What is Christ’s relationship to the church?

1 Corinthians 12:12 (ESV) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Ray Stedman puts it this way in his book Body Life: “The life of Jesus is still being manifest among people, but now no longer through an individual physical body, limited to one place on earth, but through a complex, corporate body called the church.”

Acts 9:5-6 (ESV) And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

What is the relationship between Jesus and his followers? Jesus dwells in them; the church is the collective body to whom Jesus has given his life.

The church is a sacramental people who are corporately and individually the conduit of Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23 (ESV) And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

“Christianity is distinctive as a religious faith in that it understands itself to be living as a continuing community through the living Christ…Its uniqueness lies in its particular relationship with its founder…It is the resurrected presence of the living Lord that continues to be the sole basis of the present reality of the church. Jesus is not merely the one who founded the community and left it, but rather the one who is present to the community now and in each historical period as the vital essence of the church.”

- Thomas Oden
We do not understand the core nature of the church until we grasp the unspeakable truth that Jesus extends his life on earth through a corporate people that can literally be called “the body of Christ.”

**Ephesians 1:5 (ESV)** he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

**Ephesians 1:12 (ESV)** so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

**2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)** For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Ephesians 1:22-23 (ESV)** 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV)** 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

**Ephesians 3:9-10 (ESV)** 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.