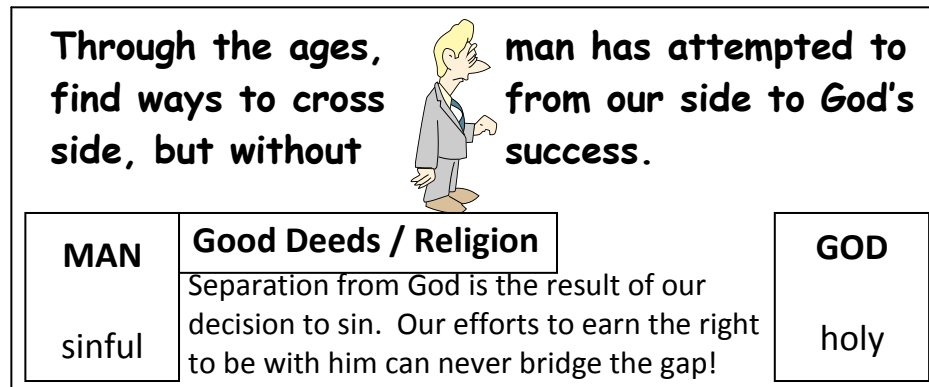
STEP 2: MANKIND HAS A PROBLEM - SEPARATION FROM GOD

God created us to be like him and to enjoy life. He did not force us to love and obey him, but gave us a will and freedom of choice. Today, as at all times in man's history, we often choose to disobey God and to go our own way. This is called SIN and results in separation from God.

The Bible says:

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

"The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)



To think about - What sort of things would you consider to be sinful? Can bad thoughts or bad words be as sinful as bad actions? In what way does 'evil' deceive and corrupt us?

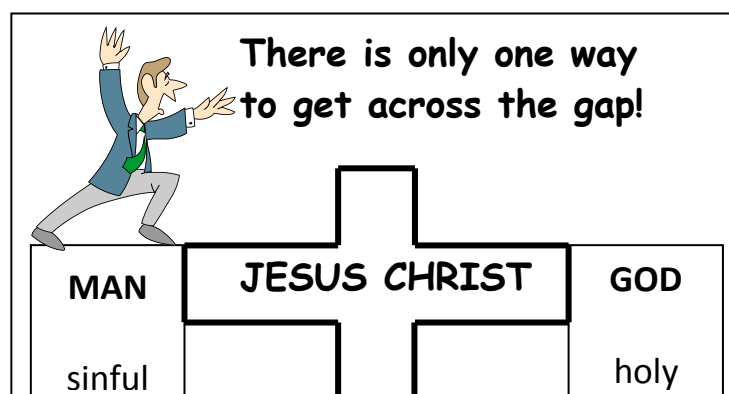
STEP 3: GOD HAS THE ANSWER - JESUS CHRIST

Jesus is the only answer to man's problem of separation. By living a life free from sin, and yet submitting to death on the cross, he willingly took upon himself the penalty for our sins. Through his rising again to life and returning to his Father in heaven, he bridged the gap between God and man.

The Bible says:

"For there is one God, and there is one who brings God and mankind together, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself to redeem all mankind." (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

"But God has shown us how much he loves us - it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)



To think about - Jesus gave everything physically and risked everything spiritually to become our hope of salvation. How do you react to that? In practical terms, what might it mean to 'submit to Christ as Lord'?

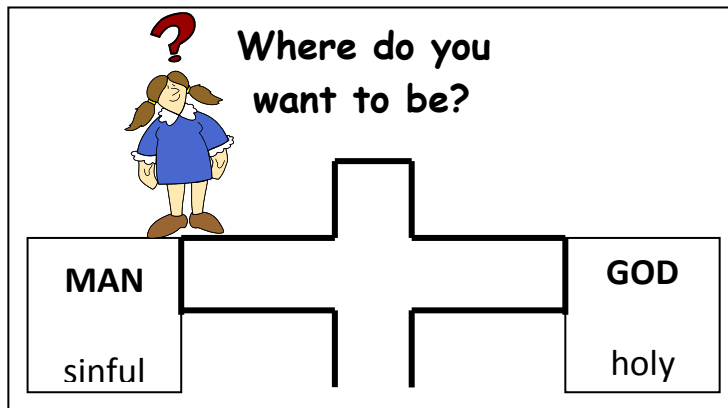
STEP 4: WE MUST MAKE OUR RESPONSE - RECEIVE AND FOLLOW CHRIST

The choice remains ours. We can put our faith in Christ and follow his way, or we can ignore his offer of salvation and stay in rebellion against God.

The Bible says:

"Turn from your sins. Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into his house and eat with him, and he will eat with me." (Revelation 3:19-20)

"Some did receive Jesus and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children." (John 1:12)



To think about - Faith is about acting on what we believe. Jesus has built the bridge. We can admire it, but still stay on the wrong side.

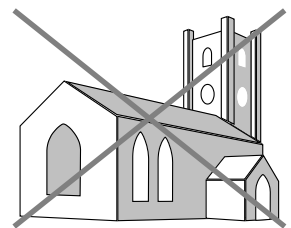
Are you on your journey across the bridge?

Church and Family

Christian Baptism, if not followed up by active participation within the family of Christ, is virtually devoid of its meaning and certainly emptied of the benefits for both child and family.

The Baptism service shows this in a variety of ways:

- ❖ By calling on the whole congregation to profess the Christian faith together.
- ❖ By speaking of being baptised *into the Church* and becoming part of *Christ's pilgrim people*.
- ❖ By recognising that the *Christian Community* has a role to play in helping and encouraging the newly baptised
- ❖ By welcoming the newly baptised into *the fellowship of faith*.
- ❖ By stressing our unity in Jesus and our responsibility to live in the reality of this.



But what is “the Church”?

The Bible describes the Church in various ways. One of the best pictures which St. Paul uses is that of the Church being the BODY OF CHRIST. It is important to understand that the Church is not a building (for example St. Mary's Church), neither is it a denomination (for example the Church of England or the Baptist Church), but the Church is all people who are followers of Jesus Christ. The Church belongs to Jesus, and if we think of it as his body, it helps us understand some important things about how it should work and what it should do.

However, as with any sort of 'picture language', it is important that we don't go too far in the way that we treat the idea. If we start trying to work out who the arms or legs are, the picture quickly becomes ridiculous. The three main passages in which St. Paul calls the Church the Body of Christ are:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the

Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (Romans 12:3-13)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

(1 Corinthians 12:12 - 13:7)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

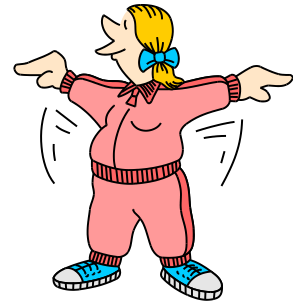
But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
(Ephesians 4:1-16)*

To think about - does it make a difference to see yourself as part of the 'church' rather than as part of the 'congregation' when you 'come to church'?

As Christ's Body, the Church is called, among other things, to:

- ❖ **Be united**, working together and supporting one another;
- ❖ **Be active**, doing the sort of work that Jesus did while he was on the earth;
- ❖ **Be open** to the guidance of Jesus, whom the Bible describes as the Head of the body;
- ❖ **Recognise** that every part, every person, is important and of value. Each has a part to play, and when one part of the body isn't functioning properly, it affects other parts.



Other pictures are used to describe the Church and they help to give us a fuller idea of what the Church is and what it is for. For example:

It is a FAMILY - with God as Father and Jesus as our big brother. We are adopted children, all equal with one another.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12-13)

he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will (Ephesians 1:5)

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19)



It is a SPIRITUAL BUILDING - and we are 'living stones' with Christ as the foundation. Stones used to build something need to be put in the right place, support and depend on each other, and often need to have 'sharp corners' knocked off them

As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)

[you are] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:20-22).



It is the BRIDE OF CHRIST - showing the intimate relationship between the Church and Christ. Christ loves the church as a husband should love his wife. Christians should make the Church beautiful as a bride on her wedding day does before going to meet her groom

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. (Revelation 21:2).



It is an ARMY - We are involved in a battle with evil and so we need to be fit, disciplined and willing to obey orders, like soldiers on active service

be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:10-17)

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer. (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12:11).

To think about - do these different pictures challenge your opinions about the church or give rise to any questions?



So the Church must be seen as:

- ❖ **a living organism**, not an organisation;
- ❖ **a fellowship** rather than buildings;
- ❖ **a close and loving family** rather than a collection of individuals.

But however we choose to describe the Church, the key fact is that it is:

- ❖ **totally dependent upon Jesus Christ** for its existence, for its purpose and for its protection.

What we know as 'Coming to Church', which is really the Church in one area coming together, is an important part of our life as a Christian. It is possible to be a Christian without ever joining with others, just as you can be a part of a family

without ever seeing or speaking to other members of the family, but you are obviously missing out on almost everything that being a part of that family means. When we come together, we come to receive, to share and to give

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10: 19-25).

- ❖ We receive 'food' when we are taught about Christ through the preaching and through the reading of the Bible, and also through receiving the Holy Communion

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' "

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:25-35)

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not

acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:11-14).

- ❖ We share 'fellowship', both with fellow Christians by showing concern, care and love for one another including praying for those in need, and with Jesus by worshipping him and talking with him in prayer

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:1-11)

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:3-7)

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young-- a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty; listen to me, O God of Jacob. Look upon our shield, O God; look with favour on your anointed one. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you. (Psalm 84).

- ❖ We give 'glory' to God through praise and thanksgiving, and in offering ourselves, our talents and our possessions to be used in his service

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way. I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon. May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:15-21)

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Revelation 4:9-11).

- To think about - Baptism is the first step on the most important journey of a person's life. That journey is one of discovery and fulfilment and leads us through all the problems and pains of this life into the eternal blessing and joy of heaven. It isn't an easy route to follow, but Jesus promises to be with us on the journey and calls us to travel in groups. Will you take your place and help your child to do the same?