



Let's Pray: May 2022

How can we pray well as we head into this new month?



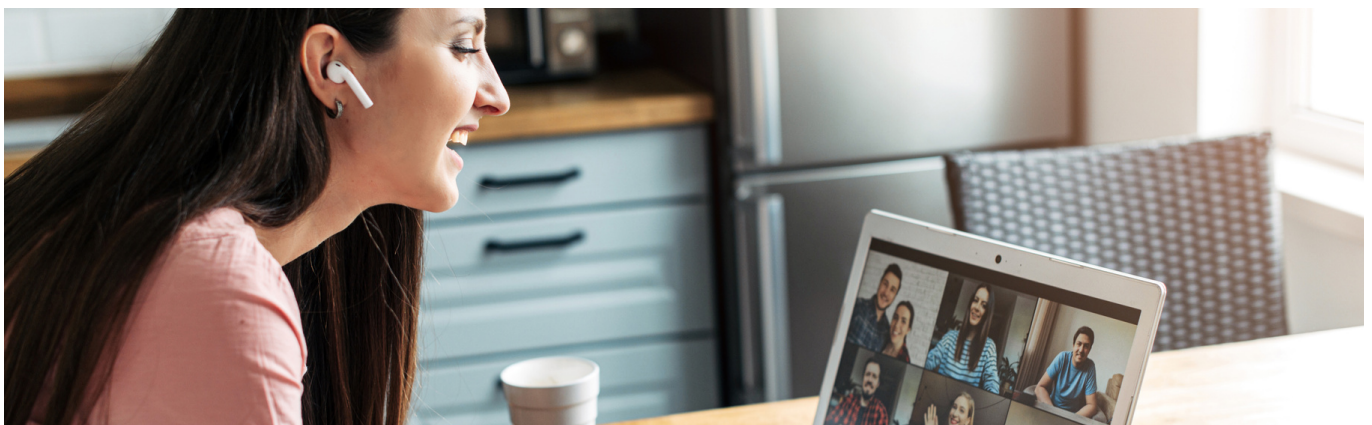
What comes to mind when you hear the word 'Church'?

For a long time, that word conjured images in my mind of the building I visited every Sunday; wooden pews, stained glass windows, Bibles on every seat (in this particular church, each wore a blue quilted Bible cover, with gold lettering on the front carefully embroidered by a member of the congregation). I thought of Sunday school and youth club, of familiar songs, prayers, and stories.

It's a pretty typical Sunday school answer, but it's true; 'Church' means more than just our Sunday morning or evening routines and activities. It's more than just a building, a room, or a service. Over time, I've come to associate the word 'Church' with the individuals who make up my church family. I think of the couple who invited me for dinner every week when I was a student. I think of the worship leader who encouraged me to join the team and use my voice to lead our community in praise. I think of the children and teenagers who bring us joy each Sunday morning. I think of those who control the powerpoint, who set out the chairs, who share God's word with us.

Much more recently, my understanding of 'Church' has continued to develop. When COVID-19 and the consequential restrictions meant that we couldn't gather in our church spaces together, Church took on a different form. Many of us moved online, joining with our community through our computer screens or phones. We were creative in finding new ways to continue to meet the needs in our communities, doing what we could to ensure people had access to food, medication, laptops for online school, friendship.

As we enter a new season, one without a lot of official guidance or restrictions but one that brings uncertainty for many as the virus has not yet disappeared, the Church is evolving again. Many have questions about what our church gatherings and communities ought to look like going forward, upon what and where we should be focusing our attention and resources or how to begin to rebuild a sense of community after such a long period of isolation and separation.





Church is a wonderful, wonderful thing. But it would be remiss of us to imply that it's perfect. We have had difficult conversations and conflicting opinions. There are things that divide us; different understandings of theology, different ways of observing or practicing our faith, different traditions, rhythms and structures – this isn't a bad thing, but it can feel hard to find a place or to relate to others. There have been times when churches haven't got it right. Sometimes being part of a church can feel hard. Sometimes church can be confusing. Sometimes church doesn't feel like a safe or welcoming space. But whatever stories and experiences we bring, there are things that should ground and unite us; things that have characterised the Church since its inception, which we can read about in the Bible.

The Church is **a collective of individuals who are witnesses of what Jesus has done** (Acts 1: 8). The Church is a people who **join together in prayer** (Acts 1: 14). We **devote ourselves to learning**, and to spending time together in **fellowship** (Acts 2: 42). The Church is a people of **wonder**; we share the things that excite us, and we celebrate together (Acts 2: 43). The Church is **generous and hospitable**; we share what we have, and we eat together (Acts 2: 45-46).

What are some of your favourite things about your church family (if you're part of one)?

Where can you see these characteristics of the Church in Acts at work today?

We at Home for Good love the Church – both the Church with a capital C, the body of Christ spanning denominations, generations and locations, and the local church, with all its associated traditions and quirks and all the wonderful things that make it a 'family' for so many. Home for Good exists because we believe that the Church has a unique role to play to ensure that every child and young person experiences the welcome, care, stability, and sense of belonging they deserve.



What if we, the Church, were a collective of individuals who were **witnesses** to the impact of the stability, support and sense of belonging that family and community can offer?



What if we were a people who **joined together in prayer** for children and young people waiting for family, for those facing challenges or disadvantages and for the families who care for them?



What if we were to **devote ourselves to learning**, to exploring God's heart to see the lonely placed in families, to unpack theological concepts of justice, hospitality, family and church, as well as to learning about the issues that impact the lives of children and young people who have experience of the care system so we can be informed and better equipped to support families well?



What if spending time together in **fellowship** looked like expanding the parameters of our communities to include those all-too-often at the margins?



What if we, the Church, were to **share in awe and wonder** as we celebrate with families in their moments of joy and victory – no matter how big or small or unique – as well as walking with them in times of struggle or heartache?



What if we, the Church, practiced **generosity and hospitality** by opening our hearts and homes to children and young people in need of safety and security, and wrapping around families who foster, adopt or provide supported lodgings?

Caring for children, teenagers and families, and playing our part to demonstrate that care, is not something new or revolutionary; it's at the heart of who we, the Church, are. It's who we, the Church have always been.

'Church' is so much more than just a building, a gathering, a Sunday; what does the word mean for you?

Points for Prayer



1. Let's thank God for the 50,000 churches around the UK. Give thanks for what those church families are already doing to love, serve and support their community.
2. Let's pray together for more individuals, couples and families from church communities in the UK to step forward to open their hearts and homes to children and young people through fostering, adoption or supported lodgings for teenagers.
3. Let's give thanks for the organic support networks that exist in church communities. Let's pray that families who foster, adopt or provide supported lodgings will be welcomed, cared for and supported well by their local church.
4. Let's pray for our church leaders, our kids' workers and youth teams as they journey towards making church gatherings and spaces increasingly more welcoming for children and young people who have experience of the care system.
5. Pray for children and young people – perhaps some you know personally. Let's pray that they will know they are loved and cared for, and that they belong and are valued by the church family they are a part of.



Reflective prayer idea

Take a piece of paper and write the word 'CHURCH' in the centre.

Take a look at some of the characteristics of the Church in the book of Acts. Open your Bible and have a read, if you like, to see if you can identify some more – this might be a nice activity to do together as a family.

- **They were witnesses of what Jesus has done (Acts 1: 8).**
- **They joined together in prayer (Acts 1: 14).**
- **They devoted themselves to learning and fellowship (Acts 2: 42).**
- **They were filled with awe at the wonders they experienced (Acts 2: 43).**
- **They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need (Acts 2: 45).**
- **They broke bread and ate together (Acts 2: 46).**

Think, or discuss with others, and note on the piece of paper in front of you: How do you as an individual, or you as a church community, practice these values?

Which of these practices or values stands out to you as something you feel you could lean into further or explore in greater depth? What would that look like?

On the other hand; which feel more challenging?

What would it look like for your church community to model the values and practises of the Church in Acts towards children and teenagers waiting for the right place to call home, those living with foster or adoptive families or supported lodgings hosts and families caring for children and young people with experience of the care system?

Below are a few stories that may inspire you with some new ideas:

- [Sharon and Rich's story](#)
- [Dave's story](#)
- [Little changes: reflections from a volunteer kid's leader](#)

Take a look at the notes you've written or drawn on your page. Pray about them, inviting God to inspire you with new ideas and to lead you into new opportunities as you explore how He has designed His Church to be.