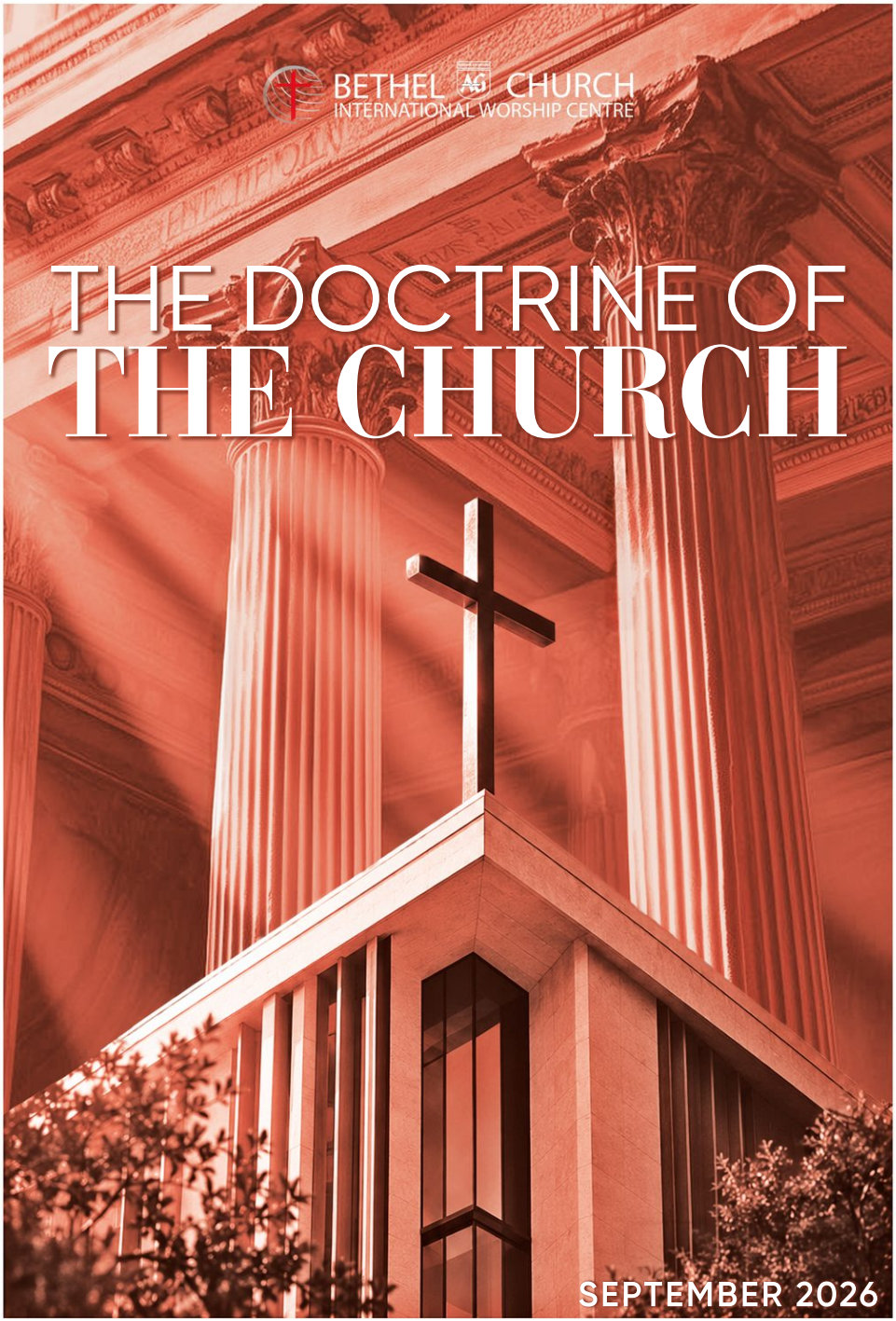

BETHEL AG CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE
THE DOCTRINE OF
THE CHURCH
SEPTEMBER 2026

# INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the Church, or *'ecclesiology',* explores what the Church is, why God called it into existence, and how to live out its calling in the world. The Church is far more than a building, denomination, institution, or Sunday gathering. It is a community formed by the gospel—people reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, united to Christ, and brought together by the Holy Spirit.

While our relationship with God is personal, it was never meant to be private. God's saving work has always been forming a people. In Christ, people from different cultures, generations, backgrounds, and social groups are brought together into *one new humanity* (Ephesians 2:11–22). The Christian life is therefore not simply *"Jesus and me,"* but life in Christ with His people, through the Spirit, for the sake of the world. **We cannot fully live the Christian life without belonging to the Church.**

Ecclesiology therefore asks some essential questions: *What is the Church? What is its nature and mission? Why does following Jesus require belonging to His people? And how does the Church participate in God's redemptive purposes in the world?*

Lord Jesus being the Head of the church said, *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). Ultimately, ecclesiology brings us back to Jesus—the One who builds, leads, loves, and gave Himself for the Church.

**To understand the Church is to understand God's people, God's presence, and God's mission in the world.**

# THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

The Church was not the result of the apostles' decision to establish an organization, nor was it a practical arrangement developed by early believers to preserve Jesus' teachings. From the beginning, God Himself intended to gather a people who would know Him, worship Him, live under His rule, and bear witness to His purposes in the world.

The Church, therefore, is not merely a human initiative formed around shared beliefs or religious practices; it is a community called into being by God through the saving work of Jesus Christ and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

So, **church is envisioned by God, established by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

## *Envisioned by God*

God has always desired a people who would belong to Him. After humanity's fall, His redemptive purpose unfolded through Abraham and his descendants. He chose Israel as His treasured possession and called them to live as a people devoted to Him (Deuteronomy 7:6), through whom His name would be made known among the nations.

Israel's repeated unfaithfulness, however, did not cancel God's purpose. His plan moved towards fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God gathered a people whose identity was no longer determined by ethnicity, nationality, culture, or social status, but by faith in Christ.

Peter describes them as **"a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession"** (1 Peter 2:9).

The Church, therefore, is not an afterthought. It belongs to God's unfolding purpose to gather a people for Himself.

## *Established by Christ*

Jesus made the Church's foundation clear: *"I will build my church"* (Matthew 16:18). The Church belongs to Christ. He is its Lord, Head, and Foundation.

Jesus established the Church through the whole movement of His life and ministry. He called disciples, proclaimed God's Kingdom, formed a new community around Himself, taught them a new way of life, and prepared them to continue His mission. His death and resurrection became the decisive foundation:

## The Birthday of the Church

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. The Church was not created simply through human organisation; it was born through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and that they would become His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

On the day of Pentecost, three signs accompanied the Spirit's coming: the sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues as of fire resting upon the believers, and speaking in other tongues (Acts 2:1–4). The wind speaks of the Spirit's life-giving and sovereign power; the fire recalls the holy presence of God and His empowering presence; and tongues become a visible sign that the gospel is destined for every people and language.

The first Christian community was therefore born as a Spirit-filled, worshipping and missionary community. People from many nations heard the disciples declaring the mighty works of God in their own languages (Acts 2:5–11). Diversity was not an obstacle to the Church's unity; the Spirit gathered people from different cultures into one new community in Christ.

Pentecost was not merely a spectacular spiritual experience. The Spirit created a community devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, generosity and mission (Acts 2:42–47).

at the cross He dealt with sin and reconciled us to God; through His resurrection He inaugurated new creation and the hope of resurrection life. He then commissioned His followers to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20).

The Church is the people gathered by Christ's saving work and sent to participate in His mission.

## *Empowered by the Spirit*

The Church was brought to life through the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). This was the birth of the Church. What began as a small and uncertain group of disciples became a bold, worshipping, witnessing community. Peter proclaimed the risen Christ, and about three thousand people believed, were baptised, and were added to the Church (Acts 2:41).

Pentecost was not simply a remarkable spiritual experience; it was the moment when the risen Christ empowered His people for their mission. The same Spirit who came upon the disciples, brings believers together as one body (1 Corinthians 12:13), gives spiritual gifts, and empowers the Church for witness and service (Acts 1:8).

The Church, therefore, has a Trinitarian beginning: envisioned by the Father, established by the Son, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Church is God's people, Christ's body, and the Spirit's dwelling place—called to display God's presence and purposes in the world.

# THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

***What Is the Church Supposed to Be?***

The Church is not simply defined by what happens when people gather on a Sunday. Scripture gives us a much richer picture of what the Church is meant to be.



Two important New Testament words help us understand its nature: *ekklesia* and *koinonia*.

## 1. The Church is an Ekklesia — A People Called and Gathered

The Greek word *'ekklesia'* means an assembly or gathering. In the New Testament, it refers to people who have been called together as God's people. The emphasis is not primarily on a place but on the people.

The Church exists because Christ calls people to Himself and gathers them into a new community. We are a people who share a common Lord, a common faith, and a common calling.

The *'ekklesia'* has several defining characteristics:

- **Called by Christ** — We belong to Jesus before we belong to any congregation, denomination, or ministry (Mark 1:16–20; John 15:16).

- **Gathered in His name** — We come together for worship, prayer, teaching, communion, fellowship, and mutual encouragement (Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:42).

- **Shaped by the Word** — Scripture forms our beliefs, values, character, and way of life (John 17:17; Acts 2:42).

- **Ordered as a community** — The Church has leaders, responsibilities, spiritual gifts, and structures that enable it to function faithfully (Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Corinthians 12:4–7).

- **Distinct from the world** — The Church is called to embody a different way of living: holiness, love, justice, generosity, forgiveness, and faithfulness (Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 2:9–12).

- **Sent on mission** — The Church does not exist merely for itself. Jesus sends His people to make disciples and bear witness to the kingdom of God (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8).

Therefore, *'ekklesia'* reminds us that church is not something we merely attend; it is a people to whom we belong and among whom we have a calling.

## 2. The Church is Koinonia — A Community of Shared Life

If *'ekklesia'* tells us who we are as a gathered people, *'koinonia'* describes how we are to live with one another.

Koinonia is often translated as *"fellowship,"* but its meaning is richer than social interaction or spending time together. It carries the idea of sharing, participation, partnership, and communion. Christian fellowship is not simply having coffee after a service or belonging to the same group. It is sharing life because we have been united to Christ.

The early Church gives us a beautiful picture of this kind of community (Acts 2:42–47).

*Koinonia* has several defining characteristics:

- **Belonging** — We are members of God's household and belong to one another (Ephesians 2:19; Romans 12:5).

- **Shared life** — We carry one another's burdens, celebrate one another's victories, and walk through difficulties together (Acts 2:44–45; 1 Corinthians 12:26).

- **Mutual care** — We are called to encourage, pray for, forgive, bear with, and serve one another (Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; James 5:16).

- **Participation** — Every believer has a place and a contribution to make. The Spirit gives different gifts for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7, 12–27).

- **Unity in diversity** — Differences of language, culture, generation, education, profession, and background do not have the power to divide those who are united in Christ (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14–18).

- **Presence** — Christian community means being present for one another in both joy and suffering (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26).

Ekklesia says, *"We are God's people, called and gathered by Christ."*

Koinonia says, *"Because we belong to Christ, we belong to one another."*



# THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

The Church is the fruit of the gospel. Through His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ accomplished what sinful humanity could never accomplish: He dealt with sin, reconciled us to God, defeated death, and opened the way into God's presence. This is the good news—the gospel.

The Church is the community created by this gospel—a people who, despite their sin and brokenness, are accepted by God through Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit to live, worship, and rejoice in His presence. We gather because Christ has made a way for us to belong to God and to one another.

Flowing from the gospel, Christ gave His Church two visible practices: **Water Baptism and Holy Communion.** These ordinances are commands given by Christ through which the gospel is remembered, proclaimed, and embodied. They do not earn salvation or replace faith; they are visible expressions of an inward faith and continually remind us of what Christ has done.

## 1. Baptism — Identifying with Christ

Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples, *"baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19). From the beginning, those who believed the gospel were baptised and added to the Church (Acts 2:38–41; 8:12; 10:44–48).

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward response to the gospel. Through baptism by faith, believers publicly identify with Christ and declare that they belong to Him. Baptism therefore portrays the gospel itself: death to the old life, burial with Christ, and resurrection to new life (Romans 6:3–4; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27).

Baptism also brings a believer into the community of Christ. We are not baptised into a private faith but, through the Spirit, brought into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). It therefore carries both a personal and communal meaning.

The New Testament presents baptism as following faith in Christ (Acts 2:41; 8:36–38; 16:30–34). The water does not save us; Christ saves us. Baptism does not produce faith; it expresses faith. It is a public declaration of allegiance: *"I belong to Christ, and I will follow Him."*

## 2. Holy Communion — Remembering and Proclaiming Christ

Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper, was instituted by Jesus on the night before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20). Taking the bread and the cup, He commanded His disciples to continue the practice in remembrance of Him: *"Do this in remembrance of me"* (1 Corinthians 11:24–25).

Communion remembers Christ—His incarnation, sacrificial death, resurrection, and the new covenant established through His blood. Biblical remembrance is more than recalling the past; it is a faith-filled remembering that brings the significance of Christ's work into our present lives (2 Timothy 2:8).

Communion also proclaims the gospel: *"you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"* (1 Corinthians 11:26). As the Church gathers at the Lord's Table, we declare that our salvation rests not on our goodness but on the self-giving love of Christ.

At the same time, Communion expresses our participation in Christ and our unity with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16–17). We come to the Table as one body, which is why Paul takes seriously the way believers treat one another (1 Corinthians 11:17–22, 27–29).

Communion is therefore both celebration and examination. We receive God's grace with gratitude while examining our lives and relationships (1 Corinthians 11:28). We come with faith, repentance, reconciliation, and renewed commitment to Christ.

Every Communion looks in three directions: **backward to the cross, inward in faith and self-examination, and forward to Christ's return.**

So, Water Baptism declares, *"I belong to Christ."* Holy Communion declares, *"I remember Christ, I participate in His life with His people, and I await His coming."*



# THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

**What is the Church Supposed to do?**

The Mission of the Church is ultimately found in the two statements of Jesus: **The Great Commandment and the Great Commission.** These two statements provide a framework for understanding the mission of the Church.

The Church exists to love God through worship, love people through ministry, proclaim Christ through evangelism, bring people into His community through baptism and fellowship, and form them into mature followers of Jesus through discipleship. These are not separate programs of the Church but different expressions of the one mission Christ has entrusted to His people.

### *The Great Commandment*

*Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."* – Matthew 22:37-40

### *The Great Commission*

*"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* – Matthew 28:19-20

*The Fivefold Mission of the Church*

1. Love God → **WORSHIP**
   We exist for God.
2. Love your neighbour → **MINISTRY**
   We exist for people.
3. Go and make disciples → **EVANGELISM**
   We take the gospel to people who do not yet know Christ.
4. Baptize them → **FELLOWSHIP**
   We bring those who respond to Christ into His people.
5. Teach them to obey → **DISCIPLESHIP**
   We help them grow into mature followers of Jesus.




## 1. Love God with All Your Heart — WORSHIP

The Church exists first to know, love, glorify, and enjoy God. Jesus said, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"* (Matthew 22:37).

Worship is more than singing or attending a service; it is the whole person's response to who God is and what He has done. The Church worships through praise, prayer, Scripture, Communion, thanksgiving,

and spiritual gifts, but worship also extends into everyday life. As Paul writes, offering our bodies to God is *"a living sacrifice"* and true worship (Romans 12:1).

## 2. Love Your Neighbour as Yourself — MINISTRY

The Church exists to love people by serving them and embodying Christ's Christ's compassion. Jesus said, *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Matthew 22:39).

Jesus welcomed the overlooked, cared for the hurting, fed the hungry, restored the broken, and defended the vulnerable (Matthew 9:35–36; Mark 10:45; Luke 4:18–19). Ministry is therefore love made practical—caring for people in practical ways—helping the poor and vulnerable, visiting the sick, supporting families in difficult times, counselling those who are hurting, standing for what is right,

## Church Health Check

In Revelation 2–3, Jesus speaks directly to seven churches in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These were real churches facing real pressures, but their messages also speak to the Church in every generation. The repeated words, *"Let anyone who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Revelation 2:7), remind us that these are not merely historical letters.

Together, they provide a kind of spiritual health check for the Church. Ephesus reminds us that truth and hard work cannot replace love for Christ. Smyrna shows that faithfulness matters more than comfort or material success. Pergamum and Thyatira warn against compromise with the culture and false teaching. Sardis exposes the danger of having a reputation for being alive while actually being spiritually dead. Philadelphia encourages perseverance and faithful witness despite weakness. Laodicea confronts self-sufficiency, lukewarmness, and the illusion that material prosperity equals spiritual health.

These churches remind us that Christ is not merely the founder of the Church; He walks among the churches and knows them completely (Revelation 1:12–13, 20; 2:1). He commends, corrects, calls to repentance, and promises reward to those who overcome. The question for the Church today is *"What does Jesus see when He looks at us?"*

The seven churches call us to remain truthful, loving, faithful, holy, Spirit-filled, discerning, and continually dependent on Christ.

being generous, and meeting the needs of our community (James 2:1–9).

The Holy Spirit equips every believer with spiritual gifts to strengthen the Church, serve others, and participate in God's mission. These gifts include serving, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership, administration, mercy, words of wisdom and knowledge, faith, healing, discernment, and many others (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:8–11, 28; Ephesians 4:11–13). No believer is without something to contribute. The Spirit gives each person gifts to be used for the good of others and the building up of Christ's body.

### 3. Go and Make Disciples — EVANGELISM

The Church exists to proclaim the gospel and invite people to become disciples of Jesus. Jesus commanded, *"Go and make disciples of all nations"* (Matthew 28:19).

Evangelism is more than inviting people to church or promoting Christian values. It is bearing witness to Jesus—His life, death, resurrection, and saving work—and inviting people to respond to the gospel. Every believer is called to be Christ's witness in homes, friendships, workplaces, communities, neighbourhoods, and every sphere of life (Acts 1:8).

The Church must therefore remain outward-looking and mission-focused to the world.

## 4. Baptize Them — FELLOWSHIP AND BELONGING

Baptism identifies us with Christ and brings us into His people. The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone. We belong to Christ, and therefore we belong to one another.

The early Church shared life through fellowship, meals, prayer, mutual care, and generosity (Acts 2:42–47). In a large church, however, attending the same service does not automatically create community. Meaningful fellowship requires moving from attending to belonging.

Small groups provide space to build relationships, study Scripture, pray, share burdens, and encourage one another (Romans 12:4–5, 15; Galatians 6:2). Serving teams also help people discover their gifts, develop friendships, and

### Church and Israel

The Church does not replace Israel, nor should the Church understand itself apart from Israel. The story of the Church is rooted in God's covenant purposes revealed through Israel and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

God chose Israel to be His covenant people and called them to know Him, worship Him, and be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1–3; Exodus 19:5–6). Through Israel came the Scriptures, the covenants, the promises, and ultimately the Messiah according to the flesh (Romans 9:4–5).

Jesus did not come to abandon God's purposes but to fulfil them (Matthew 5:17). The early Church was initially made up largely of Jewish believers, and the gospel then extended to the Gentiles. Through Christ, Jews and Gentiles are brought together into one new humanity and one body (Ephesians 2:11–22). Gentile believers are described as being *"grafted in"* to the olive tree and are warned not to become proud toward the natural branches (Romans 11:17–20).

Therefore, the Church should never respond to Israel with arrogance, hostility, or contempt. Paul reminds us that *"God's gifts and his call are irrevocable"* (Romans 11:29). At the same time, the Church's hope is centred entirely on Jesus Christ, not on ethnicity or national identity.

The Church is a people from every nation, tribe, people and language, united in Christ (Revelation 7:9). We honour Israel's place in God's redemptive story while proclaiming that salvation is found in Jesus Christ.

participate in the Church's mission (1 Corinthians 12:4–7, 12–27).

The Church brings people into the family of God, where they belong, serve, and share life together.

### 5. Teach Them to Obey — DISCIPLESHIP

The Church exists not simply to make converts but to form people into the likeness of Jesus. Jesus commanded His disciples to teach believers *"to obey everything I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:20).

Discipleship is more than gaining biblical knowledge. It means learning to follow Jesus in every area of life—to think, love, live, and serve like Him. The Church teaches Scripture, cultivates spiritual practices, forms character, equips believers to use their gifts, and helps one another grow toward maturity (Ephesians 4:11–16; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

The goal is not simply information but transformation—disciples who increasingly become like Jesus and faithfully live His way.



# THE 7 BIBLICAL METAPHORS FOR CHURCH

The New Testament uses many different images and metaphors to help us understand the Church. This is important because no single description can capture everything the Church is. The Church is not merely an organization, institution, gathering, or building. It is a living community created by God, centred on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Biblical metaphors allow us to see different dimensions of this reality.

1. **Body of Christ** — the Church is a living body, with Christ as the Head and believers as interconnected members of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 1:22–23; 4:15–16). No member is unnecessary, and no member is the whole body. This metaphor emphasizes our interdependence to work in unity in the midst of diversity.

2. **Temple of God** — In the New Testament, God's presence is associated with the gathered people of God as well as individually by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis is not primarily that the church building is holy rather how we treat the community as the Spirit of the Lord is in its midst (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19; Ephesians 2:21–22; 1 Peter 2:5).

3. **Bride of Christ** — Christ doesn't merely lead His Church rather He loves and gives Himself for her. This metaphor highlights the extraordinary love of Christ for His Church and we the church are in a covenant relationship with God. It also points towards purity, faithfulness and ultimately the union of Christ with His people.

(Ephesians 5:25–32; Revelation 19:7–9; 21:2, 9).

4. **Flock of God** — The Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd and God's people are the sheep who are cared for and guided by the Shepherd (John 10:1–18; 1 Peter 5:2–4). Even the church leaders are called to shepherd under Christ. The metaphor carries both comfort for believers and accountability for church leaders.

5. **Building of God** — The Church is not a finished structure. It is God's ongoing building project. Christ is the foundation, and believers are being built together into a dwelling place for God. This gives a beautiful picture of spiritual maturity and the importance of building carefully (1 Corinthians 3:9–11; Ephesians 2:19–22).

6. **Vine and branches** — This metaphor is primarily for our relationship and dependence upon Christ, rather than a local institutional church. Jesus says 'He is the true vine' and His disciples are the branches. Our life and fruitfulness depend on remaining in Christ (John 15:1–8).

7. **Family of God** — God adopted us into His family by His Spirit and we're to treat one another as God's family. This metaphor provides a strong foundation for belonging and fellowship with one another emphasizing family responsibilities and mutual care (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 6:10).

No single metaphor is sufficient to describe the Church. Together, these biblical images give us a fuller picture. The Church is Christ's body, God's temple, Christ's bride, God's flock, His building, His family, and a community that must continually abide in Christ. Each metaphor reveals

something different: our identity, God's presence, our relationship with Christ, our care for one another, our unity, our dependence, and our mission. Taken together, they remind us that the Church is not merely an organisation that Christians join but a living community formed by God, centred on Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, and called to embody God's purposes in the world.

## CONCLUSION

The Church is God's Church. Jesus said, *"I will build my church"* (Matthew 16:18), and that promise still stands. The Church has survived persecution, opposition, political powers, cultural revolutions, internal failures, and seasons of prosperity and decline. It has been ridiculed and honoured, marginalised and influential, persecuted and protected. Yet through every generation, God has preserved a people who belong to Him and bear witness to His truth. Nothing can ultimately stop what God is doing through His Church.

But there is a sobering challenge: while the world cannot destroy the Church, the Church can lose its power when we stop living like Christ. We can become so comfortable that we stop being courageous, so prosperous that we stop depending on God, so busy with programmes that we forget our mission, or so focused on ourselves that we no longer resemble Christ.

The question, therefore, is not whether the Church will survive. Christ will build His Church. The question is whether we will faithfully participate in what He is building. The Church is alive when Christ is at the centre, the Spirit is at work, the Word shapes us, love binds us together, and the gospel sends us into the world.

God has always had a people. May we be found faithful among them!

# OCTOBER 2026 CHURCH EVENTS

## Chapel Service

Every Wednesday | 7pm
@ Temple of God




## Teens Church

Every 2nd Saturday | 5.30pm
@ Temple of God



*Special Event*

# Fasting & Prayer

**THU 1st - SAT 3rd OCTOBER 2026**

MORNING 10:30AM - 12:30PM
EVENING 6:30PM - 8:30PM

## Child Dedication

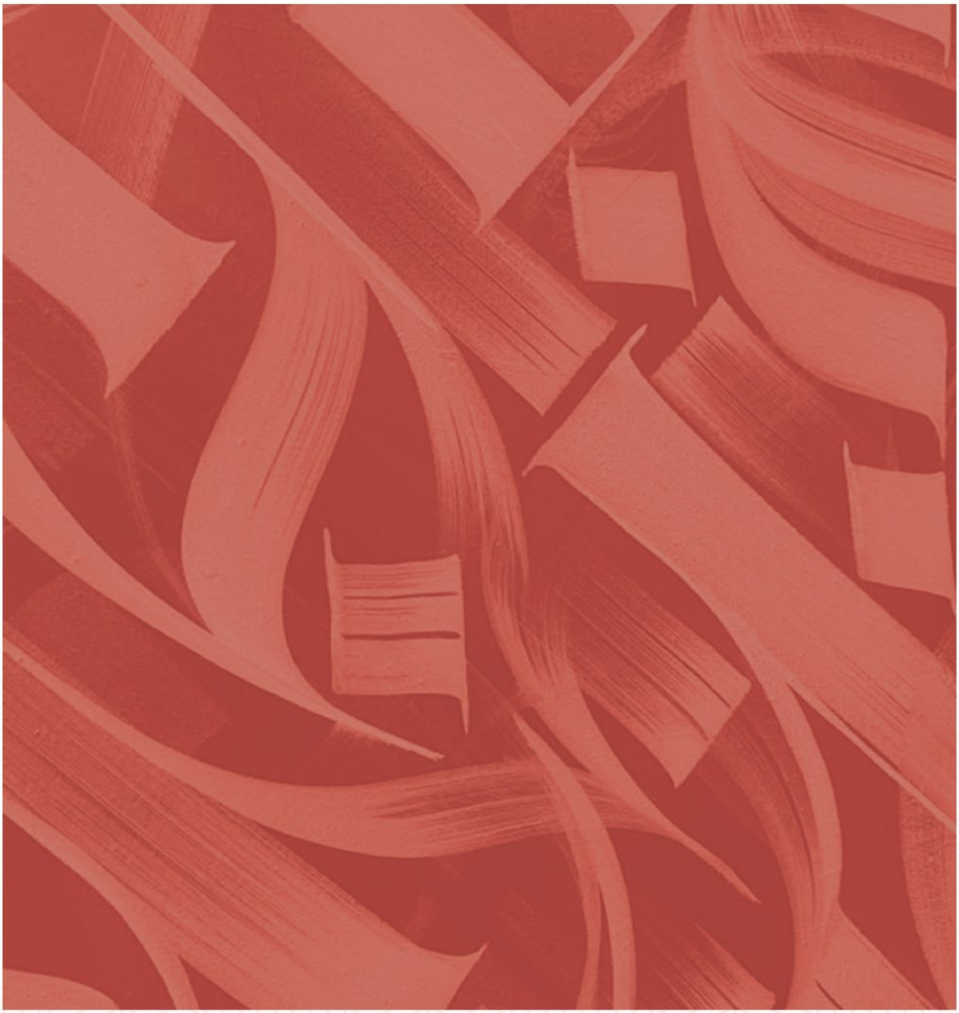
10th October | Saturday | 11.30am
@ Bethel AG Church



## Membership Class

Saturday, 17th October | 4 PM





# BETHEL AG CHURCH

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