

## Overview

Discipleship is personal but not individualistic. At our baptism we become part of the Church. We are commissioned to shine as lights in the world to the glory of God, and our journey of discipleship begins. How do we understand what it means to belong to and be part of the Church, and to keep focussed on the hope that we have in Jesus Christ in everyday situations? This session explores what we mean by 'church' and how we live as the church in the world.

***This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions***

## Activity

**What does 'The Church' mean to you?**

Write your responses on individual post it notes or slips of paper

## Perspective

### Gathered and Dispersed Church

The church is most generally recognised in its Gathered Form. Here the people of God come together for worship, learning and fellowship. They come together at specific times and in specific places, in large or small groups. As a Gathered Church, people readily identify themselves as part of a community of faith. In this context people talk about 'going' to church.



The church also exists in its Dispersed form. Here, the people of God are engaged in daily living, that is 'being' church in the world.

They may or may not be consciously alongside other Christians but are working out what their faith means in the places where they find themselves. Helpful images for the church in its Dispersed form are gathered around light, salt or yeast (all from parables of Jesus): invisible, but having a profound effect on the flavour and life of the world.



## Perspective

### Living as the Dispersed Church

"A report was requested, framed by several "church gathered" questions. I decided to answer them using a two column chart. One column is titled "Church Gathered" while the other is "Church Dispersed." I then used the two church forms as lens to focus the questions. For example, the first question asks "since the last report, how has the spirit/life of the congregation changed?" I answered the question under the "Gathered" side which produced stock answers with churchy language. When I moved the question to the "Church Dispersed," I first noticed that I needed to radically reinterpret the data. To illustrate, under the Gathered column I noted that we had three leaders facing significant medical diagnostic tests. That prompted comments about pastoral concerns and support.

When I took that data and view it through the Dispersed lens, I awakened to the fact that three committed Christians were frequenting medical facilities. While I do not yet have ways of knowing much about their experiences, the Dispersed Lens brought better

questions into focus: "how does our liturgy help people "be" the church as a patient undergoing tests? How to they encounter Christ in such circumstance? What would help them be a point of God's presence, even in their illnesses? Perhaps other questions will arise.

For now, I realized that merely using the Church Dispersed frame brought a fresh standpoint from which to view the situation."

*Rick Brewer*

### Question

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**Can you think of a story from your own discipleship that would illustrate salt, light or yeast?**

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### Perspective

#### **Whose Mission?**

God's church falters from exhaustion because Christians erroneously think that God has given them a mission to perform in the world. Rather, the God of mission has given his church to the world. It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world.

*Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, a Heart for Mission by Tim Dearborn  
(Marc Publishing, 1998)*

### Discussion

**What would be different for the church if we focussed on God's mission?**

### Perspective

#### **5 Marks of Mission**

The Anglican Church has identified 5 'Marks' of mission, which should characterise the life every 'church', local, national, denominational and global.

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

*These Five Marks of Mission were first set out in Bonds of Affection  
1984 ACC-6 p49 and later in Mission in a Broken World - 1990 ACC-8 p101*

Question

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**How does our experience of working with God through these 5 Marks of Mission, bring energy and hope back into the gathered church?**

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Perspective

**The Ground of our Hope**

You must realise that perhaps the most important moment in the worship service is the moment in which you leave the church (*building*). Then it is decided whether you have understood why you spent that hour behind those walls. Do you realise that even when you were outside the walls of the church you never the less do not cease to be a congregation. Your Christian service begins quite modestly with listening to the questions of others, talking them over and holding your peace. They all have questions, the neighbour and the colleague at work, the head of a firm and the employee, the merchant, the public official, the farmer, the union official and the politician, the Marxist and the atheist. Whether or not they address their questions to us depends on whether we take them seriously with their problems, or whether we merely push our own questions and answers in front of us like a bulldozer that levels everything to 'Christian dimensions'. We should allow their questions to confront us, and listen attentively to them. Our answers must have a solid foundation and must never be proposed on the basis of presumption or superficial views. The New Testament admonishes us ;

“Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you concerning the ground of the hope that is in you” (1Peter 3:15)

*From 'The Christian Witness in an Industrial Society' by Horst Symanowski  
(Collins, 1964)*

Question

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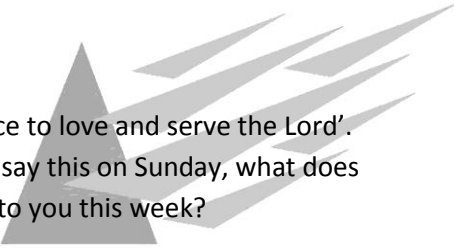
**Based on the ground of hope quotation, what have the previous 4 sessions given you as a ground of hope?**

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### Discussion

**As we return to Sunday, how best could we encourage and support each other in the challenges of living our daily lives as disciples of Christ?**

***During the week you might like to reflect on:***



'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'.  
When you say this on Sunday, what does  
this mean to you this week?

### Ponder

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**What did you learn from this session and what difference might it make to your discipleship?**

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### Closing Prayer

Lord,  
Whatever we build,  
**Give us a glimpse of glory.**  
Whatever we make,  
**Give us a sense of wonder.**  
Wherever we travel,  
**Give us a sense of reverence.**  
Whoever we meet,  
**Give us a sense of awe.**  
Whatever we do,  
**Give us a sense of achievement.**  
Whatever our situation,  
**Give us knowledge of you.**  
**Help us to see that everything is in your care**  
**And that you allow us to share in your glory**

*From 'Powerlines: Celtic Prayers About Work' by David Adam (Triangle, 1992)*