

260 vs. 251–254, 259**Christian social and ecclesiastical theology vs. Local church and Pastoral care of specific kinds of persons**

Ecclesiastical theology addresses many aspects of the Christian church, including its nature, its mission, its authority, and its government. These aspects concern both the church as a whole and the local church.

The local church is the group in which individual believers can meet regularly face to face for worship, fellowship, and church activities—for example, a congregation, a college church group.

The local church also includes the small groups called basic Christian communities or basic ecclesial communities. These are smaller than parishes or congregations, but, like other forms of the local church, are organized for the general religious welfare of their members, not just for special projects or functions. Class these in the same way as other forms of the local church, i.e., class comprehensive works in 250, and class specific aspects with the aspect in the subdivisions of 250.

Use 260 for works on the church as a whole and for comprehensive works on the church as a whole and the local church. Use 250 for works intended for the individual practitioner in the local setting, for works on the local church in general, and for works on specific local churches. If in doubt, prefer 260.

Use 260 for some activities that can be conducted by the local church, e.g., public worship (264–265), religious education (268), spiritual renewal and evangelism (269), as the context of works on these subjects is often broader than the local church.

Use 261 for the church's response to cultural and social problems, including both its perspective on, or attitude or policy toward such problems, and its activities regarding them, unless the context is limited to pastoral work, e.g., a practical work for the prison chaplain 259.5, but the church's attitude to the treatment of criminals 261.8336. If in doubt, prefer 261.

Use 262.1 for clergy or laity in connection with their authority, function, or role within the church as a whole. Use 250 for clergy and laity in connection with the practical work of ministry and caring for souls, including preaching, visiting in homes, visiting the sick, counseling, and local church administration. If in doubt, prefer 262.1.

Use 262 for church government and organization, unless the scope is limited to administration of the local church (254).