

RML Mark

The church weekend

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Name: _____

Welcome to the church weekend (online)!

Welcome to the church weekend!

Here are a few basics about how this weekend will work:

- On the following page there is a suggested timetable.
- Please join your RML groups to discuss what you've heard—your leaders should have already been in touch with details about this.
- We will close each morning with a live Q&A on Zoom—details to be circulated separately. It would really help us if you could submit questions well in advance of the Q&A.
- There will be an (optional) team challenge on the Saturday evening (8–9pm)!
- Thinking about the church doesn't stop with this weekend. You'll find some devotionals on the weekend webpage for you to use after the weekend and these are explained on the last page in this handout.

Practical tips for an online weekend

Before listening

- Get ready for the day like you normally would—put on your favourite top and brush your teeth!
- Be comfortable but please make sure you get out of bed—settle yourself on the sofa or at a desk and make yourself a drink
- Put away distractions like mobile phones
- Print out the handout if you have access to a printer or use another screen
- Pray and read the passage before you listen to each talk

While listening

- Hit play on the audio recording, close your screen or turn it away from you to avoid screen fatigue
- Use a physical bible so you can flick between passages easily
- Take notes and write down questions you might have

After listening

- Sing the suggested song or listen to it if you'd prefer
- Guard your personal reflection time and don't let chores creep in—why not set a timer to help you?
- Take a break in between talks by moving around, stretching or getting yourself a drink
- Make sure to check in with your group for discussion times and the live Q&A on Sunday—your leaders will be in touch with details about timings

Timetable

Friday

- 6.30pm** Leaders' prayer meeting
- 7.30pm** Watch introductory video
- 7.45pm** Listen to talk 1: God's plan and the church (Ephesians 1:1–23)
- 8.30pm** Discussion in RML groups (30 minutes)

Saturday

- 10am** Listen to talk 2: what is the church? (Ephesians 2:1–10)
- 10.30am** Personal reflection and prayer time (15 minutes)
- 10.45am** Break (30 minutes)
- 11:15am** Listen to talk 3: why do we meet as church? (Ephesians 4:1–16)
- 12pm** Discussion in RML groups (30 minutes)
- 12.30pm** Live Q&A (30 minutes)
- 8–9pm** Team challenge (on Zoom, organised by Andrew and Steph McQueen)

Sunday

- 10am** Listen to talk 4: how should we live as church? (1 Corinthians 12)
- 10.30am** Watch application video (15 minutes)
- 10.45am** Discussion in RML groups (30 minutes)
- 11.15am** Break (30 minutes)
- 11.45am** Watch video update and pray for Joelle Kenny
- 12pm** Live Q&A (45 minutes)
- 12.45pm** End of Sunday programme

Talk 1: God's plan and the church

Before listening to the talk please read (alone or in your group) Ephesians 1:1–23

God's plan revealed

⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ
¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time,
to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:9–10)
[to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.] (NIV translation Ephesians 1:10)

God's plan in creation

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.
And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth
and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
28 And God blessed them. And God said to them,
"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens
and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26–28)

Ruling

United and diverse

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.
16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying,
"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,
17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."
18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:15–18)

Humanity's failure

14 The Lord God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

16 To the woman he said,

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

17 And to Adam he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it’, cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,

till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:16–19)

Creation's longing

19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19–21)

29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

Noah

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. (Genesis 9:1)

Abraham

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1–3)

Israel

9 Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.” (1 Kings 10:9)

Psalm 8

4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honour.
6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (Psalm 8:4–8)

God's plan fulfilled in Christ and the church

Jesus' perfect obedience

36 And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
(Mark 14:36)

Ephesians 1:16–23

16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,
may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,
18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,
that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,
what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe,
according to the working of his great might
20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,
21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,
and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,
23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:16–23)

18 “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18–20)

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:1–10)

Some possible questions to begin discussion and reflection:

1. How is the Bible’s view of history and the present day different to how we think of it? How does it help us to have a proper perspective of the current crisis in light of the ‘bigger picture’?
2. How does knowing God’s plan impact our view of the Lord Jesus? How does it grow our gratitude to God as those who have been graciously included in the plan?
3. How does what we’ve heard shape our view of the church? How important is the church to us? How would believing this impact our approach to the church?

Pray

- What changes to your thinking and desires do you want God to do in you in light of his plan?

Please submit questions

Talk 2: what is the church?

Before listening to the talk please read (alone or in your group) Ephesians 2:1–10

church (*ekklesia*) = literally ‘assembly’ or ‘gathering’

40 For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.”

41 And when he had said these things, he dismissed **the assembly**. (Acts 19:40–41)

Saved people gathered around Christ

Heavenly and Invisible

(see also eg Matthew 16:18)

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

6 and raised us up with him and **seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus**. (Ephesians 2:1–10)

22 But you **have come** to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God,

the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,

23 and to **the assembly [church] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**,

and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

(Hebrews 12:22–24)

but also...earthly and visible

2 To the church of God that is in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2)

22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?

Or do you despise the **church** of God and humiliate those who have nothing? (1 Corinthians 11:22)

14 For the **body** does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:14, referring to the local congregation at Corinth)

16 If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God. (1 Corinthians 11:16)

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the **churches** of the Gentiles give thanks as well. 5 Greet also the **church** in their house. (Romans 16:3–5)

Missteps...

- church = a gathering of God's people **not** a denomination

- church = a gathering of God's people **not** a building

But how is Christ present with us now?

Look at these different metaphors for the church
What place does the Word of God have?

The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25–27)

The Vine (John 15:1–11)

The Temple (Ephesians 2:19–22)

The Body (1 Corinthians 12:27–28)

The flock of sheep (John 10:1–5)

The Family (1 Peter 1:22–2:2)

Saved people gathered around Christ *by his word*

Article 19 (39 Articles of the Church of England):

The visible Church of Christ is

a congregation of faithful men,

in which the pure Word of God is preached,

and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance,

Misssteps...

- Catholic error

Pope Pius XI (1928):

In this one church of Christ no man can be or remain who does not accept, recognise and obey the authority and supremacy of Peter and his legitimate successors

- Cults error

Lord's supper and baptism? = the *visible* Word of God

not 'ex opere operato' (ie automatic)

John Stott:

The ministry of Word and sacrament is a single ministry,
The Word proclaiming, and the sacrament dramatizing, God's promises.
Yet the Word is primary, since without it the sign becomes dark in meaning, if not actually dumb.

John Stott:

God's new creation (the church) is as dependent upon his Word as his old creation (the universe).
Not only has he brought it into being by his Word,
but he maintains and sustains it, directs and sanctifies it, reforms and renews it through the same Word.
The Word of God is the scepter by which Christ rules the church and the food with which he nourishes it.

Some possible questions to begin discussion and reflection:

1. What does the Bible mean by the term 'the church'? What does it not mean? Why does this matter?
2. How does the Bible view the local church? How does this compare to how we/the world views it?
3. How does the primacy of God's word impact
 - a. What we look for in a church for ourselves/others
 - b. How we view a church?

Please submit questions

Why not use some time to listen and reflect to the song 'Not I but through but through Christ in me'.

- 1 **What gift of grace is Jesus my Redeemer!**
There is no more for heaven now to give.
He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom,
my steadfast love,
my deep and boundless peace.
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus,
for my life is wholly bound to his.
Oh how strange and divine
I can sing, "all is mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me."
- 2 The night is dark, but I am not forsaken
for by my side the Saviour he will stay.
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing,
for in my need his power is displayed.
To this I hold:
my Shepherd will defend me—
through the deepest valley he will lead.
Oh the night has been won
and I shall overcome,
yet not I, but through Christ in me.
- 3 No fate I dread—I know I am forgiven.
The future sure—
the price, it has been paid;
for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
and he was raised to overthrow the grave.
To this I hold: my sin has been defeated—
Jesus now and ever is my plea.
Oh the chains are released,
I can sing, "I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me."
- 4 With every breath I long to follow Jesus,
for he has said that he will bring me home,
and day by day I know he will renew me
until I stand with joy before the throne.
To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus—
all the glory ever more to him.
When the race is complete,
still my lips shall repeat:
"Yet not I, but through Christ in me!"

Jonny Robinson, Rich Thompson, Michael Farren

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Talk 3: why do we meet as church?

Before listening to the talk please read (alone or in your group) Ephesians 4:1–16

1. We don't gather to worship!

'worship' words **not** used for what we do as the church in the New Testament

[Greek word] "*proskuneo*" = [translated into English as] worship

eg Matthew 2:2: where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship ["*proskuneo*"] him."

"*leitourgeo*" = serve

eg Romans 13:6: The authorities are servants ["*leitourgeo*"] of God

eg Hebrews 10:6: Every priest stands daily at his service ["*leitourgeo*"],

offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

"*sebomai*" = respect/worship

eg Acts 17:23: for as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship ["*sebomai*"],

I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.'

"*latreuo*" = obedience/worship

eg Romans 12:1: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God,

to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship ["*latreuo*"]

eg Hebrews 12:28: therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship ["*latreuo*"]...

ie Hebrews 13:1–5 = brotherly love,

hospitality to strangers,

remembering those in prison

sexual purity

contentment not love of money

...what goes on in a Christian meeting as being specifically for the purpose of "worship" is without New Testament precedent.

"Worship" is not an umbrella-term for what goes on when Christians gather together.

(Howard Marshall, 'How Far Did the Early Christians Worship God?' Churchman 99, 1985 p 220)

Old Testament: Man to God



¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,
²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,
²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19–22)

But now...

No more holy places

No more priests

No more atoning sacrifices

2. We DO gather to...

...Be the body

¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility
¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances,
that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,
¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given,
to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things,
¹⁰so that **through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.** (Ephesians 3:8–10)

...Build the body

¹¹ And [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry,

for building up the body of Christ,

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

to mature manhood,

to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children,

tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine,

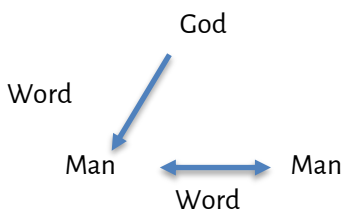
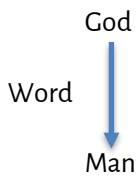
by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped,

when each part is working properly,

makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11–16)



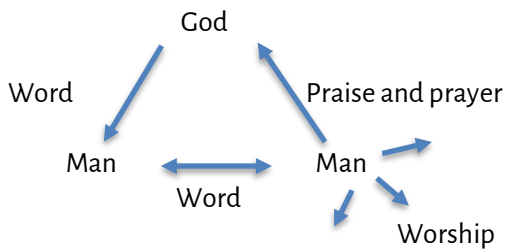
But what about singing?

¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,
singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,

²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:18–20)



Horizontal

Vertical

Some possible questions to use to begin discussion and reflection:

- How is the Bible's teaching about why we meet as church challenge popular assumptions? Why does this matter?
- How does Ephesians 4 challenge our understanding of our own role in church? How does it impact our sense of responsibility and privilege?
- What might it look like in practice to be engaging in 'speaking the truth in love'? How do we help each other do that?

Pray

Some possible questions to begin discussion and reflection:

1. How does this passage change the way we think about our involvement at church?
2. How does this passage change our motivations as we serve?
3. How does this passage change how we think about each other?
 - a. Specifically those we tend to look up to?
 - b. Specifically those we tend to look down on?

Please submit questions

Why not use some time to listen and reflect to the song 'I will sing the wondrous story'.

I will sing the wondrous story

of the Christ who died for me;
how he left his home in glory
for the cross on Calvary.
I was lost: but Jesus found me,
found the sheep that went astray;
threw his loving arms around me,
drew me back into his way.

I was bruised; but Jesus healed me—
faint was I from many a fall;
sight was gone and fears possessed me:
but he freed me from them all.
Days of darkness still come o'er me;
sorrow's path I often tread;
but the Saviour still is with me,
by his hand I'm safely led.

He will keep me till the river
rolls its waters at my feet:
then he'll bear me safely over,
where the loved ones I shall meet.
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
of the Christ who died for me;
sing it with his saints in glory,
gathered by the crystal sea.

Francis Harold Rawley (1854–1952)

The mission of the church

On this weekend we would normally have one further session. There we would consider the mission of the church (that is what does the church exist to do/not to do in this world).

We would love to encourage you to still think about this topic for yourself: as a personal summer project, by meeting as a group to listen to a talk and discuss it together, in free time you have this week because of furlough or staying home.

Here are some resources to help you:

1. **Preaching Matters: the mission of the church**

Watch this video, featuring Denesh Divyanathan as part of the Preaching Matters training series on the St Helen's website. This is a brief introduction to the question, the bible's answer to it and why it matters so much. Why not watch this as well as listening to the suggested talk or reading the suggested book?

2. **The mission of the church: Acts 1:1–11**

Listen to this talk, from James Faux on a previous 'church' weekend which provides a helpful overview of the answer to the question 'what is the mission of the church?' This would be a great talk to listen to together as an RML group, prayer triplet, or group of friends.

3. **What is the mission of the church? Making sense of social justice, shalom and the great commission by Kevin De Young and Greg Gilbert.**

Take a look, at this super helpful, scriptural book on the topic of church. DeYoung and Gilbert consider different views on the church's mission, robustly expounding scripture's storyline, as well as individual key passages, in search of a biblical and nuanced answer. It's written with the ordinary Christian reader in mind: it is a meaty book, but not theologically dense or daunting. It's available as an e-book and might be a good furlough read or one to pick up when you have time off this summer.

Pondering on...

It is always good to keep thinking about what we've heard God say. To help with this, you will find 14 days of suggested devotional material on the weekend website. This is not for more study—rather to help us remember God's words, think on them, pray over them and respond to them in coming weeks. You might want to use the material each day in your quiet time, or a few times a week over a lunch break or with friends in coming months. Have a look at the pdf for much more details on using these notes as well as more general suggestions to help us continue to respond to what we've seen in scripture this weekend.