

## Reconstructing the Local Church through God's Word and Holy Spirit-Directed Approaches

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### Abstract

*"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14). This passage encapsulates the pneumagogy of the Church of Christ discussed in this paper: the Universal and Local Churches. The major role of the church is to proclaim the gospel of salvation through Christ Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). God's Word and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together many times in the Bible (Eph 6:17; 2 Tim 3:15, 16). God's Word is spoken by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20, 21). The present church is not expected to do less. However, to a great extent, the contemporary church is bereft of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, this study chooses to reconstruct the local church through God's Word and Holy Spirit-directed approaches. The methodology adopted in this work is Solus Primus Scriptura Research (SPSR) and expository research model. The paper also used extra-biblical sources, such as Christian books, journals, and websites relevant to the study, as its secondary sources. The Bible is the only primary source of this research work.*

### Keywords

*God's Word; Holy Spirit-Directed Approach; Pneumagogy; Local and Universal Churches; Reconstructing; Solus Primus Scriptura*

## Introduction

The contemporary Church world over is in disarray. In addition to the evil influence of secular humanism and theological liberalism (which are the same thing), the problem is principally due to two factors: an ambiguous attitude towards public worship, and the development of parachurch organizations.<sup>1</sup> Biblically speaking, the Church is seen in three dimensions. One dimension is the Church as the people of God; a second dimension is the Church as a gathered assembly before God's Throne; and the third dimension of the Church is that it is a governmental institution, and as such this stands in contrast to other governmental institutions (state and family).<sup>2</sup> James B. Jordan (1985)<sup>3</sup> writes:

A study of the Greek New Testament term *ekklesia* can be confusing until we realize that it is used for three different Hebrew concepts. The Hebrew phrase "people of God" speaks of the Church in the broad sense of God's people in all that they do. The Hebrew term *qahal* speaks of God's people gathered for the purpose of worship (or gathered for any other reason). The Hebrew term *tidah* denotes the governmental, organizational structure of the Church (or any other organization). These three Old Testament ideas lie behind the use of *ekklesia* in the New Testament.

What is more, there are two major causes of the contemporary church's problems: dearth of God's Word and the absence of the Holy Spirit. When a local church is bereft of "these two-in-one personality", the church has lost the power to win souls of the unsaved, power to perform miracles, healing, etc. This is because the line of relationship with God has been cut off. This lack accounts for prevalent heretical teachings and beliefs in the church today. The portrait of some church leaders today aptly described by Dele Ilesanmi (2019):

What I observe now is that the "Five-Fold Ministry" of the church has now become "Five-Fold Mystery" of the church. Some Pastors are hirelings: they teach and preach things that are in their financial favour or device a means of siphoning money from their poor congregation. The Teachers of the Word are heretical in their teaching to the advantage of the devil. The Evangelists are not more concerned about the perishing souls but craving for popularity and pleasure. The Prophets are sanctimonious and prophetically fallacious to their innocent clients in order to deplete their pockets to their advantage. The Apostles are now the advocates of secular governments for popularity and financial gain. Teaching of morality has now become anachronistic in some Christian environments and gatherings world over, whereas religion without morality is ungodliness. Since the "milky" members of the congregation could not differentiate between ministry and mystery, they prefer magic to miracle. Now, pastors turned motivational speakers are more in the church today than the true holiness preachers. They send

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<sup>1</sup>Jordan, James B. (ed.). *The Reconstruction of the Church: A Symposium*, (Tyler, Texas Geneva Ministries, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Jordan edited the book titled, *The Reconstruction of the Church: A Symposium*, (Tyler, Texas Geneva Ministries, 1985).

people from pulpits to hell. They preach what people want not what God wants for His people. The world is gradually folding up!<sup>4</sup>

This paper refers to two major dimensions of the Church of Jesus Christ: the Universal (Invisible) Church and the Local (Visible) Church. The Universal Church as those whose names are written in the Book of Life, past, present, and future, or living, dead, and yet unborn children of God. The body of saved people, either dead or alive, are the church who are registered in heaven and whose name are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life (Exo32:32; 33; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rev 3: 5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; cf. 22:19; Heb 12:22-23)<sup>5</sup>. Anyone alive or dead whose name is not written in the Book of Life is not part of the universal church. On the other hand, the Local Church is an amalgam of saved and unsaved people with human head and physical organisational structure. Thus, the focus of this work is to explain comprehensively these two major dimensions of the Church of Christ described above.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14). This passage encapsulates the pneumagogy<sup>6</sup> of the Church of Christ discussed in this paper: the Universal and Local Churches. The major role of the church is to proclaim the gospel of salvation through Christ Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Acts 1:8). God's Word and the Holy Spirit are mentioned together many times in the Bible (Eph 6:17; 2Tim 3:15, 16). God's Word is spoken by the power of the Holy Spirit (2Peter 1:20, 21). The present church is not expected to do less. However, to a great extent, the contemporary church is bereft of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, this study chooses to reconstruct the local church through God's Word and Holy Spirit-directed approaches. The methodology adopted in this work is *solus primus scriptura research (SPSR)* (*bibliosearch*, scriptural or biblical-based research) and expository research model, and extra-biblio sources, such as Christian books, journals, and websites relevant to the study, as its secondary sources. The primary source for this work is the Holy Bible.

### Biblical Concepts of the Church

The Greek word *ekklesia* or *ecclesia* mostly translated Church means a called-out company or a called-out ones. This Greek word for church is made up of two words. The *EK* is "out of" while the word *KLESIA* means "called". *EKKLESIA* is "a called-out assembly". This word means the people of God, the believers in Christ. The word *ecclesia* appears in the New Testament in 115 times and in each case, except 5, refers to the Church of Christ. The Greek term for "church" (*ekklesia*) is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament and in the Greek New Testament (Acts 7:38; Heb 2:12, citing Ps 22:22) to refer to God's people<sup>7</sup>. The word is nowhere refers to a building or a denomination as it is commonly used today.<sup>8</sup> The word is used for the Church of Jesus Christ in two ways, viz, for the invisible church of Christ and the visible church of Christ.<sup>9</sup> This is discussed in great details in this paper. According to Derek Prince (1971), the

<sup>4</sup>Ilesanmi, Dele Alaba. "Dimensions of Accountability in Christian Education", in *African Pentecostalism: Probity and accountability* Ayantayo, Adedibu and Igboin (eds.), (Adekunle Ajasin University Press, 2019), chapter 14, pp. 262-292.

<sup>5</sup> All Scriptural quotations here are from King James' version, except otherwise stated.

<sup>6</sup> Pneumagogy is a method of teaching and learning under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This theory was propounded by Dele Alaba Ilesanmi.

<sup>7</sup> Battle, John A. "Of the church", Westminster Standards Western Reformed Seminary, n/d (www.wrs.edu)

<sup>8</sup> Ogunsanya, Z. A. *A text book on ecclesiology: The study about the church of Jesus Christ*, (Holgos publications, 2005:18)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Bible describes the church as the house and family of God (Eph 2:19; 3:15; Heb 3:1-6). He says the use of the word *ekklesia* (as translated in KJV)<sup>10</sup>:

1. Church in a city	35 times
2. Church in a house	4 times
3. Churches in a province	36 times
4. Church universal	20 times
5. Church local, but not exactly defined	16 times
6. Church in a province	0 times
7. Old Testament church in the wilderness	1 time
8. Assembly (of a city of Ephesus)	<u>3 times</u>
Total:	<u>115 times</u>

The Bible uses various figures of speech to describe the church:

- The temple of God (1Cor 3:16)
- The bride of God (Eph 5:22-32)
- The body of Christ (Eph 1:10, 22-23; Col 1:18; cf. 1Cor 12:12-27)
- The bride of Christ (Eph 5:23, 27, 32; Rev 19:7-9)
- The kingdom of God's Son (Col 1:13)
- The house of God (1Tim 3: 15)
- The church of God (1Cor 1:2)
- The church of the firstborn (Heb 12:23)
- The church of the Lord (Acts 20:28)
- The churches of Christ (Rom 16:16)
- Fullness of Christ (Eph 1:23)

It should be noted that the church is built by Jesus Christ (Matt 16: 13-18); purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28); it is built on Jesus Christ as the only Foundation (1Cor 3:11) and not on Peter, Paul or any other man (1Cor 1:12-13) but Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built. It should also be noted that members of the church of Christ are called:

- Members of Christ (1Cor 12:27; 6:15; Rom 12:4-5)
- Disciples of Christ (Acts 6:1, 7, 11:26)
- Believers (Acts 5:14; 2Cor 6:15)
- Saints (Acts 9:13; Rom 1:7; Phil 1:1)
- Priest (1Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6)
- Children of God (Gal 3:26-27; 1John 3:1-2)
- Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1Pet 4:16)

### **The Greek *Ekklesia*: The Universal and the Local Churches**

As earlier mentioned, the word *ekklesia* (church) is used for the church of Jesus Christ in two ways. The first is "the Universal Church" and the second is the "the Local Church". The Universal Church is a heavenly assembly. It can also be called the invisible church of Christ. On the other hand, the Local Church is regarded as an earthly assembly or visible church. As cited by Thomas M. Stones (2020), the Greek and New Testament Professor averred, "Men, in the secular Greek world of the first century *ekklesia* meant exclusively 'visible assembly.' However, the Holy Spirit gave *ekklesia* another second meaning— 'universal invisible assembly' in Matthew 16:18."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Prince, Derek. *The Church – Volume 1: Universal and local* (Study Note Outline – TC1, 1971)

<sup>11</sup> Stouse, Thomas M. "Does *ekklesia* have two meanings?", 2020.

<https://www.fairhavenbaptist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Does-Ekklesia-Have-Two-Meanings.pdf>

### **The Universal or Invisible Church: A Heavenly Assembly**

According to Bill Robinson (2023), the universal church or invisible church has no earthly organization. In other words, the universal church has no earthly headquarters. Christ is the head of His body, the church, and is the chief Shepherd over the universal church, the true church (Eph 1:22-23; 1Pet 5:4). The invisible or universal church refers to those persons who have actually been regenerated or quickened by the Holy Spirit, God's elect or true believers, dead or alive.

The universal church that Jesus came to establish (Matt 16:18) is composed of individuals, both the living, the dead, and the unborn, who are in a saved relationship with God through Jesus Christ (Eph 3:14-15ff). It is important to remember the church does not save (Christ does) but it is made up of the saved. Thus, the universal church is the aggregate of all saved individuals of all time and ages. And, as such, "Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph 3:21). The universal church can be seen as a spiritual gathering and coming together of the saved, living, dead, and unborn, who are enrolled or registered in heaven in the book of the life (Lk 10:20; Heb 12:22-24; Rev 21:27). In his view, Jonathan Leeman (2022) says that "The universal church is a heavenly and eschatological assembly of everyone – past, present, and future – who belongs to Christ's new covenant and kingdom".

The universal church consists of all the *elect*. Not just God's people in the New Testament, but also His people in the Old Testament such as Abraham. The universal church should come first in our thinking because people "join" the universal church or heavenly assembly by becoming Christians. The universal church is *invisible*. It is invisible only "in respect of the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace". We cannot directly see the Spirit's regenerating work (John 3:8); we cannot perfectly judge another person's grace. This church has only one Head: Jesus Christ (Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:18) and only one headquarters which is situated in heaven (Heb 12:22-23). Every member of the universal church is united to Jesus by the Holy Spirit immediately after conversion.

The statement "the invisible church" cannot be denied due to the inability to look into the human heart, the inward calling of the Holy Spirit, and the application of redemption to the soul. We can only perceive outward signs, statements, and actions. The Holy Spirit only gives genuine saving faith to the elect, and counterfeit faith is often indiscernible to mortals. Jesus prayed for the elect present and not yet born in John 17.<sup>12</sup> Only those in spirit can know those whose names are written in the Book of Life (Phil 4:3). The Universal Church refers to in this paper can be seen as one with three different people:

1. The saved but dead people: their names are already written in the book of life waiting for judgement.
2. The saved but living people: their names are written in the book of life. All things being equal, their names will be there even after death or rapture.
3. The yet unborn children of God

### **The Local or Visible Church: An Earthly Assembly**

Leeman avers that "a local church as a mutually-affirming group of new covenant members and kingdom citizens, identified by regularly gathering together in Jesus' name through preaching the gospel and celebrating the ordinances." According to Battle, the visible church

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<sup>12</sup> Hendryx, John. "Distinction between the visible and invisible church", 2018. <https://www.monergism.com/blog/distinction-between-visible-and-invisible-church>

includes all who profess the true religion (1Cor 1:2), along with their children (Ezk 16:20-21; Acts 2:39; 1Cor 7:14). The visible church is composed of true and false believers, a mixture of born again and unborn again people. The local church is part of the universal church which can be found in any given locality. But not all the members of the local church are registered members of the universal or invisible church, only those whose names are written in the Book of Life. Bill (2023) says:

the local church is the relationship of saints to one another for the purpose of worshipping and working together in a specific locale/city to accomplish the work that God authorized it to do (1Cor 1:1-2; 1Thess 1:1; 2Thess 1:1). As such each local church is all-sufficient to do the work God has authorized it to do. Namely, to preach the gospel to the lost and for the building up of the saints (Eph 4:11-16); for benevolence in relieving needy saints (Acts 11:27-30). Each local church in the New Testament was autonomous (self-governing) and functioned independently from all other local churches (compare the 7 letters to the churches of Asia in Revelation 2 & 3). Meaning that each local church had its own elders, deacons, and members (Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1). This is further emphasized by Peter in 1Peter 5:1-4, where he exhorts elders "to shepherd the flock that is *among you*." Nowhere in the scriptures do we read of an organization larger than the local church.<sup>13</sup>

Prince (1971) asserts that the central purpose of the local church is *fellowship*. Believers are called to the *sharing together of Christ* (1Cor. 1:9); the New Testament was written to bring believers into the fellowship of the apostles, sharing with them the *fellowship of the Father and the Son* (1John 1:3); this fellowship brings *full joy* (1John 1:4; cf. 2John 12); and out of this fellowship the Holy Spirit brings to birth the purposes of God (John 3:6; cf. Acts 2:1; 13:1-4). Without fellowship there can be no spiritual birth.

Local churches are specific communities of believers organized under the leadership of elders/pastors/ overseer. There are many examples of local churches in the Bible. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for every church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust (Acts 14:23). The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you (Titus 1:5). The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house (1Cor 16:19).

The visible church, on the other hand, is discernible by the senses and consists of everyone who professes the true religion along with their children. In the visible church, there are genuine believers who are truly united to Christ, while false professors or hypocrites only taste of heavenly gifts but do not truly partake of the Saviour. The visible church is set apart from the world by profession, external government, discipline, and ordinances. Members of the visible church have obeyed the outward call of the gospel, placing themselves in covenant with God and enjoying the privileges of being members of the visible church.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Saved-Living Universal or Invisible Church: A Conceptual Clarification**

The living universal or invisible church is a body of saved believers who are still alive but having their names written in the Lamb's Book of life. People who are still currently serving

<sup>13</sup> Robinson, Bill. "Understanding the difference: Local and universal church", September 30, 2023). <https://www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/cms/understanding-the-difference-local-and-universal-church/>

<sup>14</sup> Hendryx, John, opt.cit., 2018.

God faithfully and righteously in a local church. The living universal or invisible church may not be known by everyone but is known by God. The living universal church is a world-wide righteous people of God who does not have a single human leader and physical organisation. Hence, it is called invisible church, exist but not seen and coordinated. The people are part of the local church, which is made of both the saved and unsaved people, they are invisible and uncoordinated but they cannot be separated from the local church by human but God has separated them by adding their names to the Book of Life. They may be in this world but not part of this world. The living universal church works as each Christian submits to Jesus as head. The living universal church members are invisible not because they cannot be seen but they cannot certainly be distinguished or identified. No man can truly identify the righteous ones, only God knows those who are His (2Tim 2:19). Not every member of the local or visible church is genuinely born again including some of the church leaders. Only children of God are members of the invisible or universal church of Christ. For example, Jesus avers:

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt 7:21-23).

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica:

The fact that many Christians hold nominal beliefs and do not act like followers of Christ has been noted since the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the church ceased to be persecuted. To account for this, St Augustine proposed that the real church is an invisible entity known only to God. Martin Luther used this theory to excuse the divisions of the church at the Reformation, holding that the true church has its members scattered among the various Christian bodies but that it is independent of any organization known upon Earth...

The living universal or invisible Church is part of the local or visible churches. The visible or local churches exist at a particular time and place. They are not spread out geographically but can be identified as a church in a particular location in every nation of the world. All living Christians are called to be part of local churches where they are led and cared for by pastors or elders, worship their God, learn the Scripture, receive the Lord's Supper, pray together, serve one another, and carry out the Great Commission together. It is a good thing for one to belong to a local assembly of believers but this does not automatically make one a member of the invisible church because the Lord Jesus says that one must be born again (John 3:3-7).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ogunsanya, Z. A. *A text book on ecclesiology: The study about the church of Jesus Christ*, 2005:25

### The Dichotomy between the Universal Church and the Local Church

S/N	Universal Church	Local Church
1	All Christians everywhere	Christians in a local area
2	There is only one indivisible, united church	There are many different churches
3	Admission is by adding by the Lord Jesus	Admission is by joining (Acts 9:26-27)
4	Names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life	Names are written in church attendance book
5	Consist of all the saved people, living and dead	Consists of Saved & Lost people
6	No earthly organisation	There is earthly organisation
7	Death doesn't affect membership	Death ends membership
8	There is no need to preach and teach the Word	There is need to preach and teach the Word
9	Prayers, the Lord's Supper, Water Baptism, etc. are not needed	Prayers, the Lord's Supper, Water Baptism, etc. are needed
10	You are saved if you are here	Your attendance is no guarantee for salvation except you accept Jesus Christ
11	No division, no strife here	Doctrinal dichotomy may exist
12	No earthly successor	There are earthly successors
13	Jesus is the head of the church, no human head (Eph 5:24)	Jesus as the head with human head (Eph 5:24)
14	Spotless and blameless (Rom 12:1; Eph 5:27)	Spotless and blameless (Rom 12:1; Eph 5:27; cf. 1Cor 1:1-2) and those need reformation
15	The Church as the temple, body, and bride of Christ, and as the communion of saints	The church is a mixed multitude.
16	Believers are combined under the leadership of Christ Jesus	Local churches are specific communities of believers organised under the leadership of pastors.
17	The headquarters is in heaven	The headquarters is located anywhere on the earth
18	This is an invisible church	This a visible church
19	This is a heavenly assembly	This is an earthly assembly
20	No unsaved people can be found here	The unsaved can be found here.

Table 1

### Local and Universal Church Nexus

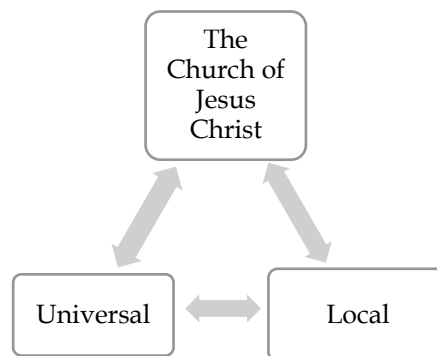
There is no genuine living member of the universal church who does not confess Christ's name and obey Him inwardly and outwardly. He/she must be a member of a local church. No profession of faith must be counted genuine if it is contradicted by refusal to forsake any false teaching or ungodly way. The local church is also typified in Romans 1:7; 1Corinthians 1:2; etc. it is then wrong to claim to belong to universal church if not eligible to belong to local or visible church. The local church is an engine room of conversion for the universal church. The local church does not convert, Jesus does. The Spirit of Jesus (God's Spirit or Holy Spirit) does

the work of conversion in a local or visible church where His Word is being taught and/or preached.

Leeman (2022) painted the nexus this way:

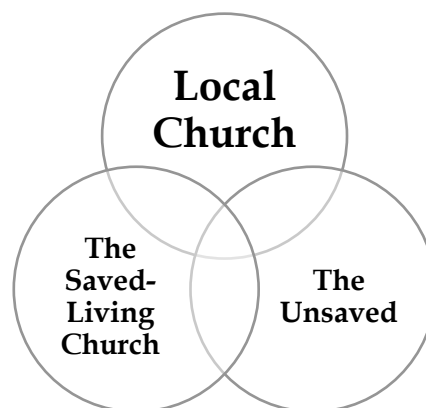
To become a Christian is to become a member of the universal church. Yet membership in the heavenly assembly must “show up” on earth, which Christians do by gathering together in the name of Christ through the preaching of the gospel and mutually affirming one another as belonging to him through the ordinances. The heavenly universal church, in other words, creates earthly local churches, which in turn display the universal church.

People are added to the Universal Church after they have come to Christ, and they are encouraged to join a local church that is seeking to do God's will. The moment a person is born again is added to the universal church by Christ while he joins the local church to worship and serve God where the Word of God will be shared. No Word will be shared in the universal church because it is now regarded as invisible church but does exist. In the universal church, both present and past believers in Christ are one in worship before the throne of God. One important thing we need to know is this: one's acceptance into a local church is no guarantee that one is acceptable to God.



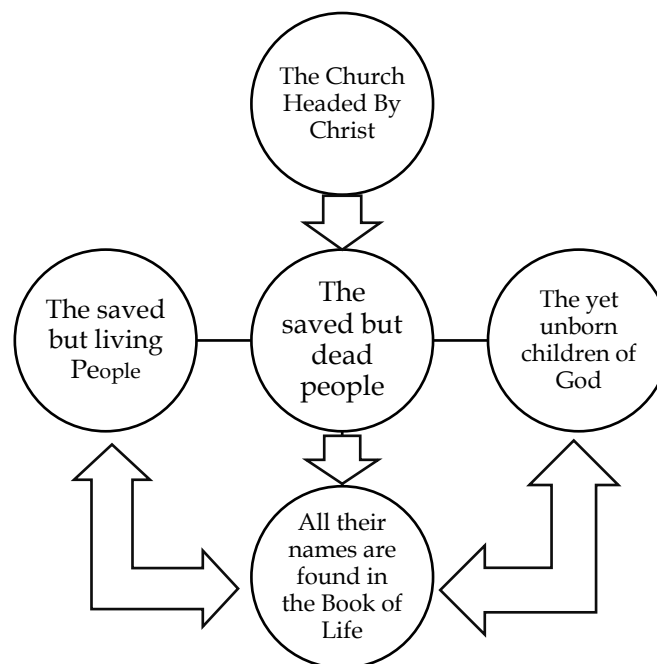
*Diagram 1*

The church of Jesus Christ is universal and local



*Diagram 2*

The diagram shows that the local church is a mixture of the saved-living church and unsaved. This church has human head, such as elders, pastors, or overseers. This is where the universal, invisible church is produced. The brethren and the unsaved people in this church are nourished with the Word of God for the faith of the brethren (the saved, living church) to be strengthened and for the unsaved to be converted and added to the heavenly church, assembly. To be a member of the local church is not a guarantee to have direct access to the invisible, universal church, the heavenly assembly, but it is a good step to take because it is a place where one can receive the Word of grace for one's salvation. Every member of a local church must genuinely confess Jesus as Lord before he or she can be added to the heavenly assembly or church. Anyone whose name is not found in the Lamb's Book of Life will not be a member of the Universal Church of Christ (Rev 13:8).



*Diagram 3*

All members of the universal or invisible church are found in the Lamb's Book of Life. This church is one indivisible entity that has no human head. The living saved people are part of the local church of Christ; the yet unborn children of God must also join the local church because Jesus had prayed for them in advance (John 17:20); and while the saved dead people, the dead in Christ, who are in Abraham's bosom, side or paradise will be waiting for judgement.

### **God's Word and the Holy Spirit: The Right Approaches to Reconstructing the Church**

The church that needs the Word of God and the move of the Holy Spirit is the local church. The local church, as discussed earlier in this paper, is a visible church that comprises both the saved-living universal church and the unsaved people. Thus, the local church is an amalgamation of both saved and unsaved people. Both people in this church need God's Word and the Holy Spirit. The saved-living universal church means the believers in Christ who are alive and have been added by Jesus Christ to the Universal Church of Christ with their names already written in the Book of Life. These group of Christian believers still need the Word of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit because he that thinks he stands should take heed

lest he falls (1Cor 10:12). Paul also says "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1Cor 9:27). The believers cannot do or stand without the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. What keeps them in Christ is the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. It is no guarantee that a believer's name cannot be removed or blot out of the Book of Life if he falls away. God has the right to remove anyone's name from the Book. The only way out is to remain permanently on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ with committing sin (Exo 32:33; Rev 3:5). For the unsaved who joined the local church cannot be saved without the Word of God and the Holy Spirit who inspires and teaches the Word.

There is an intimate, inseparable nexus between the Holy Spirit and God's Word. They work in harmony with each other. The greatest ministry of the Holy Spirit is in connection with the Scriptures – God's Word. Indeed, both are mentioned together many times in the Bible (Eph 6:17; 2Tim 3:15-16).<sup>16</sup> They are closely knit together and whatever is contrary to the Word of God cannot be in agreement with the Holy Spirit. Hence the two are important and invaluable in reconstructing the local church as described in this paper. Thus, the best approach to reconstructing the contemporary church to fulfil divine purpose on earth is Holy Spirit-Directed learning approach. This approach makes use of the Word of God to bring about positive or desirable permanent change in the members of the church. The change that will bring learners (members and the unsaved) in right relationship with God. Pastors, elders, preachers or teachers have a vital role to play here. According to Dele Alaba Ilesanmi (2023), Holy Spirit-directed learning is the method of teaching and learning under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, which he calls Pneumagogy.

Ilesanmi's theory of pneumagogy is based on five major biblical principles which are important tools for the reconstruction of the local church:

1. **God or Christ-centredness:** All instructions must be God/Christ-centred for a person to fulfil the purpose of God for his/her life. All thoughts, knowledge, teachings, or instructions must be subject to the obedience of Christ our God.<sup>17</sup> All our children must be taught by God<sup>18</sup> because the earth must be filled with the knowledge of Him<sup>19</sup>. Only God can give true wisdom, knowledge, and understanding<sup>20</sup>, and the Holy Spirit remains the Teacher<sup>21</sup>. The major function of the teacher is to relate to the Master Teacher, our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **The Word of God:** Learning must be rooted in the Word of God. Any instruction or teaching that is not rooted in the Word of God cannot be considered true or genuine learning. This is because the written Word, or the Scripture is given to man by God through His inspiration for teaching, training, mentoring, coaching, instruction, reproof, and correction, in righteousness so that the children of God will be perfect, well-informed, skilful, intelligent, holy, and thoroughly prepared, furnished or equipped unto all good works<sup>22</sup>. Jesus confirmed that the Word belongs to the Father<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, the word must be appropriated by the teachers to facilitate the teaching-learning process to engender a better life for themselves and their students. This will,

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<sup>16</sup> See pastor W. F. Kumuyi's sermon outline for pastors and preachers, Vol 1, 2003

<sup>17</sup> 2Corinthians 10:5

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 54:13

<sup>19</sup> Hebrew 2:14; Isaiah 11:9

<sup>20</sup> Proverbs 2:6, 7

<sup>21</sup> John 14: 26

<sup>22</sup> 2Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>23</sup> John 14:24

in turn, positively improve a lot of society. Therefore, learning and teaching must be Bible-based.

3. **Holy Spirit-directedness:** As a person grows up, he/she must learn how to depend on the Holy Spirit, who teaches all things and brings all things to our remembrance<sup>24</sup>. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity. He is God living in us. He is the Teacher of this dispensation. Thus, He must not be ignored in the teaching-learning environment. No Christian educator can successfully impart knowledge and impact lives without the help of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of the truth; He lives in us, and He is with us<sup>25</sup>. The role of the Holy Spirit cannot be underrated in the teaching-learning environment. He does many things: He teaches, empowers, helps, brings things to our remembrance, guides, and leads, just to mention a few. With this in mind, no spiritual man or teacher can ignore Him. Any education that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit will cause the receiver confusion, calamity, unrest, and sorrow. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher. The maxim that "experience is the best teacher" is not true. No doubt, experience has its place; it cannot teach you all things, but the Holy Spirit can. Therefore, He, the Holy Spirit, is the best Teacher. The teaching-learning process is Holy Spirit-driven.
4. **Prayer:** Prayer is vital to the success of the teaching-learning process in Christian education. Prayer is communication with God, which includes praising and worshipping God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24), and asking God for your desires in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14). Asking God for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding will help us receive the correct interpretations of God's word. This will help both the teachers and students to enjoy the same wisdom and understanding God gave to Solomon (1Kings 4:29-34; 5:12) and the excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding He gave to Daniel (Dan 1:20; 5:12,14; 6:3). Only God can give true wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, and this sound, true wisdom is for the righteous (Prov 2:6, 7). Therefore, we need to ask God for this in prayer (Matt 7:7). Prayer is essential to the teaching-learning process.
5. **Faith-drivenness:** This is the vehicle that we need every day of our lives for our desires to be accomplished and to please our Maker, God (Heb 11:6). It is through faith that the worlds were framed by the word of God (Heb 11:3). It is a vehicle that conveys the word of God to its destination when it is well appropriated. It retains the word of God in the hearts of the students/congregation. It helps us apply our knowledge rightly through the power of the Holy Spirit. No success can take place in the teaching-learning environment without faith-filled words and the Holy Spirit's empowerment. The Christian learning environment must be faith-filled before a successful teaching-learning process can take place.

The use of human theories or approaches in the teaching of God's Word can prevent the move of the Holy Spirit. This is because the Holy Spirit works with the Word of God. Since biblical theories or approaches are based on the Word of God, it will be very easy to rebuild or restore the church of God through His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, the need for the Holy Spirit-directed approach in local churches. Members of the local church that want to be saved must be led by the Spirit of God, the Holy spirit: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14) – Spirit-led Approach (pneumagogy).<sup>26</sup> Ilesanmi asserts that the Holy Spirit guides the preaching and teaching-learning process (John 14:26;

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<sup>24</sup> John 14:26

<sup>25</sup> John 14: 17

<sup>26</sup> See Ilesanmi (2023) for a better understanding.

16:13). For example, "The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue" (2Sam 23:2). Anyone who does not speak according to the Word of God, there is no light or Holy Spirit in him (Isa 8:20). The Word of God does not change with time and scientific or technological discovery. Thus, nothing should replace the Word of God in the mouths of the children of God because they have His Spirit them (Isa 59:21). The Word of God is made know to those who received the Spirit of God (Prov 1:23) because "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*" (John 3:34). Therefore, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are one, they are inseparable companion: for the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph 6:17).

Furthermore, Ilesanmi (2022) explains God's Word by citing Hebrew 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb.4:12). He clearly explains how active and powerful the word of God is. The word can build and it can destroy. The word of God can be trusted and depended on if it is faith-filled and the Holy Spirit-controlled – pneumagogy. Through faith the worlds were brought into existence by the Word of God (Heb 11:3). The whole creation was made by, and responded to, the Word of God. The power of God's word cannot be underestimated. God magnifies His Word above His name given the important role the word plays in the cosmos (Ps 138:2). This Word of God is available for us to use to reconstruct the local church we belong to. When God's Word is spoken in faith, it releases either life or death (Prov 18:21) and will affect people, things, and circumstances. Faith-filled words can move our mountains and dismantle them in one fell swoop (Mark 11:23). The word has the capacity to fulfil the purpose for which you send it (Isa 55:10-11). When we send or speak the word, healing and deliverance will take place (Ps 107:20). What you just need to do is to speak out the word, send it now the result will be unimaginable. Faith is the vehicle that conveys your words to their destinations. You need "great faith" to galvanise or activate your words (Matt 8:10). We need faith to electrify our words to fulfil the purpose for which they are sent. Our words can only produce results if they are triggered by our faith.<sup>27</sup> Hence, it is pertinent to use the Word of God to rebuild the ailing church.

In addition, the role of the Holy Spirit cannot be downplayed in reconstructing the local church. Among others, the Holy Spirit secures believers against apostasy or desertion; He helps true believers or members of the invisible church not to fall away because they are baptised with the Holy Spirit and thus permanently abide in Christ (1John 2:27; 5:4); He unites to true Christians to Christ and helps them not to apostatise while those who are not saved but ready to receive Christ are united to Jesus by Him; believers in Christ Jesus are freed from the pollution of sin by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit; He intercedes for the believers in Christ (Rom 8:26, 27); there is no condemnation to the local church that is Holy Spirit-directed, not worldly directed (Rom 8:1); and He is the only One that can set the sinners free the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2). Thus, the Holy Spirit-directed approach is invaluable to the reconstruction of the local church.

### Conclusion

The study has been able to explain and dissect the two major dimensions of the Church of Christ: the local and the universal churches. The work reveals that one can become part of a local church without truly being a Christian, but only true believers are part of the universal Church. One does not "join" the Universal Church just like the local church, but one is

<sup>27</sup> Ilesanmi, Dele Alaba. "Speak the word", 2022. <https://christopress.org/speak-the-word/>)

supernaturally added to it by the Holy Spirit when one is united to Christ by faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit. When one speaks of Jesus' Universal or Invisible Church, one is referring to the heavenly assembly of people saved by Jesus both living and dead. The local church, as explained in this paper, is a visible earthly church with a mixture of the saved and unsaved people. The universal church is not composed of local churches ruled by a centralised earthly headquarters. The universal church has no earthly organisation but the local church has earthly organisation. The paper argues further that the only way to reconstructing the disarrayed church is through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit-directed approach.

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