



**How do I choose
a good church?**

So, you're looking for a church...

There are so many churches around that it can be pretty daunting to know which to be part of. And if you're new to Sheffield then chances are you don't even know the names of most of them yet! We hope this leaflet will help you as you think through this issue.

What is a church?



It's easy to think of 'church' as the old building on the corner, but the Bible says the church is a group of Christians who meet together. God says that church is exciting for two main reasons: God uses the church (God's people) to keep us going until heaven, and God uses the church to make his glory known to the rest of the universe. Not bad reasons for bothering with church!

Do I really need to go to church?

Perhaps you're not convinced that you need to find a church in the first place. Here are two good reasons...

We need God's word, so we need church. Right from the start, God's people have opened up the Bible when they meet together. God speaks to us through the Bible - it's his living word that gets us started in the Christian life, and it keeps us going and growing all the way in the Christian life.

We need each other, so we need church. The Bible is clear that there's no such thing as a 'lone-ranger Christian'. Through the church, God has given us one another, and he wants us to build each other up as we wait for Jesus' return. The Bible pictures church as a family or body, with every person having a part to play.



So, how do you pick a church? Have a look at the things overleaf.

What should I look for in a church?

It can be hard to know what to ask and what things to be looking out for when you're trying to find a church. But here are five key things which we think you should look for in any church.

Jesus Jesus said that the church is *his* (Matt 16:18). So is the church centred on Jesus – trusting in his death and resurrection, and seeking to follow Jesus as Lord? Does the church seek to give Jesus glory above all?

Bible God achieves his *work* through his *word*. The Bible is the sword of the Spirit (Heb 4:12). A church should teach the Bible clearly, show how it points us to Jesus Christ, and treat it as God's authoritative word to us today.

Love Jesus said that the mark of being a true disciple is that we love one another (John 13:35). Is this a church which demonstrates Christ-like love? Is the church committed to being a family of brothers and sisters in Christ? Does it unite people of different ages, stages and backgrounds?

Serve Christians are not just told to *attend* a church, but to be part of a church, using the gifts God has given us to build each other up (1 Corinthians 12:7). Is this a church in which you will be encouraged to get involved and to serve others?

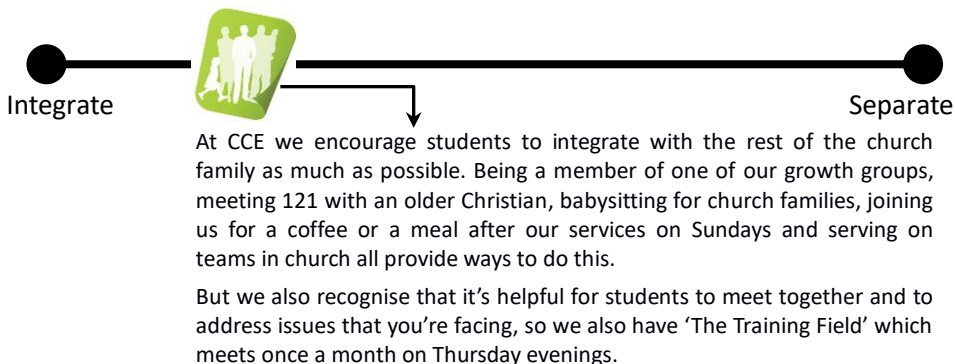
Bring The church is to be the light to the world (Matt 5:14). Are there encouragements and specific opportunities to do this, and is it somewhere you could bring a non-Christian friend without hesitation?

Every church should seek to fulfil all of these key distinctives. And you should avoid any church that fails to proclaim Jesus Christ, teach God's word seriously, love one another, encourage everyone to use their gifts in serving, and welcome non-Christians to hear the good news. That said, we're delighted that there are loads of great churches in Sheffield, and we love to hear of students getting stuck into them.

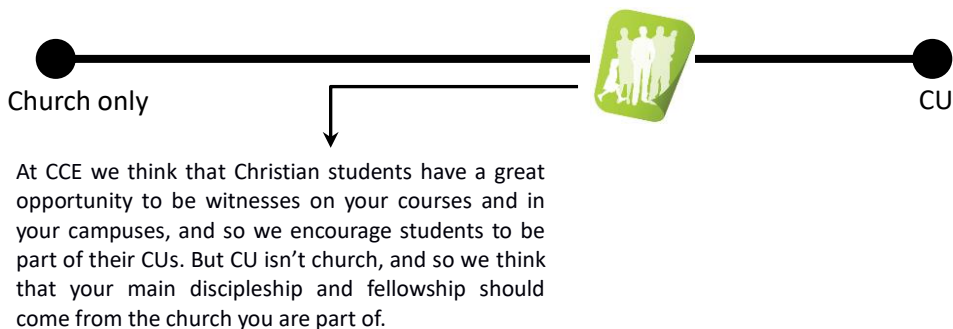
Other factors

Having thought about the 5 things a church *must* be, here are a couple of other issues for you to consider as a student. In each case, there's not a 'right' and 'wrong' way to do things – just different approaches. But nonetheless it might be helpful for you to consider where a church lies on the scale.

Factor 1: Does the church encourage students to integrate with the rest of the church family, or are students kept as a separate group?



Factor 2: Does the church encourage students to get involved with the University CU, or just to concentrate on the getting stuck in to church?



Time to choose!

We'd encourage you to think seriously about which church to join. But don't take too long! The sooner you decide, the sooner you'll gain the benefit of being part of God's family. If that's at CCE – great! But if CCE isn't right for you, then we'd be happy to help you find somewhere else.