CARLISLE DIOCESE

BEING THE CHURCH PREPARATION

LIVING your call

The basics

It can be hard to explain parts of our faith to other people. Often we turn to pictures or images to help. People have used many different images to try to describe the church: one writer counted 96 images of the church in the New Testament! And many more have been used over the centuries. They have included the church as a family, a body, a bride, an army, a vine, a flock, and a building.

Can you think of three ways you could complete the following sentence if you were describing the church to a new Christian?

The church is like _____ because _____.

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Going deeper

1. Read the bible passages for each of the images in the table on the following page. How does each passage help us understand the church?

2. Read the passage in the context of the whole chapter (If you're using the online link, just under the passage there is a link "Read full chapter"). Does this change what you thought when you read the shorter passage?

3. Compare the different images. Put ticks for the two most preferred pictures/images/models. Put crosses for the two least preferred picture/image/model.

4. Look at what you have filled in and written down
   a. Are there tensions or differences between what your own and your church's preferences are?
   b. Are there tensions or differences between what your church teaches, and how it operates in practice?
   c. Are the 2 preferred pictures in each column both of a similar 'type'? Is the main focus of those pictures on relationship with God or on relationship with each other? Is the image of the church in those pictures one of being engaged with the world, in conflict with the world, or separated from the world? Is the main focus of these pictures of the church ' here and now' or in eternity?
   d. Do you think that you and your church have a well-balanced emphasis, or is it rather one-sided? (e.g. If the preferred pictures all focus on separation from the world, this is unbalanced).

5. What do you think are the strengths and the weaknesses of each of the pictures? (None of them is complete or adequate on its own).
   a. Looking at the preferences again, what are the strengths and weaknesses of your own and your church's pictures?
   b. Can you see any ways in which the weaknesses or imbalances are affecting the life of your church?
   c. Does anything need to be done about the weaknesses and gaps in the overall picture? If so, what?

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Biblical Picture / Image / Model of the Church	Biblical References	Notes	Which do your church teach and preach about most?	Which are your own preferences?
The Family of God	Galatians 6.10			
The Body of Christ	1 Corinthians 12.12-14			
The Bride of Christ	Revelation 21.2			
The Army of God	Ephesians 6.11-13			

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Salt and Light to the World	Matthew 5.13-16			
Citizens of Heaven	Philippians 3.20			
The Vine	John 15.1-5			
The People of God / Holy Priesthood / Building	1 Peter 2.4-10 Ephesians 2.19-22			
Christ's Flock	John 10.11-16			