

# Stretching Exercises

When you are part of a body of believers, you are a vital participant in an important give-and-take relationship. You support the other members just as they support you. Sometimes you may feel that you receive more than you give, but that can quickly change as situations and needs arise. Think for a moment about the group with whom you worship. Describe the ways in which the members—both individually and collectively—support you.

---

---

---

---

Now describe your contribution to the group.

---

---

---

---

According to recent research, many young Christians in the 18-to-30 age group choose not to attend the churches of their childhoods, but visit many congregations until they find the church "home" that meets their needs. Envision the local church of your dreams. How big is it? What kinds of special ministries does it have? Where is its location? How large and specialized is the pastoral staff? How formal is its worship? What kinds of opportunities for growth and participation does it offer the members of its congregation? Try to articulate these characteristics in a few sentences.

---

---

---

---

Paraphrase this verse from the New Testament: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27, rsv).

---

---

---

---

In his book *Hi-Q Christians*, Dr. Oral Withrow lists what each of us can expect from the church we attend and, in return, what the church we attend can expect from each of us. Read the list on the left and then try to create a response list on the right.

What you can expect from the church	What the church expects from you
The word of God, proclaimed, taught, made relevant to your life.	
The sacraments, administered solemnly and with dignity.	
Opportunities to equip yourself for ministry within the church and the community.	
Prayer in times of need.	
Guidance for life in the form of sermon messages and counseling	
Inclusion in meaningful groups, both large and small, within the church.	
Friendship.	

### Group Discussion Topic

In our very mobile society, "church" is as close as our computer terminals, television sets, radios or CD players. Online "chat" groups enable us to discuss religion with people around the globe. Television preachers, who may be more gifted speakers than our local pastors, can inspire us with stirring rhetoric. We can listen to Christian talk shows on our car radios as we drive to and from the office. We can pop in a compact disc and listen to everything from contemporary gospel music to the great classical oratorios.

With all these resources available to us, why is it essential that we attend a local church on a regular basis?

#### Respond to these questions:

√ What is the relationship between the church and the denominational bodies we see all around us?

- √ How does a person become a member of God's church?
- √ Who has authority in and over the church? How is this exhibited? √ How may the church take on a servant role in the world?
- √ What is your best definition of "church?"

## **Meditation**

Think about this passage from 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (rsv).

How do the words make you feel? Are you empowered by them? Motivated to take some kind of action?

---

---

---

---

