

# Introduction



The Body of Christ, the Community of Faith, the Fellowship of Believers—these are only a few of the images associated with the Church. Taken together they all refer to something quite different from any club, institution, or business. Here is a people drawn from all peoples, infused with spiritual life, and called to a great mission.

Such vitality and purpose belong to the Church wherever it is. Unlike any other organization, the local church is not a separate part of the whole; it is the local expression of the whole. Yet each local church needs a guiding hand—a pastoral hand—to help it flesh out what it means to be the Church.

This is not an easy task. As a pastor you are tugged in so many directions to “do church” in so many different ways. One technique promises larger offerings; another, better attendance. Responsibilities, denominational and otherwise, pull and stretch at how you do your job. It’s hard to keep focused. Sometimes the pastoral vision of nurturing a community to reflect Christ’s vibrancy, purpose, and love gets a little hazy. Even worse—you must sharpen this vision and accomplish this nurture in a world saturated in consumerism and postmodern uncertainty. Where can you find help amid so many distractions and complications?

This book seeks to provide some of this help. In the following pages experienced church leaders recapture and refine the vision of what the Church is and what its task should be. These leaders serve in diverse capacities. Several are educators; some are pastors; all are seasoned ministers. In these chapters they share their insights in such areas as leadership, worship, renewal, fellowship, outreach, and missions. They explore their topics with an eye on how the local church can be made a clearer reflection of what it truly is—the Church.

Take some time and allow these mentors to refresh, inspire, and guide you. You won’t be disappointed, and you may go away with a better idea of what great potential your congregation has. After all, to its neighbors your church is the Body of Christ. Let God use this book in your ministry to help your church encompass all that this means. Not only will your people and their mission be enhanced, but almost certainly you will be too.