

## *Prayer of the Month, February 2014 • Michael Saward*

Lord of the Church, enable your people to be the Church: a redeemed people, a holy people, a united people, a missionary people: and in all things a people gladly submissive to the truth as it is found in Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Michael John Saward, 1932–<sup>1</sup>



Taken from a collection of prayers by Michael Saward on the theme of mission in the Church, this prayer focuses on what it is to be the Church. It might seem odd to think that we are not quite the Church, but we are not fully the Church that God intends – there is room for improvement. In his prayer Michael Saward suggests areas where we could do better: more holy, more united, more missionary ... This is taking seriously the idea that there is only one Church and we are part of it, rather than thinking we are a separate bit of the Church that is ‘all right’ – the rest of the Church has all the problems. The Church is only real and only makes sense in relation to Jesus; he is the head of the Church and the source of truth to whom we constantly refer.

Michael Saward was born in Blackheath, south-east London, on 14 May 1932. For his National Service he became a subaltern in the Royal West African Frontier Force, in Accra, Ghana. He studied theology at Bristol University and was ordained priest in Canterbury Cathedral. He served as a curate in London (Croydon, then Edgware) before moving to Liverpool, where he became secretary of the Liverpool Council of Churches. In 1967 he became Radio and Television Officer to Archbishop Michael Ramsey until 1972, when he re-entered parish ministry in London. He has served on many Church committees including the General Synod, the Church Commissioners, and the Church of England Evangelical Council. He was also chairman of the Billy Graham London Mission 1989 Media Task Group. His name is best-known to most people for hymn writing – he has written over a hundred hymns, the best know of which is ‘Christ triumphant, ever reigning’ usually sung to the tune Guiting Power by John Barnard (named after a village in Gloucestershire). He retired at the end of 2000 from the post of Canon Treasurer of St Paul’s Cathedral, London. He continues to be involved in the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and is currently on its executive committee as treasurer.

Colin Lunt

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<sup>1</sup>*Task unfinished : prayers for mission* / Michael Saward. . – Falcon Press and Patmos Press, 1973. – © Michael Saward