

Image, Story, Expression

- biblical pictures and today's opportunities for being church

IMAGES OF CHURCH

Multitude of images

We have already mentioned¹ that the New Testament uses some 96-plus different images and metaphors to speak about the Jesus-community in its multitude of different aspects.²

- There is no one single definitive word for the whole; a reminder of the subtle complexity of its nature, it is in fact a mystery
- The biblical images used for the church are taken from every aspect of life
- This multitude of images impart knowledge through our emotions as well as our mind
- Biblical images are not 'word-substitutes' that can be replaced or interchanged, nor are they mere illustrations; rather they are 'windows of revelation' about the essential nature of the people of God³
- There clearly is a distinction between literal and metaphorical truth (we are not an *actual* temple building); hence the ability for organic and inorganic images to be used side by side and to run into one another.⁴
- Every biblical figure for the church is important. They flow into one another; they are all interdependent. No one figure may be taken on its own as primary. Figure blends with figure:
 - The building grows (Eph 2:21)
 - The city comes from heaven dressed as a bride (Rev 21:2)
 - The body is both a temple and a bride (1Cor 3:16; 6:19)

No single figure will serve on its own as an adequate model for the church, each image is highlighting important facets of truth. History teaches us that there have been real dangers in doctrine and practice when one metaphor has been developed at the exclusion of others (eg 'Temple', 'Body' etc).

Focusing on the New Testament images of the Jesus-community is an 'inclusive' way of thinking about church, which is free from the doctrinal, historical and cultural limitations that can be so divisive, and tied up with denominationalism. Biblical images point us towards those inner relationships that link us to Jesus and the Spirit and are the key to thinking about 'being church' today. The core 96 New Testament images of the church are:

¹ Page 6 above

² See Paul Minear *'Images of the Church in the New Testament'* James Clark & Co 1960 / 2007

³ God has created the universe with an essential wholeness, which gives it a divinely infused analogical structure. So in the biblical metaphors for the church the realities of life in the created world are brought into living relation with the realities of God's revelation of his name and his works. That is, there is an 'agreement' or 'correspondence' between two things that are otherwise different; so creation, while different from God, is able to communicate truth about him through its characteristics when properly understood

⁴ However, literal and metaphorical truth make a 'true' connection with another. The one represents the other in a true way. In studying biblical metaphors we must distinguish between our human ability to choose a picture to illustrate an idea (limited and inadequate; a 'pupil metaphor'), and God sovereignly giving us a primary image, a 'master metaphor', which is a window on truth (absolutely dependable).



- Salt of the earth
- Letter from Christ
- Fish and fish net
- The boat
- The Ark
- Unleavened bread
- One loaf
- Table of the Lord
- The altar
- Cup of the Lord
- Wine
- Branches of the vine
- Vineyard
- Fig tree
- Olive tree
- God's planting
- God's building
- Building on the rock
- Pillar and buttress
- Virgins
- Messiah's mother
- Elect lady
- Bride of Christ
- Wedding feast
- Wearers of white robes
- Choice of clothing
- Citizens
- Exiles
- The Diaspora
- Ambassadors
- The poor
- Hosts and guests
- People of God
- Israel
- Chosen race
- Holy nation
- Twelve tribes
- The patriarchs
- Circumcision
- Abraham's sons
- The Exodus
- House of David
- Remnant
- The elect
- Flock
- Lambs who rule
- The Holy City
- Holy Temple
- Priesthood
- Sacrifice
- Aroma
- Festivals
- New creation
- First fruits
- New humanity
- Last Adam
- Son of Man
- Kingdom of God
- Fighters against Satan
- Sabbath rest
- The coming age
- God's glory
- Light
- The name
- Life
- Tree of Life
- Communion in the Holy Spirit
- Bond of love
- The sanctified
- The faithful
- The justified
- Followers
- Disciples
- Road
- Coming and going
- Witnessing community
- Confessors
- Slaves
- Friends
- Servants
- "With ..."
- Edification
- Household of God
- Sons of God
- Brotherhood
- Body of life
- Members of Christ
- The body and the blood
- Diversities of ministries
- Spiritual body
- Head of cosmic spirits
- Head of the church
- Body of this head
- Unity of Jews and Gentiles
- Growth of the body
- Fullness of God

With this list of New Testament images in mind we shall examine three important clusters of ideas as an example of the rest.



Temple of God

The image of church as a built construction is frequent. God's building (1Cor 3:9), a house (Ep 2:20) built on rock (Mt 16:18), the pillar and ground (buttress) of truth (1Tm 3:15), God's building is of living stones (1Pt 2:3-5). The work of growth in the church is 'edification' - building up (Eph 4:7-12; 1Cor 8:1; 1Pt 2:5). One of the most powerful building images is of course the tabernacle and temple that symbolize God dwelling in the midst of his people (1Cor 3:16-17).

▪ New Temple: in Jesus

In the 1st century CE the Jerusalem Temple was a central feature of Jewish faith. Passages in the Hebrew scriptures (cf Is 56:1-8; Ez 40-47) gave it great eschatological significance. These form the background for this New Testament image of the Christian community.

Jesus recognised the uniqueness of the Temple (cf Mt 12:4; 23:17,21) and called it his 'Father's house' (Jn 2:16). But it had become a cover for spiritual barrenness ('a den of insurrectionists' cf Jer 7:11). Its veil would be torn (Mt 27:51), the building soon destroyed (Mk 13:2).

Jesus declared that he was greater than the Temple (Mt 12:6). In his proclamation, 'Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up' (Jn 2:13-22), he is proclaiming that he, and the *ekklesia* he is bringing into being, are completely replacing Judaism and the Temple.

Jesus' important but difficult statement to Peter, '... upon this rock I will build my *ekklesia*' (Mt 16:18), is a promise to Peter (cf Lk 22:31-32). It sees God's people gathered as a building, a messianic remnant called out from the Hebrew people, entering the kingdom of God. They are founded and built upon apostolic faith. This declaration is seen by some as also referring to the heavenly eschatological gathering; as in Heb 12:22-24.

An important scripture behind Jesus' act of cleansing the Temple (cf Mk 11:15-17) is the important Hebrew scripture Isaiah 56:1-8. Here is a beautiful picture strangers and outcasts from the community of Israel being drawn into the Temple 'a house of prayer for all nations'. Jesus saw his ministry fulfilling this prophecy; building a new Temple, a living centre of worship, the eschatological congregation of the Messiah (Mt 18:20; Jn 14:23).

▪ Holy Temple: in Paul

Paul particularly develops the idea of God's people, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, as the dwelling place of God. The idea appears in three main passages:

- **1Cor 3:16-17** - here 'the temple of God' refers to a local congregation, but as part of the heavenly community. They are God's temple because the Spirit dwells within their midst (cf Ez 43:4-5); without God's presence there can be no temple. They are the very dwelling place of God, 'God's temple ... you are'. The temple exists in unity and holiness; to defile it by schism will defile it and incur God's judgment.
- **2Cor 6:16-18** - the phrase 'we are the temple of the living God' refers to all Christians generally. This new temple fulfils Hebrew prophecy (cf Lv 26:12;



Ez 37:27). This is not just presence among but actually living in them; they are his temple.

- **Eph. 2:14-22** - phrases like, 'broken down the dividing wall', (v.14), 'no longer strangers' (v.19) show the church to be the fulfillment of Isaiah 56:4-5.⁵ Paul's reference to Christ 'the corner stone' (v20) is probably the 'top-stone' holding everything in place, which rabbis believed belonged to the heavenly realm (cf Gen 28:17). Jesus is of primary significance, linking the heavenly and the temporal. The holy temple is an expression of God's people in whom he lives by his Spirit (v21).

So in Paul's thinking the temple imagery can be used of, an individual believer (1Cor 6:19), a local congregation, and Christians generally, whether Jew or Gentile, who have become God's dwelling place by his Spirit.

▪ **Living Temple: in Revelation**

The image of the temple holds a key place in the book of Revelation. Here we have both the heavenly and the eschatological. It is bound up with the consummation of all things, as in the words of 21:22:

'And I saw no temple in the city,
for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb'.

The new Jerusalem has no temple, neither is the whole city a temple; rather, the temple is none other than God himself, directly and fully accessible to his people through his Son the Lamb. The temple is nothing less than the perfected presence of God and his people.

Towards the end of the first great cycle of visions (11:19), the temple and the ark of the covenant are opened for all to see amid lightning, voices, thunder, earthquake and hail. This points us towards the end where in 22:3 God declares that his dwelling place is with mankind. Every barrier between people and God is removed, and 'they shall see his face' (22:4). The temple image is both reign and realm; universal worship symbolising unity under divine kingship

Body of Christ

The image of church as a physical body captures the early Christian imagination. It is a body of life (Rm 5-8) and all believers are members of Christ's body (1Cor 12:12), with shared body and blood (1Cor 10:16-17). It is made up of members that serve one another (1Cor 12:25). It is a spiritual body (1Cor 15). As the temple is built so the body grows (Col 2:19) to make the fullness of God (Eph 2:14-16). Working with the body image there is the natural progression to the idea of betrothal (2Cr 11:2), marriage and the bride of Christ (2Cr 11:2).

▪ **Corporate body**

A key New Testament concept of Christian community is the metaphor, 'the body of Christ'. Jesus is the one who includes in his resurrection body 'the many'. Here is the

⁵ Notice the link with Jesus as the fulfilment of Isa 56:1-8 above.



Hebrew idea of corporate personality, where 'the body' is 'the self'. Each Israelite was a member of Israel; likewise each Christian is a member of Christ. 'To look in to the face of any Christian is to meet the gaze of Christ'.

Jesus clearly identifies himself, his body, with the community of believers:

- **Mt 25:35-36** 'I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison ... as you did it to the least of these my brethren you did it to me
- **Acts 9:4** 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' the challenge on the Damascus road as a response to Paul's persecution of Christians

▪ **One body**

It is in the thinking of Paul that the idea of 'the body of Christ' becomes a dominant concept. In different letters he develops the idea in various powerful ways. He sees the body in:

- **Breaking bread:** (1Cor 10:16-17) Those who participate in the meal participate in the benefits of his death; they are one body 'the body of Christ', just as there is one loaf. The physical body of Christ and the benefits of his death have brought us into close relationship with the church as his united body.
- **Responsibility:** (1Cor 12:12-27) Within the united body there is true diversity, the many functions necessary for being a real body. Each member has a particular function necessary for the good of the whole. They are gifts given by the Spirit for upbuilding.
- **Inter-relationships:** (Rm 12:4-5) Here the reference appears to be to all believers, however scattered, illustrating their relationship to one another. Here again we have diversity and unity together. A unity which is to resemble the harmonised movements of a well coordinated body.
- **Union with the head:** (Col 1:18,24; 2:19) For the first time the relationship of the body to the head, Christ, is emphasised. The risen Christ is the source of the body's life and power. Not only does the head nourish and provide cohesion, but through it the body receives divine growth.
- **Heavenly places:** (Eph 1:23; 2:11-22; 4:4-16) Christ is the Lord of the cosmos, and in this his body the church plays a highly significant role; called 'the fullness of him who fills all in all'. This is a body to which temporal and heavenly believers belong. However, there is an important temporal dimension, reconciling Jew and Gentile to God. The body is both already complete and yet still growing to perfection; a heavenly entity and yet an earthly reality in tension.

The church is neither part of the body of Christ, nor a body of Christ, but the body. The members of the body have responsibility both 'to Christ' and 'to one another', but the image does not seem to deal with Christians' relationships to the world. It is not spoken of as an extension of the incarnation. It is 'inward' and 'upward' in its emphasis, rather than 'outward'.

▪ **Pure bride**

In the picture of 'the bride of Christ' the metaphor of the 'body' is pressed to the extreme. The church has become 'one flesh' in marriage union with Christ. It has both happened (Eph 5:23-33) and has yet to happen (Rev 19:7-8).



The roots of the 'Bride' metaphor are found in the Hebrew scriptures:

- Israel is often pictured as the spouse of Yahweh (Isa 54:5-7; 62:4-5; Hos 2:7; Jer 3:14)
- the covenant making at Sinai is seen as a marriage bond (Jer 2:2; Ezk 16:8, 43, 60)
- Israel's spiritual rebellion is seen as whoredom (Ezk 16:15-43; Hos 4:10-15)
- there is the promise of a new and everlasting marriage contract (Ezk 16:60-63) which is prophetic of Christ and the Church

Jesus uses the marriage metaphor when speaking about the 'end times' and our attitude in being prepared or responding to the invitation (cf Mt 22:1-14; 25:6; Lk 12:35-40). The 'Last Supper' also has the sense of a nuptial feast, ratifying the marriage between Christ and the church.

It is in Ephesians 5:22-33 that Paul develops the marriage metaphor most fully. In giving practical teaching about human marriage he uses as his model the relationship between the heavenly bridegroom Christ, and his bride the church. The heavenly marriage is the pattern for human marriage.

For Paul Genesis 2:23-24 is not simply about the marriage union of the first man and woman, it is clearly prophetic of Christ and the church; 'the profound mystery' (Ep 5:32). Paul looks forward to that eschatological moment when the Lord brings the church, the Bride, to the second Adam whose heart response will be, 'This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!' (cf Gn 2:23).

Paul's teaching on the image of the church as the bride of Christ has four main features:

- The church has a two-fold relationship to Christ; as a bride she is distinct from Christ, but as wife she is united to him 'as one flesh' (Ep 5:31)
- The church has been loved by Christ; he gave himself for her (Ep 5:25) and continues to nourish and cherish her (Ep 5:29), so the church is to submit to him
- The church awaits a consummation of the union (Ep 5:27), when as a pure bride she will be glorious (2Cr 11:2)
- The church is both bride and body (Ep 5:30)

The idea of the marriage union between Christ and the church is a forceful eschatological idea. The marriage union already exists between Christ and the church (Ep 5:32); and yet it is still to take place (Ep 5:27 cf. 2Cr 11:2; Rv 19:7-9; 21:2,9; 22:17). The 'already' but 'not yet' tension continues.

Marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church is unique because it is the deepest of all human relationships. It is:

- Surrender without absorption
- Service without compulsion
- Love without conditions

To say that the church is 'one flesh' with Christ is to describe a relationship in which a person is completely himself or herself yet developing into the new person by participation in the common life of Christ's body - the church.



Tree of Life

A tree is one of the most ancient and universal symbols of life. Among trees we find both the oldest⁶ and the largest⁷ of all the living organisms on the planet. Almost every culture on earth has a 'Tree of Life'; seen as sacred - linked to rivers, streams, mountains, gardens, animals and even symbolic of deity itself. Among different peoples there are contrasting trees; to the Babylonians - the palm, to the Egyptians - the fig, for the Sumerians - the vine and the Hebrews - the olive; for the Druids - the oak, the Chinese - the peach and so on. None of this should surprise us, as the Bible sees the whole diversity of trees as pointing towards the creative hand of God.

We are a new creation in Christ (2Cor 5:17), first fruits of the new creation (cf Rev 21:1; 2Pt 3:13) at the centre of which is the Tree of Life (Rev 22:2). As with the original creation, it is again the centerpiece (Gen 2:9):

“Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal,
flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city;
also, on either side of the river, the tree of life
with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month;
and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations”
(Rev 22:1-2)

It is implicit from the connections with other New Testament images of church that the Tree of Life is a symbol of the people of God (eg 'city' and 'temple'). The background is in the pages of the Hebrew scriptures where the like between the Tree of Life and righteous people is clear for all to see:

“Blessed are those whose ... delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.
They are like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither. In all that they do, they prosper”
(Ps 1:1-3)

“The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.
They still bring forth fruit in old age; they are always green and full of sap”
(Ps 92:12-14)

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life”
(Prov 11:30)

“A gentle tongue is a tree of life ...”
(Prov 15:4)

Here is a community that is creatively and spontaneously fruit-bearing and whose deeds (leaves) bring healing to all peoples. The image of the Tree of Life is of course picked up in a range of other symbols for church in the New Testament.

⁶ Cf 4,600 year old Bristlecone pines

⁷ Cf the coastal Redwood some 360 feet high



▪ True vine

The vine is the most widely mentioned plant in the Bible, along with its produce of grapes, raisins, wine and vinegar.

Many rabbis argue that the vine is in fact the Tree of Life, because of its widespread biblical use and significance. It is interesting that the Sumerian word for 'grapevine' is *geshtin*, and the two syllables mean 'tree' and 'life' respectively.

The vine grows and spreads by extending its tendrils, which often run along the ground, but it is nonetheless a tree. There are many examples of ancient vines with thick gnarled trunks of considerable diameter, like those of a more upright tree.

Notice that wine does not figure in the stories of the patriarchal families or the exodus (with the exception of Melchizedek) because it is the drink of settled people. Notice the huge clusters of grapes in Canaan (Nu 13:23). That is why to 'sit under your vine and your fig tree' is a biblical symbol of peace.

Vines were usually planted on the top of hills so as to catch the sun from all sides, or on terraces cut into the hillsides. Mt Carmel means 'the vineyard of God'.

The vine imagery in John 15:1-8 is powerful in representing the relationship between Christ and the church. It is symbolic of a 'living union'. It is eucharistic; sharing Christ's life because of his death; merging into the imagery of the wine and his blood (life-force). It teaches the same truth as the metaphors of 'the body' and 'the bride' of Christ.

The Hebrew Bible represents Israel as a vine. Although the vine is a frequent analogy for Israel it is often used with the sense of her being degenerate. (Ps 80:8-16; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ezk 15:1-8; Hos 10:1-2). This adds force to the contrasting declaration that Jesus is the 'true vine' (Jn 15:1).

In the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mk 12:1-2), Jesus develops the Hebrew analogy of Israel as a vine / vineyard. Again Jesus is stressing that he is the true inheritor - husbandman.

It is in John 15:1-8, with Jesus' proclaiming 'I am the true vine', that we see the church not only in contrast to, and fulfillment of, Israel, but in living intimate union with Christ. Jesus is saying that he and not Israel is the 'vine', source of God's life and relationship with him. Here is inseparable oneness and eschatological fruitfulness, hence such a powerful picture of the messianic community.

▪ Fig tree

The fig tree, in biblical and rabbinic writings, was a frequent symbol of God's people (cf Hosea 9:10; Jer 24:1-10). Jesus picks this up in warning about the impending disaster on the nation (Mt 21: 17-22; Mk 11:11-14, 20-25).

The fig is often closely linked in imagery to the vine in Hebrew poetry (cf Joel 2:22; Mic 4.4 etc). Jesus identifies Nathaniel, 'sitting under a fig tree' (Jn 1:47-50) and his favourite



place with to stay with friends in the environs of Jerusalem was Bethany - 'the house of figs' (Jn 12:1-3; Mt 21:17; Mk 11:11-14).

The ancient Egyptians saw the fig tree representing the Tree of Life, a goddess who gives her fruit to deserving mortals worthy of happiness.

The fig is the first fruit to be directly identified in the biblical story. Its leaves were used to cover the nakedness of the first couple following their disobedience to God (Gen 3:7).

The fig tree is a plant native to western Asia, yet cultivated throughout Palestine. Not usually a big tree, its trunk and branches are smooth, its bark silver-grey in colour. Its leaves are large and hand-shaped, the thick foliage providing shade as indicated in its Hebrew name (*teenah*) which means 'to spread out'. Figs are very nourishing because of their high sugar content, providing all-important energy. They also have powerful healing properties both externally as a poultice or internally keeping the digestive tract healthy.

Along with the vine, the fig tree was the most domestic of all biblical trees. You get a sense that it grew close to the back door and every home should have one. As we have seen its leaves are large and hand-shaped, the thick foliage providing shade indicated by its Hebrew name 'to spread out'.

Time and again the picture of living in the land in peace and security involves the image of the fig tree (Dt 8:8; 1Kg 4:25). Also Micah 4:4:

'He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken'.

Remembering that figs are about:

- Shade – protection and shelter
- Fruitfulness – abundance, satisfaction
- Nourishment – feeding and empowering
- Healing – internal and external

It is quite easy to see how it becomes a symbol of the new community of faith that is finding its focus in Jesus.

▪ Olive Tree

The only direct figurative use of the olive and church in the New Testament is in Romans (11:13-24). Paul develops a symbolism. Israel is the olive tree, the roots are the Patriarchs, the branches are the children of Israel, and the Gentiles are 'a wild olive grafted in' to make the completeness of the people of God.

The olive tree became the most cultivated tree in the Mediterranean world, and the most frequently mentioned tree by classical writers. A single tree will provide a whole family with



all its needs for fat. However, it must be carefully tended to produce fruit, and needs to be planted near to the sea to flourish.

There are Jewish rabbis who believe that the olive tree is in fact the Tree of Life, as it is seen as a symbol of hope, beauty, fertility and peace. The old trunk and root of the olive tree, surrounded by shoots, is a biblical symbol of a family, parents and their children. The shimmer of the grey-green leaves in the wind as it blows across the olive groves is said by the Jewish rabbis to be a symbol of the presence of God's gift of *shalom*.

The first biblical reference to the olive is in the story of the Flood and the Ark when the dove returns with an olive branch in its beak (Gen 8:8-11). The symbolism of the ark as the church, the dove as the Spirit and the olive leaf as the gift of peace would not have been lost on the early Christian community.

Jesus' last hours of freedom before his arrest and crucifixion are spent in Gethsemane – 'the garden of the olive press' (Lk 22:39-46; Mk 14:32-42; Jn 18:1). Crushed in agony and the flow of perspiration like blood, but also like oil, is so evocative and speaks of church as a suffering community.

The olive tree grows slowly and can reach a very great age; some of the olive trees in Gethsemane today are believed to be close to 2000 years old. An old olive is difficult to remove because it will always sprout from the root, constantly regenerating itself.

Olive oil was used for lighting the tabernacle and temple and was a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It was also used for healing. The very purest olive oil was used as the basis for the fragrant liquid used for ancient anointing leaders and priests. The title Messiah means 'anointed one' and the name 'Christian' means 'little Messiah'.

The implications are, "You are a Christian. You have chosen to be a follower of Jesus and are dedicated to him. You are anointed by the Holy Spirit to both receive and to bring beauty, life, healing and peace. You are called to shine in the temple of creation as a light to God's truth, bringing hope in the darkness of this world."

STORY OF CHURCH

Across the Millennia

The story of how the Christian community of faith has understood and interpreted these 96+ New Testament images is vast. All we can do in an attempt to capture something of the diversity that has emerged is to provide a simple thumbnail sketch of the development of ideas of what it means to be church:

Growth and Expression – 33-1500 CE

From the day of Pentecost (possibly sometime around 33 CE) to the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's we listen to four fictional voices that try to illustrate the wide range of development and experiment in what it might mean to be a local expression of church.



▪ Early Christian: 2nd Century Witness ⁸

Following the resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent day of Pentecost, the followers of Jesus met in homes, the temple precincts in Jerusalem and probably synagogues. As the faith spread and Gentiles became the increasing majority in the congregations and persecution increased the home or other secretive places became their centre of meeting.

Dateline: 110 CE, Bithynia, Turkey

“I am shopkeeper in the city of Nikomedia and I am a Christian, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are quite a few of us in this area but we have to be careful because our neighbours and the Roman authorities are very suspicious of us and think our beliefs are a dangerous superstition.

We meet together as often as we can, but always, if possible, before dawn on the first day of the week, the day of Jesus’ resurrection. We arrive quietly, meeting before sunrise because that is the only time that those who are slaves are free to join with us. We usually meet in someone’s home, but the locations change and are kept secret. Our times together are very simple and open, not like the rituals of those who do not know Jesus. We usually spend some time singing our thanks to God and our praise to Christ as God. Sometimes the words are those of the Psalms from the scriptures of the Jews, other times they have been written by one of our number or ones we have learned from traveling teachers. Our tunes are simple but very beautiful and we often sing responsively to one another.

Very important when we meet together is to encourage each other to live lives that are worthy of the Lord Jesus. Someone may speak and instruct us and then we make a promise together, to God and to one another, not to commit crime, such as fraud or theft, nor to commit adultery, to be people who can be trusted, and to fulfil our promises when we have made them. We conclude our time together praying, we all stand with our arms raised above our heads as we pray, in the way that all Christians do.

The central and essential part of our gathering is eating food together. Everyone brings something, whatever they can afford, and we all share it having given thanks for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Central to these meals is bread and wine that communicate the power of the risen Lord to us through the Holy Spirit. But these meals are also important in making sure that those who are poor and hungry among us are fed and have enough to eat and drink. Once the meal, the songs and the prayers are over we slip away silently and anonymously into the early dawn

⁸ From the vast literature on this subject a good place to begin would be:

J Comby *‘How to Read Church History – Vol 1: from the beginnings to the fifteenth century’* SCM 1985

A Kreider *‘Worship and Evangelism in Pre-Christendom’* Grove Books 1995

... then follow bibliographies from there



▪ **Monastic: 6th Century Witness** ⁹

From 312 CE and Constantine's rise to power in the Roman Empire, Christians began to find increasing favour with the authorities and by 395 CE would become the religion of the Empire. This had the consequences for the church that remain to this day, some of which are reflected in the voice of our next witness.

Dateline: 545 CE, Monte Cassino, Italy

"My name is Brother Lucian, a monk at the Christian community of Monte Cassino, begun by Father Benedict, our Abbott. It is still night as we make our way from our cells to 'Vigils', the first of seven 'offices' we share in prayer and praise throughout our day. Following this there will be three hours of reading, study and meditation before our next gathering at Lauds, which we celebrate at dawn. We spend up to four hours in communal worship every day, seven days a week. We sing psalms and hymns and say liturgical prayers together on each occasion and regularly celebrate the Eucharist.

Our shared life in this monastery is given its rhythm and shape by the wisdom of Father Benedict's 'Rule' that sets out a pattern to our days. We see it as the 'Work of God'. Not only is there the liturgy and study throughout each day, but also the importance of doing strenuous physical work to provide for the needs of the community and to develop godly personal discipline. Through both our prayer and our work together we seek to develop a high moral character, bring glory to God and to change the world towards his image.

Why do we live like this, so different from the lives of other Christians across the Empire and beyond? First, there are tens of thousands of us 'monastics' throughout the world wherever Christians are found. Second, this is our way of 'being church' in an evil world, giving people a glimpse of 'heaven on earth'. Since the time of the Emperors Constantine and Theodosius, when all members of the Empire were encouraged to be seen as 'Christian' and the churches became filled with half-believing people with a mixed understanding of the faith, many of us have wanted to show what it really means to be a Christian and to demonstrate our passion and zeal for God. Originally, individual women and men went into the desert and lived in caves. Since then increasingly mature spiritual leaders, like Father Benedict, have drawn groups of us together for the benefit of living shared and supported lives. This way we can grow spiritually and work for the needs of others.

▪ **Eastern Orthodox: 10th Century Witness** ¹⁰

Tensions in the empire between east and west not only had political consequences, but spiritual ones also. The Greek speaking Christians in the east saw an unbroken line

⁹ See C Stewart OSB '*Prayer and Community – The Benedictine Tradition*' Darton Longman & Todd 1998

T Fry (Ed) '*The Rule of St Benedict in English*' Liturgical Press 1982

¹⁰ T Ware '*The Orthodox Church*' Penguin 1993

Kallistos Ware '*The Orthodox Way*' St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1982



between themselves and Jesus and the apostles. They saw the Latin speaking churches in the west, with their focus on the bishop of Rome and claims to superior authority, as breaking away from the original unity.

Dateline: 990 CE, Constantinople, Bosphorus

I am standing under the huge dome of the 'Church of Holy Wisdom' right at the centre of the city of Constantinople, built by the Emperor Constantine some five centuries ago on the foundations of the ancient town of Byzantium – it is the 'New Rome' of the east. The air is filled with incense; the walls and ceilings are painted with beautifully coloured pictures of stories and characters from the scriptures. Here and there in prominent places are paintings on wood of Christ, Mary or other holy people that we call ikons, which are like windows into the spiritual world of truth. Above all else what hits your senses is the music; a choir singing in interwoven harmonies that not only fill the huge space of the church building but your very soul as well.

I hear that not long ago, Vladimir, the ruler of that great country to the north, Russia, wanted his nation to embrace one of the great religions of the world. We are told he sent emissaries to visit the Jews, the Muslims, and the Latin speaking Christians in the west; also ourselves, here in the east, in Byzantium. Reports from the first three faiths did not inspire him, but the emissaries who attended the mass here in this very building told of an experience so beautiful they did not know if they were still upon the earth or actually in heaven! I am told that as a result Vladimir has ordered the whole Russian nation to be baptised into our faith. That is saying something!

Rumor has it that the situation between ourselves, as Greek-speaking Christians in the east, and those who are Latin speaking in the west has not been good for some time. It is not just about language though. We both worship the same Christ and our beliefs are both built on the decisions of the seven councils of the church where east and west worked together. But now the bishop of Rome is claiming superiority over our Patriarch, in that their church was founded by both Peter and Paul and is also so much older. They are beginning to make church decisions among themselves without any reference to those of us in the east. What are things coming to? But what do I know, I'm only a potter ...!

▪ **Western Mediaeval: 13th Century Witness** ¹¹

The church in the west came to dominate political powers in its formation of the religious, social and political entity that was called 'Christendom'; the church controlled the state(s). Yet within this overarching framework individuals and groups were to find God in significant ways and experiment with creative possibilities.

¹¹ See S Murk-Jansen '*Brides in the Desert – the Spirituality of the Beguines*' Darton, Longman & Todd 1998



Dateline: 1220, Paris, France

My name is Juliana and I live in a small community house of spiritual women within the city of Paris. We simply see ourselves as seeking to single-mindedly follow Christ in prayer, study and good works, but others have begun to give us the nickname 'Beguines'; we think it is after some other serious Christians called Albigensies from around the city of Albi in the south of the country.

Local people in the city may well think of us unusual. Of course like them we attend Mass regularly at the local parish church, but we want so much more than that. Being women we cannot become priests, but neither do we wish to become nuns. We have chosen to live an apostolic life dedicated to spirituality, chastity and charity. We choose to live simply but not in poverty. We have taken no vow and have no particular 'rule' that we follow; each community chooses its own pattern of life. At any time we could each return to our homes, families and become married, should we so choose. We are devoted to the Eucharist because it points to the humanity of Christ, which inspires our spirituality and our work with the poor.

There are tens of thousands of us to be found right across Germany, the Low Countries and France. Most of us live as small groups in quite ordinary houses on the streets of large towns and cities. Some come from fairly wealthy families while others of us are from much poorer backgrounds. There are certain women who choose to live alone like 'urban hermits', while others follow our pattern of life while still living at home with their own families. We want to show that we can be dedicated to God without having to retire to the cloister.

Permission for laywomen like ourselves to live in community was granted by the Pope in 1215, but this does not mean that there are not numbers of people suspicious of us. We study theology, but we write and teach it in the popular language of the people, not the Latin of the scholars. Many others are afraid we are 'free spirits', but what is so wrong with that ...?

Turbulence and Expansion - 1500- 2008 CE

From the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation in the 1500's to the cusp of the 20th Century we listen to a further four fictional voices that try to illustrate the continuing range of experiment and expression in what it might mean to be a church.

▪ **Lutheran: 16th Century Witness** ¹²

Reform in the western church had been a regular cry from the 10th Century CE, but the way events eventually unfolded in the early 16th Century took everyone by surprise.

¹² From the wealth of literature on the subject begin with:

J Comby '*How to Read Church History – Vol 2: From the Reformation to the present day*' SCM 1989

J Atkinson '*Martin Luther and the Birth of Protestantism*' Pelican 1982

R Bainton '*Here I Stand*' Lion 1983



Dateline: 1527 CE, Wittenberg, Germany

I am a shoemaker in Wittenberg in Saxony my name is Hans. Wow! At what a pace things have been happening here! It all began when Martin Luther, a local monk and theology teacher in our new university, started a debate about buying indulgences for the forgiveness of sins - the next thing we knew all Germany seems to be turned upside down! Martin loves the church and never wanted or expected anything like this to happen, but now that it has he feels compelled to follow what he sees as biblical truth. The Pope has recently excommunicated him, but those churches following Martin have also broken their links with Rome to follow his ideas.

This is not a revolution, but it is a reform. At first sight our church services may not appear very changed, but they are. Martin is keen that everyone attending the service actively participates, quite different from before. The shape of the liturgy is similar to how it used to be, we still use Latin for parts of the service, but there is so much more German! A mixture of Latin and German hymns and songs not only led by the boys choir but actively encouraging the congregation to sing as well. But we are not doing so well at church singing at the moment. We can sing our hearts out in the tavern but in church we seem reluctant – so many changes – a bit too much for some people!

The biggest change is the place of the Bible in our services followed by the sermon. In our three-hour long Sunday services there is a 15-minute reading of the Bible, often from a Gospel, in German of course, followed by a sermon we can really understand for about three-quarters of an hour. There are also services and sermons for everyone during the week.

What astonishing impact all this is having! You have some changes in theology with huge changes in politics! Yet some people want more. Martin has already had to subdue some younger men here in Wittenberg who thought he was too slow, but further a-field we hear about people called Anabaptists who baptise only adults! Now that is frightening!

▪ **Quaker: 17th Century Witness** ¹³

Church reformation and political revolution in England only increased the momentum of radical experiment with the possibilities of understandings and styles of expressing Christian community and faith; from which a lasting impact has remained.

Dateline: 1654, Bristol, England

“My name is Hannah, a seamstress from Bristol. I am part of the Society of Friends. There has been turmoil across the country these past years, what with king and parliament locked in a ruinous civil war. The poverty and injustice led to loud voices like those of the ‘Levelers’ and the ‘Diggers’ calling for greater political change and equality for all. But, Oh No, it hasn’t stopped there! Freedom of worship under Cromwell saw so many religious groups appear, it

¹³ C Sharman *‘George Fox & The Quaker’* Quaker Home Service 1991
Friends (Ed) *‘Quaker Faith and Practice’* Quaker Books 2005



was enough to make your head spin! From 'Seekers' who turn their back on all religion to 'Ranters' who seem willing to commit any sin to show just how free they are!

Confused, I was invited one night to a meeting in the home of William the tailor. The stranger who was speaking was a certain George Fox. A striking and courageous man who spoke simple clear words about, "Christ being the Light of the world and this light being in everyone, and through the work of the Spirit is gathering all to God," and us being called to walk everyday in this light of Truth. He quoted long passages of scripture straight from memory and spoke with a simple authority quite unlike the parsons in what we now call the 'steeplehouses'. His face shone with a real goodness.

I pondered what I heard that night and became convinced it was the truth. I, and others like-minded, now meet regularly together. There is no minister or sermon, but rather we sit in a circle in quiet meditation open for the Spirit to move one or another to speak. In our daily lives we treat all people as equal with no special respect to those who consider themselves our betters, this is shown in our speech as well. We tell the truth at all times and take no oath even if it costs us harsh punishment. We have turned our back on violence of every kind, including the gallows and slavery, and see the image and likeness of God in everyman.

The Spirit of the light and truth of Christ inspires us often to call on people to, "Tremble before the Lord ..." This has led many people to begin to call us 'Quakers'! But among ourselves we shall always be Friends."

▪ **Methodist: 18th Century Witness** ¹⁴

Some historians believe that 18th Century England was ripe for an equivalent for what would become the French Revolution. But a variety of what have been called spiritual 'awakenings' were to bring a change in the direction of society and the church, not only in England but other parts of the world also.

Dateline: 1745, London, England

The preaching of John Wesley astonished me! This short dapper parson, a university teacher with a cultured voice, holding us ordinary folk spellbound! He spoke of the love of God and divine forgiveness in a way that touched me as nothing else had ever done. As I responded the sense of God's strength within me was overwhelming!

The 'Religious Society' Mr Wesley started here in London meets in a place called the 'Foundry', an old canon factory. We meet weekly for a service with scripture reading, a sermon and prayers, but it is the hymns, written by his

¹⁴ J Comby *'How to Read Church History – Vol 2: From the Reformation to the present day'* SCM 1989 p 94-100

J Hill (Ed) *'The History of Christianity'* (Lion Handbook) Lion Hudson 2007

R Hattersley *'John Wesley: A Brand from the Burning'* Abacus 2004

See: <http://deeplycommitted.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/the-methodist-method.pdf>



brother Charles and with everyone singing, with words like 'O for a thousand tongues to sing!' is quite amazing.

Also during the week we have our 'class' meeting where small groups of us gather to talk about our spiritual struggles and successes and to pray for one another. Every person also brings along a penny to contribute towards the work of the 'Society'. We are encouraged to work hard, to save hard and to give what we can. I am getting better at reading and study so as to improve my mind, alongside developing holiness and godliness in my life. We are encouraged to meet together as often as we can as we are told, "There is no such thing as solitary religion."

People call us 'Methodists' because we have a 'method' in our spiritual life. It started off as a slander, but it seems to have stuck. Well, I don't mind. Mr Wesley encourages us to attend our local parish church as well as coming to the 'Society' and 'class meeting'. He is very clear that this is not a separate church but simply something to support the spiritual life and understanding of people within the Church of England. But I will tell you one thing that is different, here ordinary people, women as well as men, can preach in services without being ordained. I am good at speaking out to groups of people and so at the moment I am studying hard in the hope that sometime soon I can preach my first sermon.

Oxford Movement: 19th Century Witness ¹⁵

This century has been called the 'great century' of the Christian church, with the work of mission taking advantage of global European imperial and economic expansion. There were also further developments in previous ideas of being church along with fresh initiatives in different places. But it was also time for some groups to take stock of exactly where the church was really standing.

Dateline: 1848, Leeds, England

My name is Peter, an Anglican vicar working in a poor parish in a very industrialized part of the city of Leeds, here in the north of England. I do this work out of choice, as a result of the strong influence of what has been called the 'Oxford Movement' on my life. We are all troubled by what is happening in the Church of England these days. Priests introducing hymns and spiritual understandings influenced more by Methodism and general non-conformity than true church tradition. They are weakening both the liturgy and the sacraments. Added to this they are always emphasizing on personal spiritual experience and the constant looking for revival.

As John Keble and Henry Newman have made clear, the Anglican Church is as close to representing the New Testament church, as it is possible to be. There is no Pope, yet it is founded on the authority of the apostles, through the

¹⁵ J Comby *'How to Read Church History – Vol 2: From the Reformation to the present day'* SCM 1989 p 140 -144

J Hill (Ed) *'The History of Christianity'* (Lion Handbook) Lion Hudson 2007

A Vidler *'The Church in the Age of Reason'* Pelican 1990 p 49-56



bishops, and it is deeply sacramental in both its understanding of the Eucharist and life itself.

Why am I working here in a tough parish in Leeds? Because the gospel is for the poor and they deserve the very best from God. Yes, some evangelicals and non-conformists have worked hard among the poor, but these poor are people unschooled and often illiterate, they need ritual with colour, sound and fragrance to stimulate their senses and their faith, not simply words, books and loud songs with thin tunes and shallow theology! There is mystery and reality in the bread and wine for them to discover and centuries-old liturgies to stir their souls. How dare we patronize them with anything less!

People like us are often described as Anglo-Catholic. Of course, there is only one holy catholic and apostolic church'. The Reformation was important, but as Henry Newman has shown the Church of England's 39-Articles can quite easily be interpreted with a Roman Catholic understanding. There are fewer differences than most might believe!

Society and parliament are liberal. Evangelicals and non-conformists emphasise the personal. At least we, and the Catholics, together believe in God, as we should! Now this is the truth I want to share with the poor and needy in Leeds.

EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH

Different examples

With those small mosaics, of ways in which different Christians have what it might mean to be church over nearly 2000 years, behind us. We now reflect on the situation in the light of the last half of the 20th Century (remember that most of the first half was torn apart with global conflict) and today:

- The global Christian community is both thriving and struggling.
- Traditional Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches show a continuing and significant worldwide presence.
- Secular and indigenous cultures present real challenges to traditional understandings of the faith.
- There are many experimental forms of local church: café-church, liquid-church, house-church, pub-church, deep-church, organic-church, fresh-expressions and very many more

Different stories

We now reflect on three different groups on three different continents that are exploring contemporary expressions of church:

- **The Food Pantry**
- **Where?** St Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco, USA



- **Who?** Sara Miles began 'The Food Pantry' having made a Christian commitment only a year previously following a chance and powerful spiritual encounter at a communion service at the church. Both her grandparents were missionaries, however both her parents were atheists.
- **When?** 'The Food Pantry' was founded in 2000 and opens every week on a Friday in the sanctuary around the communion table / altar at the centres of St Gregory's church.
- **What?** 'The Food Pantry' gives away fresh fruit and vegetables plus other groceries completely free to whoever comes, irrespective of their need. They buy about nine tons of food a week, for just pennies a pound, and distribute them to between 450-500 families. Families select the food they need from a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, bread, rice, pasta, beans, cereal, and dry goods.
- **Why?** Sara Miles says, "Honeydew melons. Purple and green plums. Peaches, nectarines, spinach, yellow tomatoes, red tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, artichokes, lettuce, potatoes, onions, scallions, crookneck squash, pears, string beans, okra, apples, broccoli, mangoes, zucchini. On Fridays, our sanctuary is a vision of God's ridiculous, over-the-top abundance. And packing up the leftovers to take down to the soup kitchen, or to serve at coffee hour on Sunday; wrestling boxes of watermelons or composting crates of overripe apricots, we can reflect with new understanding on St. Gregory of Nyssa's observation that 'the fruit of mercy yields much fruit.'
 "God is food. You eat Jesus, become Jesus and spend your life feeding others. Food makes community. Food pantry is Eucharist – we don't run it as a good deed. We run it because we believe that God's vision is abundance for everybody. We set it up around the altar so it looks like a farmers market in heaven! We invite everybody to come around and pick what they want. Everyone is welcome. The principles of what it is to do church are:
 - *All people are God's people.* Some are a pain in the butt! We have a lot of fellowship – but as we argue and rub up against each other. The more you see of God's people – the more you see of God. We insist on giving food to the wrong people
 - *All people have a hunger to give.* I started the food pantry because I stumbled into a church as a badly behaved person and strangers fed me and gave me bread and wine. I decided I wanted to feed other people. A lot of people who have received at our food pantry are hungry to give something away. So our programme is run by people who came hungry and stayed because they wanted to give something away. Instead of charity it becomes communion – in the understand that we all have something to give to each other and our lives are made holy by the work that we do side by side. Particularly when we do the work alongside people who are not like us
 - *Our work together is church.* Church equals people who eat together and praise God

"The Food Pantry is a witness – not of doing good works – but an example of coming to understand how vast and loving God's is and how transforming the worship of God is. It is a way of worshiping together. What makes worship? What makes liturgy? Liturgy comes from the Latin word *leitourgia* meaning public work – community action – it requires everyone to do it because the work is so huge. Everybody has to work away from their own work and join together in a common work. We suggest it is this joint work that nurtures growth in community. So we realise enlightenment through service. We propose that giving people opportunities to serve with in and with out their religious



communities is the surest way to come to spiritual insight and growth. The liturgy is continuous with every day life.”

- **WWW**.thefoodpantry.org
Read Sara Miles’ book **‘Take This Bread’** Ballantine Books 2008
- **Small Boat Big Sea** (SBBS)
- **Where?** Manly, Sydney, Australia
- **Who?** SBBS was founded and is led by Michael Frost who is an international teacher and practitioner on spirituality and mission.
- **When?** SBBS meets as ‘The Lounge’, every Sunday at 5.30pm in the William Street Studios, 3 William Street, Fairlight NSW 2094 and in other groups during the week.
- **What?** SBBS expresses its community life in a number of ways.
 - ‘The Lounge’ is church stripped of its formality. Most of the members are involved in the service, which takes place amid soft lounge chairs and couches. Laid back outwardly, they are nonetheless committed activists. We meet weekly to share in a community meal. We bring food to share with everyone and visitors and guests eat freely.
 - ‘DNA Groups’ where DNA stands for "Discipleship, Nurture, Accountability". Every person in our community is encouraged to join a DNA. These are groups of 2 to 5 people who meet regularly to talk, support and pray for each other.
 - ‘BELLS’ is a principle of life that shapes both liturgy and everyday living, based on the words; Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn and Sent.
- **Why?** “At SBBS Mission is the energizing principle. We’re trying to develop a Christian community as a gathering of people who want more from Church than a few pop songs and a long sermon. It’s a place for people who want to develop their Christian spirituality and grow in their faith. It’s a safe space for the creation of community. It’s a commitment to care for the needy and the lonely. It’s table space for the hungry and those who like life tasty with lots of garlic and spice. It’s a new model of church that transcends liturgy and patriarchal leadership. It’s a large, comfy space that fits you.

“Food is central. We feature great cuisine, cheap wine, beautiful music from around the world. We place worship and communion back where it began, as a delight in the middle of the shared table. Participants are invited to join a community who are concerned with global issues; who pray for peace; who work toward the extension of God’s Kingdom around the world; who are committed to truth, justice and mercy; who listen to God’s Word; who feed the poor and take in the lost. We see our mission as:

- *Communing with God* to create an expansive Christian spirituality that infuses daily life
- *Creating a Community* of safety, grace & healing that shares kingdom building adventures in Manly & beyond



- *Commissioning People* to create a just, safe & beautiful world for everyone
- *Catalysing a Moment* that provides a relevant & creative Christian spirituality for Australians

“We seek to shape our daily lives through a weekly rhythm of BELLS:

- Seeking to *bless* someone, whether from our community or beyond every week. This might take the form of an encouraging note or email, a phone call, a gift, an act of kindness, or donations to causes or charities
- Attempting to *eat* with someone that we don't live with every week. This might be a full meal or as little as a cup of coffee
- Seeking to develop a practice of *listening* so that we take time, at least once each week, to listen to God's voice. This might take the form of a prayer walk along a beach, listening to music, or mediation.
- *Learning* to develop a discipline of studying the Scriptures or reading other literature that gives insight into the nature of God.
- Looking for ways in which our daily routines are expressions of God's calling on our lives and recognising the ways in which we have been *sent* to do his work.

- **WWW.**smallboatbigsea.org

- **Headspace**

- **Where?** Kennington, London, United Kingdom
- **Who?** Headspace is part of the a church in the Waterloo area of London called Church.co.uk
- **When?** The Headspace community meet on Sunday evenings in the church building
- **What?** Headspace was formed in 2004. They meet on Sunday evenings in the church building. If you were to visit a service you may experience something quite reflective and creative or you may experience a theoretical discussion about a particular topic or value. Everyone is encouraged to socialise together in the local pub after the evening service and this is seen as important as the evening service.
- **Why?** “In a sense Headspace is a hybrid of a house church. It doesn't meet in a house but its emphasis on relationship rather than ‘programme’ or set form. We work to build community. The Headspace service tends towards group reflection on a particular theme – communal interpretation of scripture and communal living of this interpretation. The community does not have a particular leader. Rather a group of people meet on a monthly basis at an open planning meeting (usually in the local pub) and whoever is around joins in planning what topics and themes will be explored in the coming month. Inclusively is a core value of the community.

“As a community we have recently worked through issues such as notions of Christmas, salvation, sanctification and worship. This communal exploration can lead to a whole spectrum of opinions, which may not be comfortable for people of a more traditional churchmanship.



“People who are in the community tend to meet up through the week to eat and socialise together and this happens organically rather than through a structured programme of activities.

“Headspace is a relatively new church, but in the time since it began it has taken on different expressions and identities but the above describes Headspace at this current time.”

- **WWW.** church.co.uk/waterloo/main/headspace.htm

Questions

1. In what areas you believe Christians are weak in their understanding of the church?
2. How should our understanding of the biblical concept of church affect our lifestyle both individually and corporately?
3. Having studied this session, what picture now comes to your mind when you hear the word 'church'?

Reading and Resources

- R Banks *'Paul's Idea of Community'* Hendrickson 1994
GR Beasley-Murray *'Baptism in the New Testament'* Eerdmans 1973
A Dulles *'Models of the Church'* Doubleday 1978
RN Flew *'Jesus and his Church'* Abingdon 1938
S Miles *'Take This Bread'* Ballantine Books 2007
P Minear *'Images of the Church in the New Testament'* James Clarke 1960 /2007
S Murray *'Church After Christendom'* Paternoster 2004
E Kreider *'Communion Shapes Character'* Herald 1997
H Kung *'The Church'* Shreed & Ward 1967
G Lohfink *'Jesus And Community'* Paulist Press 1984
J Moltmann *'The Church in the Power of the Spirit'* SCM 1977
C Raphael *'A Feast of History'* Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1982
JL Segundo *'The Community called Church'* Orbis 1973
J Vanier *'Community And Growth'* DLT 1989

