

in society.

The denominational barriers that seek to separate us need to be broken down, so that we can effectively carry out our work and witness as a Church in the wider world. As Christians, we are the ones who represent Christ, and so we must be God's hands and feet in order to effectively minister to others. This ministry we can carry out by way of our vocations/talents/professions. The question therefore is, are we using these gifts with which God has blessed us to carry out the mission and ministry of the Church? As teachers, doctors, lawyers, chefs and farmers, in what ways can we collectively touch the lives of people in our churches and communities who are in need? This is important, because it is through us - by way of what we do and how we live our lives, that people can be effectively drawn to Christ. We therefore must play our part as the Church, so that others can truly feel and experience the reality that God is indeed alive and well among us, even in trying and testing times.

**Question for Reflection:** How can the quality of lives that we live as Christians enhance or affect our ministry and witness as a Church in our communities?

### Conclusion

So, whereas the physical building (church) is important in reminding us that Christ is with us, the presence and actions of the people/members of the church are of an even greater significance, because when we are able to touch the lives of people in tangible/practical ways, then for them, God becomes more realistic for them, because through us as Christians, they will experience

the transforming power of God's love. Let Jesus be seen in us by the community, via us sharing the goodness and love that Jesus has for them. A love which should be made known to everyone so that they can experience God's saving grace (through us) in their daily lives.

### References

Matthews E. M. (2007). *The Collected works of Edward M. Matthews Volume III*. San Diego, Canada: St. Alban Press.



The Church is the Body of  
Christ



# The Church as a symbol of Christ's presence in Community



## What is the Church?

Standing magnificently on a hilltop, at an intersection or at a very prominent/noticeable location, resides many of our Anglican Churches. These locations, it is said, were strategically selected because the physical structures of the church served as a reminder to communities that Jesus is among them always. This assurance of God's presence, is often depicted by the high steeple, a cross on the building, and the ringing of the bell (which calls the community to worship, and in some instances, informs them of a marriage or death in the community by the way it is rung). As a result, irrespective of denomination, the church is regarded as being a "Holy Place" by members of the community, because this is where the community gathers to worship God. However, this respect for the church has depleted in the past few years. In what ways is this seen? Why do you think this happens?

Additionally, the atmosphere inside an Anglican Church is one which stimulates the senses to be actively engaged in worship. The positioning of the altar at the front or centre of the church; the baptismal font near an entrance (especially at the back) of the church; the lit candles, the burning of incense, the Trinity symbol on the pews, the processional cross, and the crosses on the walls are only but a few of the ways in which this is achieved, so that our worship of God may be made meaningful.

In examining a definition for church, Encarta Reference Library (2005) defines the church as "a

building for public worship, especially in the Christian religion". However, it should be noted that the Church is also defined as the Body of Christ throughout the world. Have you noticed the difference in cases (upper and lower) for each word, and their associated meanings?

### The Church as the Body of Christ

When we think of the word "church", a physical building may come to mind where Christians gather to give worship/worship to God. However, the



Church is in fact the Body of Christ—people who are believers in Jesus. From an ecumenical standpoint, therefore, the Church actually extends beyond/break all denominational barriers, because once we believe that Jesus is Lord and are identified as Christians by virtue of our baptism, then that makes us all a part of the Body of Christ. It is sad that we sometimes cause our different denominations to let it appear as if we are not one big family. Why does this happen?

According to Matthews (2007), up to the year 1054 ACE, the Church did not see itself as being broken. They acknowledged that they had their different roots/patriarchs (Church of: Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Rome), but the Church still saw itself as one, because everyone had a common mission of serving God and each other, based on the commandments that Jesus instructs us all to live by, which is to love God with all our heart, mind,

soul and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31).

### The Church is Christ's Witness in the World

As the Body of Christ, therefore, we represent Jesus in the world. Unlike the church/physical building, which is fixed, we are able to move about, thus being able to demonstrate to the world, the reality that Christ is alive and well. We represent Christ, and so like the practices of the Early Church, (Acts 2:43-45; 2 Corinthians 9:12-13), we too should be ensuring that the needs of the poor, hungry, oppressed, and those who are without clothing and shelter are met. Are we doing this as a Church? In what ways can we embark on such missions?

When the collection was received in the Early



Church, it was used to provide for the homeless, the orphaned, the widow as well as to pay the travelling expenses for the apostles as they moved from one territory to the next (Acts 4:32-45; 6:1-6; 2.Cor.11:7-9 ).

Bearing this in mind, are our collections taken by our churches today used to carry out these ministries? If someone is homeless because of a fire for instance, do we come together as a Church and see how it is that we can address this issue? Ministries such as these are vital in demonstrating that Christ is present among the people in the community, and it therefore speaks to the reality that the Church needs to be active and proactive