

Church Timeline

- Earliest Jewish (Hebrew) synagogue dated 3rd C BCE in Egypt.
- A 'synagogue' is a 'house of assembly' from the Greek word '*synagoge*', meaning assembly. In Hebrew it is called *Bet Keneset*; 'house of assembly'. Some Jews also refer to synagogue as '*shul*' meaning 'school' in German, as within a synagogue there is usually a study hall, or *Bet Midrash*, 'house of study'.
- In ancient Judaism the focus of worship was the Temple in Jerusalem. The synagogue was for prayer, gathering and learning. When the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, synagogues did not take on the worship role of the Temple.
- The earliest Christians got together in houses (Acts 17:5, 20:20, 1 Cor 16:19) or synagogues (Acts 2:46, 19:8)
- The earliest identified Christian church is a house church in Syria dated between 233 and 256 CE.
- The meaning of 'church' in the New Testament is a group of people drawn together because of their commitment to follow Jesus, rather than a building or institution.
- The early church groups met to pray, learn, discuss their faith and remember Jesus' sacrifice through Communion (bread and wine) (Acts 2:42)
- People enter the church through baptism, whether they have been born into a Christian family or not
- The church is seen as God's people in the world (1 Peter 2: 9-10), with a responsibility to worship God and take the message of Jesus to all non-Christians
- Today churches are one of the biggest providers of food banks in the UK

