

00:01 back everybody, this is the third video for session four, why is the church important. That's what we're going to be looking at specifically.

00:11 There are two videos, I think I'm going to divide the, the remainder of this into two videos. And so, let's get going with this one you'll need your notebook ready to hand, to scribble something some responses down, so once you're ready let's, let's keep going.

00:32 So, yes, here we go. So, why is the church important? You've got your notebooks ready, hopefully, and let's get going.

00:37 So, when you hear the word church what comes to mind? This is the question I'd like you to spend some time thinking about.

00:45 When you hear the word church, what comes to mind? We're going to take about, I think, about ten minutes, maybe, ten, ten, yeah, about ten minutes on this.

00:55 I will pop up with a couple of other questions as we go along towards the end of that, but, yeah, ten to twelve minutes, something like that.

01:03 when you hear the word church, what comes to mind? I said a moment ago that I would ask a couple of questions as we go along.

07:35 We've had a- So I'm gonna change the angle or focus it a little bit depending on, on your perspective.

07:44 Uhm what's been your experience of church? How do you feel about church? Okay, so there were two questions, and I might have got the sound wrong a moment ago, so apologies for that I've got it back to the right level now.

14:56 So there's two questions to have been considering alongside when you hear the word church, what comes to mind?

15:03 What's been your experience of church, and how do you feel about church? the reason for having these two and how you feel about church, is because, in a moment I'm going to start talking about some of the things that you might have been writing down initially, of what comes to mind when

15:23 you think about church. But I don't want to put to one side the importance of our own experiences, of being our own experience of church, I I'm not going to go any further than that, because otherwise I start to close things down a bit.

15:41 And the emotions that it can elicit. a broad spectrum of emotions, both positive and negative. and so, if, in what now follows, you're hearing me sort of talk about things in a more kind of, well, this is the church, blah, blah, blah, blah, type of thing, and, Thank you.

16:01 You, you know, if, depending on what you've written in your notes, and when we come together, we'll be talking about this kind of thing.

16:06 But the emotions and the experiences of church are very important to recognize as well. they can be joyful, and they can be devastating.

16:13 so, important to, to hold all those together. so I don't mean to sideline those at all in what follows, okay?

16:23 I hope you, I hope you hear that. okay, so let's go back to that, sort of underpinning question of when I was talking about what comes to mind when you think of the church, when you hear the word church, and underpinning that is this question, what is the church?

16:41 and so have a look at your notes and see what's on there and how you might kind of, give category labels, as it were, almost to the different kind of things that you've been putting down on paper, yeah?

16:56 Take a couple of minutes for that, and then I'm going to pop up some things on the screen and talk them through with you and, see where we get to.

17:04 Okay. Okay, so you've got your notebooks to hand there with what you've been penning down there.

19:24 so, let me just sort of give you three broad brush kind of ways of of, of things that, ways that we might categorize some of what we've been writing down.

19:33 So, the first one is is the institution. Thinking of the church as the institution of the church. Now growing up, I didn't have anything to do with the church didn't have anything to do with the church wasn't part of my upbringing at all.

19:49 And yet it it were. listening to the radio.

20:01 You know, I, I remember back in the early 80s uuuh, was it either during or, I think it was after the Falklands War, I remember the arch, the Archbishop at the time, Archbishop Robert Runcie getting into hot water with the Prime Minister of the day, Maggie Thatcher, because Runcie was

20:23 , the Archbishop was calling for, calling for Christians to pray for the Argentinians as well, and that did not go down well that whole praying for our enemies bit, no and so that I had this understanding, oh, who's the Archbishop, hm, and you know, then there was the

20:44 , wedding of Charles and Diana, and that happened at all, you know you know, that was a, a big, big, date occasion that involved the church and then, other bits, you know, obviously you know Pope John Paul II, I, I remember uh, quite vividly when he was there

21:11 was that I was aware that there was this. person called the Pope, and obviously you know, a little bit at school, wasn't very keen on history but I, I was aware that there was, you know, there was this thing called the church that had had a huge impact and was wrapped up

21:30 with the politics of, of Europe over the centuries, and, and so on. So I was aware that there was this thing called the, the, the, you know what one might call the institution, the, the, the, the church you know, in our country, where we have the, the church of Englandm.

21:50 So yeah, so I was aware there was this thing called the institution, and that's one way of thinking of the church, is as the institution uhm And the way that, I mean, just think of King Charles's coronation you know, it was, again, another state occasion, but

22:09 the church is an institution, the, the Charles's coronation was totally bound up with the church as an institution and the way that parliament and the church relate all, all that kind of thing.

22:23 So, that's where we're thinking of the church as the institution. That's one way of thinking of the church. And it'd be interesting to see on your notes, if anything of that kind of thing has, you know, thinking of the church as an institution you know whether that's in any way come

22:44 through in what you've jotted down in your notebooks. Um, another way, probably more likely. The weekly way of thinking that you will have jotted down when the word, when you hear the word church, what you've jotted down, is thinking of the church as the place, as a place.

22:56 Um, again, growing up, I would I grew up in in Heddington just outside Oxford, and I would walk around past in Old Heddington, a little church called St Andrews.

23:13 Never went in. Um, but there was this place the church. And you know, so you can think of the church as a place, as a building.

23:23 Um obviously the early church that wasn't the case. In the sense it was a place, but it wasn't a building, in the sense that it was a place the early church would meet underground, or in people's extended- extended.

23:38 At homes, kind of thing. Um, but it was only later that the money started to flow, that enabled them to start having actual church, designated church buildings, large buildings.

23:49 Um, that was happening more in the 4th century. And and since then, and, you know, you've got all the sort of the church buildings in- in the villages up and down the country, in our cities, and in our market towns, and- and these are the places.

24:09 So when you think of church, you're probably going to think in various ways, you hear the word, you're going to think of the place.

24:15 Um, the building. Um, yeah. Okay, that's- that's- that's, second way of thinking about it. And then the third way.

24:26 And the third way is to think of the people. The church. When you think of the church, you think of, the- the church is the people.

24:38 You can think of the church being the institution. You can think of the church being the place, or the building.

24:44 Um, put the ways that the- New Testament are early, writings and everything which, the scriptures go back to our sources, the way that the tradition is traditioned.

24:58 Um, the Holy Spirit has guided this handing on of the message is one of the images used, well, many images, but they all focus, they have a strong focus on- on the people.

25:11 Um, they're not talking about it. There's an institution where they're not talking about it as a place, they're talking about it as the people.

25:18 There's a place, there's temple language, but it's talking about the people being the temple. Um, so there's a strong focus on the people.

25:26 And so when you think of the church it could be that your- the thing that most immediately comes to mind is the people.

25:33 And one of the interesting things to think about here is just to say, okay, so if you are- involved in church, if you are a Christian and you're, you're following Jesus and you're part of a worshiping community, you're part of a church, which of these images most likely- most likely comes

25:49 to mind. Then to step away from that and to pause and- actually, let's do this. Let's- let's just pause for a moment and think, okay, so think of people that you know who don't have anything to do with the church.

26:00 Which of these three do you think that the most- likely to think about? Just take a minute and see where we go.

26:06 Do you think they're most likely to think about the people, the- the place, or the institution? I wonder what you've written down for this.

26:52 Uhh, yeah. It'll be interesting. It's something we can show when we come together. Um, one of the ways of course today that people engage with, or if they're wanting to suss out a church or they're thinking, you know, they've heard about a church or something like that.

27:11 Um, there's that, they'll go to the website. They'll, they'll, they'll google. They'll try and find out if the church has a, a website.

27:19 Um, so one of the things that I'd like you to do now, and for this you probably need to pause this video and, and then open up a web browser or an adjacent tab in your web browser, is if your church has a website, what do you think a visitor to the website would think?

27:38 church was. So, um yeah, take a moment. I'll, I'll run this a little bit for about 5 minutes, but if you need more time to do that then, then find just pause the video, but um, in an adjacent web browser tab, just go to your church website, if you, if you have, if you, if you're part of a church

28:02 think of it, if you're not part of a church, you're not part of a worshipping community at the moment think about the biggest, the church that you know of, locally to you and, and google it and see what kind of website it has, and just look at the sort of the homepage, that initial sort

28:19 of impression that you're going to get, if you were a visitor to this website and you, you had nothing to do with that church, what, what do you think?

28:26 Thank you Um, that person would think church was. And make a note of the website and, write down a few impressions, and then we'll carry on.

28:38 Um, and I'll show you a couple of websites that, I have in mind. As a website, and, to think about what, a visitor to that website, what impression that visitor might have, as to what they would think the church was, what they think church was.

34:38 I'm gonna show you a couple of, websites just to give you some sort of impressions and just keep the conversation going, as it were, about this.

34:48 So here's the church where I'm I've been- for 25 years, it's the website is for the parish, as a whole, the parish of Christchurch, down, it's just outside Bournemouth it's a seaside market town, it's got one of the, what they call one of the greater churches of the Church of

35:05 England it's a big old building if you've ever been to Durham Cathedral the person who was behind Christchurch prior was behind so Durham Cathedral is like Christchurch priori, but on steroids uhh, it's all pumped up and, y'know, huge but um, anyway, so, it's still

35:24 , it's still big, anyway, so if you were to look at this, I mean, the Church dates back to 1094, I think, something like that, so if you were to look at this website, what would you, what, sort of, what impression would you have of it?

35:36 What, do you think, if you were visitor, to this website? What would you think, it, y'know, what's, what's important here or no, and what's, what, what is the Church?

35:48 Well, you know, you've got a big, big photo of the interior of the nave, looking up to the great choir, and, and so, you know, the key kind of message here is that the Church is a place, it's a building, and you've got, sort of some details there about the museums, at Michael's Law Museum,

36:09 which is about the history of the priory, so it's, it's got a big focus there on the Church being a place, being a building.

36:17 Umm, you've got some institutional stuff tucked away here, you've got things like safeguarding that brings us into obviously one of the key things, so the Church at the the moment talking about safe.

36:28 So you click on that link, that takes you to all the details about safeguarding, then the various, connections for the diocesan safeguarding team, and all that kind of thing, that all the Church Church-Fington websites are meant to have in a prominent visible place.

36:43 So but apart from that, the primary kind of impression I think you're gonna get there is that this is a place.

36:49 There is staff talking about the priory this week, and you have a f got down here along the bottom that's saying latest live stream.

36:56 So that's talking about as being a worshipping community, watch that type of thing, but it's less obvious you've got visiting services events, kind of stuff across the top.

37:04 But the main impression, I think it's fair to say if you were to look at this, is that you would come away and think the Church is a place.

37:12 It's a building. Okay. So that's one. That's one thing. Another Christ Church is Christ Church Winchester. Umm, so oh dear, thing's happening in the kitchen.

37:23 Anyway, there we go. Umm, so this is the home page of another church and obviously it's a big significant church in Winchester.

37:35 And which many of you will know. And so you look at this and sort of like, okay, so. So I took this screenshot this week.

37:43 So this is in May 2025 by the time you watch this. There's every chance that the website will have changed.

37:48 Umm, both of these websites may have changed. But anyway, at the time of recording, this is what these websites looked like.

37:56 And so here you've got a big kind of, big circle focus of lots of people and their kind of guys got, What is, one, one, one chap's got his arms in the air and, and they're all sort of standing and they're facing and it looks like there's a kind of a band at the other end with guitars and so

38:13 on and so forth. So, the focus there is very much on people, and people worshipping. And so you see on the text over there, we're called to be a flourishing and generous, generous regional center.

38:28 Interesting. So talking about it is being a place. Maybe not the focus, not using the language of building but using the language of center, a generous regional center of Christian worship, mission and discipleship.

38:41 Um, but worship is very much there that you can see in that big circle. And along the top, it's like, gather, connect, I'm new, and, and what have you, and so those things are obviously all to do with people.

38:56 Interestingly, though, you do have a little hint also of the institution. So it's not one or the other in all of this.

39:02 It's, you know, it's just where's the emphasis. And so you've got this on the top there. It says join the electoral role.

39:09 And that's a little bit of institution language, isn't it? It's just like, well, what's the electoral role? And what does it mean?

39:16 And to join it, and, and, and, and so on. So you have to, you have to be a little bit in-house, as it were, to understand what that kind of language means.

39:25 And that's, that's one of the things that the Church of England has for all the churches. It has an electoral role, and you're either on it or you're not.

39:34 And if you're on it, then that means that you can vote at various things. And, and what have you? Um, so, but it's, It's a little bit of a sort of a, a door slightly opening, saying, actually, this, this, this is part of a bigger setup.

39:49 Um, a bigger, institution rather than just an individual thing. And, and if you, if you go down to the footer of that same website, the Winchester, Christchurch, Winchester's, website, you also have just this phrase.

40:04 Here, Christchurch, Winchester is part of the Church of England. And you've got charity, register, charity number, and so on and so forth.

40:13 I mean, this is all institution stuff. Um, this is church's institution. But the emphasis is very much on people and worship.

40:26 Um that's, that's, that's, the, that's, like, the visual focus of this. So, it would be interesting to see what your websites, your church websites are.

40:35 When we come together, we'll talk about how they what kind of message that they're, giving, what kind of impression that if a visitor who didn't know what they would come away thinking that church was from looking at those pages.

40:49 Um, so, so yeah, so there we go. Let's, j jump to that. Yeah, we've got the, the three then.

40:55 So, sort of just drawing this little bit to a close. You've got the institution, the church is the institution, the church is the place, the church is the people.

41:04 The tendency, the temptation is to turn around and say, well, it's not the institution, it's the people. Or it's, it's not the people, it's the place.

41:10 Or it's, it's the place, not the people. And, and, and so on and so forth. And the reality is that the church is all three of these.

41:16 Umm, but it's a question of where the emphasis lies and what's guiding it and so on and so forth. And I'm jumping ahead of myself here, so I'm gonna bring this to a close because what I want to look at, and this is going to be the focus of the final and fourth video of this, section.

41:36 Because we've been talking about this question, why is the church important? But I want to zero in on say, why is the church important?

41:44 It's just, like, really bringing our attention to why is the church important with, with this kind of thing and saying, well, the church is the institution, the church is the place, the building, the church is the people.

41:52 Okay, all that's good, but I now want to switch and focus our attention on why is the church important? It's another way of saying, why does the church matter?

42:03 You know, what's, you know, why- Is it important? That's going to be our focus in the fourth video, so I'm going to pause, have some lunch, and then we'll get going on the fourth session of this exploring theology course, why is the church important?

42:23 So, see you soon. Okay, bye now.