

2

Practices

2.1

Worship

■ What is worship?

Worship is the way in which Christians show their deep love, reverence and respect for God. It is connected with the word 'worth' and means to recognise someone's importance and value.

Christians may worship alone or with others, in a special building like a church, in people's homes or any appropriate place. Worship may involve prayer, meditation, Bible readings, singing hymns, preaching, sharing food, pilgrimage, celebrating festivals or using religious art, music or drama. People can worship anytime, but Christians' weekly public worship takes place on Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection.

Why worship?

Worship allows Christians to praise and thank God for his blessings, to ask for forgiveness of sin or to seek God's help for themselves or others who may be suffering. Worship helps deepen a Christian's relationship with God and gives him or her comfort and strength to live a more truly Christian life.

■ Different forms of worship

Liturgical worship

Some Christians prefer services that follow the same set pattern each time. This is called **liturgical worship**. In liturgical worship a priest leads the congregation in formal prayers that have set responses. Bible passages are read out, particularly from the gospels, and there may be a sermon based on these. The priest may perform symbolic actions which have a specific meaning. During the service there will often be music, hymns sung by the congregation or choir, or sometimes chanting by the priest. An example of liturgical worship is the celebration of the Eucharist for Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Churches.

Non-liturgical and informal worship

Christians also take part in **non-liturgical worship**, in which there does not have to be a set order or ritual. In Nonconformist churches, such as Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed churches, those planning the service may choose an order to suit a theme. Nonconformist churches place an emphasis on the word of God in the Bible, and although many churches may celebrate Holy Communion regularly, perhaps once or twice a month, the service is usually focused on Bible readings and a sermon based on the readings. The basic structure of the service might

Objectives

- Understand what is meant by worship and its importance for Christians.
- Understand the differences between liturgical, informal (non-liturgical) and private worship.

Key terms

- **worship:** acts of religious praise, honour or devotion
- **liturgical worship:** a church service that follows a set structure or ritual
- **non-liturgical worship:** a service that does not follow a set text or ritual
- **informal worship:** a type of non-liturgical worship, sometimes 'spontaneous' or 'charismatic' in nature
- **private worship:** when a believer praises or honours God on his or her own

Links

You will learn more about the Holy Communion on page 42.

The meaning of Nonconformist is explained on page 38.

See pages 37 and 38 for more about prayer.

remain the same each week but the preacher may change the order, the number of hymns or types of prayer.

Informal worship may depend on people's spontaneous prayers or sharing of thoughts. Quaker worship is mainly silent, and people speak when they feel God's spirit moving them to offer thoughts, prayers or a reading from the Bible. Community or house churches meet to eat together and share their faith to recreate what they believe to be the worship of the Early Church. Some informal worship, like that of the Pentecostal Church, is 'charismatic' (that is, 'led by the Spirit') and may involve dancing, clapping, calling out, and speaking in tongues. These worshippers feel it is easier to experience God's Holy Spirit in informal worship.

Characteristics of liturgical worship, and why they are important for Christians

- The people receive forgiveness from God through the action of the priest.
- The people receive the living presence of Jesus in Holy Communion.
- Bible readings follow the Christian calendar and teach Christian history and faith across the Old and New Testament and Paul's letters.
- There is a worldwide set order of service that is familiar to all, even visitors.
- The ritual has been passed down through generations, giving a sense of tradition.

Characteristics of non-liturgical and informal worship, and why they are important for Christians

- The style of worship follows that of some early Christians who met to hear about Jesus in the joy of the Spirit after Pentecost.
- Faith is expressed in a variety of ways. Holy Communion, for example, may be celebrated in different ways.
- Christians can share personal interpretations of the Bible. Often, readings follow the Christian calendar.
- People can take an active part in church by praying aloud or speaking without formal training.
- The service may have an emotional impact, with a feeling of personal revelation from God.

Private worship

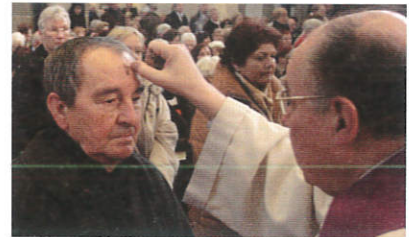
Private worship allows individuals to spend time with God, either alone or with close friends or family. It may involve prayer, meditation, studying or meditating on a Bible passage, or using aids to worship such as an icon, or a rosary.

Activities

- 1 With a partner, make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of liturgical worship. Do the same for non-liturgical and informal worship. Which would you prefer and why?
- 2 Choose three examples of private worship and explain how they may help Christians to deepen their relationship with God.

★ Study tip

It may be helpful to give specific examples of the different forms of worship (liturgical, informal and private worship) to extend your answers.



▲ In liturgical worship the priest may perform symbolic actions which have a specific meaning



▲ Quaker worship is mainly silent

Summary

You should now be able to explain what is meant by worship in its various forms and its importance for Christians.

2.2

Prayer

■ What is prayer?

Prayer is communicating with God in silence or aloud, with others or alone, using **set prayers** or **informal prayer**. Sometimes Christians say a set prayer before eating a meal to thank God for providing what they need to live. Other Christians might pray spontaneously for their meal using their own words, in an informal prayer.

“ Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts, which we are about to receive from your bounty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. ”

Catholic Grace before meals

People may pray in a humble position, kneeling down, sometimes with hands pressed together. In Orthodox services people stand to pray, **Nonconformists** often sit, Anglicans may kneel, and other Christians raise their hands to invite the Holy Spirit into their lives. Catholics may use a rosary, while Orthodox Christians use icons to aid prayer.



▲ Catholics say set prayers using a rosary while meditating on the life of Jesus



▲ Orthodox Christians pray to God using icons in their homes

Christians believe that God will answer prayer but not always in the way the person would like (see Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:32–36). Prayer can help someone accept God's will even if it means suffering. Sometimes Christians prefer to find their own way of expressing their needs to God by using informal prayer; they sometimes feel they can open their hearts to God more easily by using their own words.

Objectives

- Understand the nature and use of prayer and its significance.
- Find out about the Lord's Prayer, set prayers and informal prayer.

Key terms

- **prayer:** communicating with God, either silently or through words of praise, thanksgiving or confession, or requests for God's help or guidance
- **set prayers:** prayers that have been written down and said more than once by more than one person, for example the Lord's Prayer
- **informal prayer:** prayer that is made up by an individual using his or her own words
- **Nonconformist:** an English Protestant who does not conform to the doctrines or practices of the established Church of England

■ The significance of private worship and prayer

Worship is not just about attending public services, it affects the whole of a Christian's life. Private worship helps Christians build up a discipline which gives them strength to cope in times of trouble. It encourages a routine that allows time for reflection in a busy day. Through prayer and meditation Christians find peace and a sense of communion with God in their everyday life as followers of Jesus.

■ The Lord's Prayer

When Jesus was asked to teach his disciples how to pray, he answered with **the Lord's Prayer**. One version of the Prayer is shown here:

“ Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your Kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen. ”

The Lord's Prayer

The importance of the Lord's Prayer for the individual, the community and society

The Lord's Prayer gives individual Christians a pattern for how to pray as it combines giving praise to God and asking for one's needs. When used as a private prayer, a Christian is reminded that he or she must forgive others in order to be forgiven. It is believed that prayer is only effective if the person's relationships with others are right.

The Lord's Prayer reminds Christians that God is the Father of the whole community, not just of the individual. The prayer is used often in Christian worship and tends to be prayed out loud by all members of the congregation together. It is nearly always said at Holy Communion, baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Even non-believers can feel its impact in such services as it is a prayer that many people in Great Britain learned as children in their families or in school. It can bring a sense of unity and spiritual purpose in society at important times, for example when recited at commemoration services after a tragic event.

Research activities

- 1 Find Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane in Mark 14:32–36. Did God answer Jesus' prayer? Try to give two different points of view.
- 2 Find out more about how Orthodox Christians use icons to worship God in their homes.
- 3 Find out more details about how Catholics use the rosary to pray.

Key term

- **the Lord's Prayer:** the prayer taught to the disciples by Jesus; also known as the 'Our Father'

Activities

- 1 Explain, giving examples, the difference between set prayers and informal prayers.
- 2 'Christians do not need to worship in church as long as they pray at home.'
Evaluate this statement.

Extension activities



- 1 Look up Jesus' teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:5–15). What does Jesus warn people not to do when they pray?
- 2 Compare the versions of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:5–8 and in Luke 11:2–4 with the version given on this page. Look for a copy of the traditional version of the Lord's Prayer and compare this with the other versions you have read. What differences do you notice?

★ Study tip

It would be helpful to learn the Lord's Prayer by heart and be able to explain its meaning.

Summary

You should now be able to explain the nature and use of prayer and its significance for Christians.

2.3

The sacraments: Baptism

■ What are sacraments?

Sacraments are holy rituals that outwardly express an inner, spiritual experience. They make visible for believers a special gift of grace (a free gift of God's love). Catholic and Orthodox Christians accept seven sacraments, which they believe to have been initiated by Jesus: **baptism**, confirmation, Holy Communion, marriage, Holy Orders, reconciliation, and the anointing of the sick. Many **Protestant** churches see baptism and Holy Communion as important rituals because they believe Jesus instructed them to undertake these. Some churches that practise **believers' baptism** consider it an important ceremony but do not refer to it as a 'sacrament'. Other churches like the Quakers or The Salvation Army, do not use any sacraments.

How do sacraments help Christians?

Sacraments involve symbolic actions, words, and physical elements such as water in baptism and bread and wine in Holy Communion. Many Christians believe that sacraments are special rituals which help to strengthen their relationship with God by making him a part of their life. They are important to the Christian community because they affirm that Christians are part of the Body of Christ, the Church, with all its responsibilities.

Activities

- 1 Explain different attitudes towards sacraments among Christians.
- 2 Explain why sacraments are important both to an individual and to the Christian community.

■ Baptism

For many Churches baptism is the initiation rite by which people become members of the Christian Church. In baptism the person is formally acknowledged as a child of God and receives God's saving grace; the person's sins are forgiven and he or she enters a new life with Jesus Christ.

When John the Baptist baptised Jesus in the Jordan River, two extraordinary things happened that showed God's approval of his son's mission (see Mark 1:9–11). Jesus' baptism set an example for his followers to be baptised in order to receive the Holy Spirit and begin a new life in the Christian community.

“ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ”

Matthew 28:19 [NIV]

Objective

- Understand the meaning, role and significance of sacraments for Christians, including different forms of baptism: infant baptism and believers' baptism.

Key terms

- **sacraments:** rites and rituals through which the believer receives a special gift of grace; for Catholics, Anglicans and many Protestants, sacraments are 'outward signs' of 'inward grace'
- **baptism:** the ritual through which people become members of the Church; baptism involves the use of water as a symbol of the washing away of sin
- **Protestant:** a branch of Christianity, originally Protestants were called by that name because they protested against some of the practices of the Catholic Church; there are many Protestant denominations, but they agree on the central belief that the Bible is the only authority for Christians
- **believers' baptism:** initiation into the Church, by immersion in water, of people old enough to understand the ceremony/rite and willing to live a Christian life
- **infant baptism:** the ritual through which babies and young children become members of the Church, where promises are taken on their behalf by adults; the infant is freed from sin and introduced to the saving love of God and the support of the Christian community.

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▲ Believer

■ Infant baptism

The first Christians were often baptised as adults, or whole families were baptised at the same time. Nowadays Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Methodist, and United Reformed Christians practise **infant baptism**.

People might ask why a baby who is too young to sin should be baptised. Catholic and Orthodox Christians would say everyone is a descendant of Adam and Eve who committed the first sin. Everyone has a tendency to sin and needs salvation, even a baby. For Catholics and Orthodox Christians, infant baptism removes this original sin. At an infant baptism the child is welcomed into the Church as soon as possible, and the parents are able to thank God for their new baby and celebrate the birth with family and friends.

Rites vary but the priest or minister says, 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' while pouring blessed water over the head of the baby. Godparents and parents promise to bring up the child in the Christian faith. Besides water, other symbols are used such as making the sign of the cross on the baby's forehead, anointing with oil, dressing the child in white, and giving the parents a candle lit from the Paschal candle (a large candle blessed and lit every year at Easter). The congregation welcomes the newest member of the Christian community.



▲ Infant baptism

■ Believers' baptism

Some Christians, such as Baptists and Pentecostals, think that a baby is too young to understand the meaning of baptism, so people should wait and be baptised when they are old enough to come to a mature decision about their faith. They believe that baptism does not itself save a person; it is someone's conversion to living a life dedicated to Jesus that is important. Therefore the believer must be old enough to have come to a mature decision about their faith.

Believers' baptism involves full immersion in a pool, symbolising the cleansing from sin and the rising up to new life with Christ. Rites vary but



▲ Believers' baptism involves full immersion in a pool

usually the minister talks about the importance of baptism and asks if the candidates are willing to change their lives. Each person may read a Bible passage and give a brief testimony of their faith in Jesus as their personal saviour. The minister goes into the pool with the person and baptises them 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'.

Discussion activities

- 1 With a partner or in a small group, describe how your parents celebrated your birth. Is there a difference between the way religious and non-religious people may mark the birth of a child?
- 2 Should parents have their children baptised if they have no intention of bringing them up as Christians?

Research activities

- 1 Research the symbolism behind the water, the candle, dressing the child in white, and the anointing with oil at an infant baptism.
- 2 Find out how people become members of the Quakers or Salvation Army and why they do not accept sacraments.

★ Study tip

You should be able to discuss similarities and differences in baptisms among different groups of Christians.

Summary

You should now be able to understand the meaning and role of sacraments and the importance of baptism, including infant and believers' baptism, for Christians.

2.4

The sacraments: Holy Communion

■ What is Holy Communion?

Holy Communion (also known as the Eucharist) is the sacrament that uses bread and wine to celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection from death. For Catholics, the sacrifice of Jesus is made present once again during this ritual and made real for believers. For the churches that do not consider Holy Communion a sacrament it is still a significant ceremony. Many Christians consider it the most important act of worship. It recalls the Last Supper of Jesus (Matthew 26:17–30).

When Christians celebrate Holy Communion they give thanks to God for his great love in sending Jesus to save people from sin and enable them to experience God's love for all eternity.

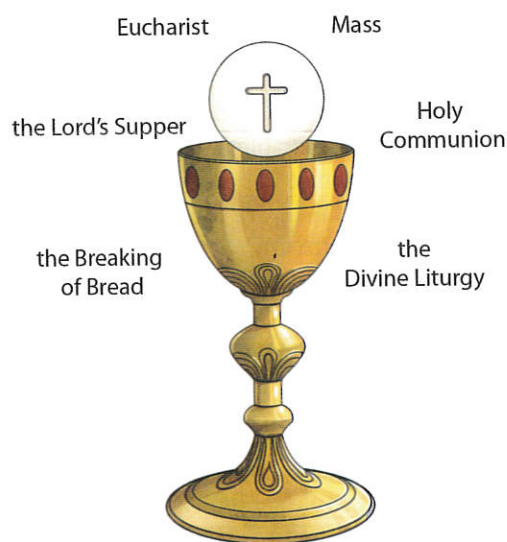
Christians interpret the meaning of Holy Communion in different ways. Catholics, Orthodox Christians and some Anglicans believe that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. It is a divine mystery how this happens but they believe that Jesus

is fully present in the bread and wine. By receiving Holy Communion they believe they become present in a mystical way at the death and resurrection of Christ which saves them. Protestant Christians who celebrate Holy Communion do so as a reminder of Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper. The bread and wine remain symbols of Jesus' sacrifice and help them to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection for their lives today.

Many Christians see Holy Communion both as an act of fellowship with other Christians and as communion with God. By recalling Jesus' sacrifice together and by sharing the bread and wine, these Christians believe they are brought closer to each other as a community and closer to God.

■ The impact of Holy Communion on individuals, communities and society

For many Christians, Holy Communion is at the centre of their lives and worship. Through it they believe they receive God's grace by joining in the great sacrifice of Jesus. They do not merely remember a past event, it becomes a present reality for them. It brings the community of believers



▲ There are many names for Holy Communion

Objective

- Understand the sacrament of Holy Communion and its importance for Christians.

“ The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. ”

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 [NIV]

★ Study tip

Reading the original text of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17–30) would help you to understand Holy Communion as it is celebrated today.

Key term

- **Holy Communion:** a service of thanksgiving in which the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus are celebrated using bread and wine; also called Eucharist, Mass, the Lord's Supper, the Breaking of Bread, and the Divine Liturgy

together in unity, strengthening their commitment to their faith. If someone is having doubts or is going through a difficult time, celebrating Holy Communion with others can give them support and encouragement.

Holy Communion calls Christians to put the love they have experienced from God into practice by loving others. Just as Holy Communion is a shared meal where everyone is equal, churches try to make everyone welcome, whatever their age, gender or race.

Holy Communion also has an impact on society and on other communities across the world. It reminds Christians that while they break bread together, there are many in the world who are starving. Holy Communion encourages them to work for equality and justice for all. Many Churches collect money during the service to support work being done for developing countries, the elderly, prisoners and the homeless.

Maureen receiving Holy Communion



▲ Maureen continued to gain strength from Holy Communion during her illness.

'As a practising Catholic, receiving Holy Communion is one of the most important parts of my life. When the priest says the words of consecration I know that Jesus is truly present on the altar in the bread and wine and therefore I am truly receiving him. This is a reminder that Jesus suffered and died for me and in receiving him in Holy Communion I am one with him. The Risen Christ is the essence of my faith.

The word "Eucharist", meaning 'thanksgiving', reminds me that I have so much to be thankful for, particularly the great love that Jesus has for me. The words "Holy Communion" remind me that I am in communion and therefore part of him.

From March to July of this year I was receiving chemotherapy for cancer and couldn't attend church. Friends were able to bring me Holy Communion and this was very important to me as I continued to receive this spiritual food.'

Activities

- 1 Explain, using your own words, why Maureen believes Holy Communion is important for her.
- 2 Explain differences and similarities between different Christian traditions concerning beliefs about Holy Communion.
- 3 'It is more important to help the poor than to celebrate Holy Communion.' Evaluate this statement.

Research activity



Find out which Christian groups do not celebrate Holy Communion, and why.

Summary

You should now be able to explain what the sacrament of Holy Communion is and why it is important for Christians.

2.5

Celebrating Holy Communion

There is a similar pattern in the way most churches celebrate Holy Communion:

- the ministry of the Word which focuses on God's word in the Bible
- the ministry of Holy Communion – offering, consecrating and sharing the bread and wine

■ The Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church

The Divine Liturgy recreates heaven on earth. Much of the service takes place on the altar in the sanctuary behind a screen, called an iconostasis, which represents the divide between earth and heaven. The priest passes through the iconostasis using the Royal Doors. The church is filled with candles and incense that help people feel God's presence.

Liturgy of the Word

- There are hymns, prayers and a reading from the Bible.
- The priest comes through the Royal Doors to chant the Gospel.
- There may be a sermon.

Liturgy of the Faithful

- The priest comes through the Royal Doors to receive wine and bread baked by members of the congregation. He selects one loaf to be consecrated.
- The Creed, the Lord's Prayer and other prayers are offered for the church, the world, and the local community.
- Behind closed Royal Doors, the priest says the words Jesus said at the Last Supper.
- The bread is divided in four: three parts are consecrated as the body and blood of Christ. The fourth unconsecrated part is broken into small pieces.
- The priest comes through the Royal Doors to distribute the consecrated bread and wine together on a spoon to the people who come forward for communion.
- Prayers of thanksgiving are said after communion.
- As people leave, the priest gives them pieces of the unconsecrated bread to take home as a sign of being part of the Christian community.

■ The Catholic Mass

Mass begins with a greeting from the priest, and prayers of penance and praise (the 'Gloria').

Liturgy of the Word

- On Sundays there are three readings from the Bible (from the Old Testament, Paul's letters and the Gospel), a psalm and a homily.

Objectives

- Understand the different ways in which Christians celebrate Holy Communion.
- Consider the different ways in which Christians understand Holy Communion.



▲ An Orthodox priest giving communion; behind him is the iconostasis (a screen that is covered with icons, separating the sanctuary from the nave) which symbolises the division between heaven and earth

Discussion activity

With a partner or in a small group, discuss the following statement: 'Christians should spend their time helping others instead of attending Holy Communion services.'

- People say prayers for the Church, the world, the local community, the sick and the dead. On Sundays this is preceded by the Creed.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

- Offerings of bread and wine are brought to the altar.
- The priest says the Eucharistic Prayer using the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: 'He gave you thanks and praise, he broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said, Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you.'
- He prays over the wine using similar words.
- The people say the Lord's Prayer.
- The priest and congregation give a sign of peace to each other.
- Members of the congregation come forward to receive communion.
- The priest blesses the people and tells them, for example, 'Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives.'

■ Holy Communion in the Anglican Church

A Communion service in the Church of England is almost identical to that of the Catholic Church. One small difference is that the 'peace' ('sign of peace' in the Catholic Mass) is shared at a different point in the service; whereas Catholics do this after the Lord's Prayer, Anglicans do it before the offerings of bread and wine are brought to the altar. Some Anglicans share the Catholic and Orthodox view that the bread and wine are transformed into Christ's body and blood, but many believe that Jesus is present in the bread and wine in a spiritual way and only while it is being eaten. The main emphasis is on this community meal being shared equally with all.

■ Holy Communion in Nonconformist churches

A typical service in the United Reformed Church has these elements:

- It begins with a hymn and a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.
- Bible readings and a sermon follow.
- The congregation prays for the world and for the needs of particular people.
- The minister reminds the congregation of Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper. He or she takes bread and wine, says a prayer of thanksgiving over them, including the words of Jesus, 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood'.
- There is an 'open table' so anyone who wishes to take communion may receive the bread and wine.
- People may come forward to receive the bread and wine. In some places the bread is cut beforehand, in others people break a piece off as it is passed around the seated congregation. The wine is sometimes non-alcoholic and is usually distributed in small cups.
- There is a prayer of thanksgiving, blessing and an encouragement to go out and serve God.

Activities

- 1 Make a list of the things these services have in common and another list of their differences.
- 2 What is meant by the Liturgy of the Word? How might it be helpful to Christians?
- 3 How do these services emphasise equality and community?



▲ An Anglican Holy Communion service

★ Study tip

Try to see a Communion service for yourself, either personally or on the Internet, to gain more understanding of the meaning and importance of the service for the worshippers.

Summary

You should now be able to describe different ways in which Holy Communion is celebrated in different Christian churches.

2.6

Pilgrimage

■ What is a pilgrimage?

A **pilgrimage** is a journey made for religious reasons, alone or with other Christians, to a sacred place. The believer makes a physical journey but it is also a spiritual journey towards God. The pilgrimage gives many opportunities for prayer and worship, and is itself an act of worship as believers show devotion to God by choosing to go.

Pilgrims may visit the Holy Land, particularly Jerusalem, because it is where Jesus lived, died and was resurrected and where Christianity began. They may visit shrines connected with famous saints. Some prefer to go to remote places to pray and reflect on their lives.

■ The role and importance of pilgrimage

Christians go on pilgrimage to:

- grow closer to God and strengthen their faith
- express sorrow for sin and be forgiven
- reflect on their lives, particularly when facing a crisis or a big decision
- pray for something special or thank God for a blessing
- seek a cure for an illness
- help other pilgrims who are disabled or ill
- experience a holy place
- meet others who share their faith.

It is not compulsory for Christians to go on a pilgrimage but it can play an important role in their spiritual lives. Often they come back with a better understanding of their faith and renewed enthusiasm for living a Christian life. They may have received advice from priests or monks that has helped them see problems in a new light. They may also feel cleansed from sin.



▲ Sick or disabled pilgrims are accompanied by able-bodied helpers at Lourdes, a popular pilgrimage site for Catholics

Objective

- Understand the role and importance of Christian pilgrimage, including the contrasting examples of pilgrimages to Lourdes and Iona.

Key term

- **pilgrimage:** a journey by a believer to a holy site for religious reasons; pilgrimage is itself an act of worship and devotion

Activities

- 1 Why is pilgrimage an act of worship?
- 2 How might a pilgrimage strengthen someone's faith?
- 3 Explain the differences between a pilgrimage to Lourdes and a pilgrimage to Iona.
- 4 'There is no difference between a pilgrimage and a holiday.' Evaluate this statement.

Discussion activity

With a partner, try to think of any negative effects of going on a pilgrimage. Do the positive aspects of pilgrimage outweigh the negative?

■ Lourdes

Lourdes in south-west France is a place of pilgrimage dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus. In 1858 a young girl named Bernadette had visions of Mary in a grotto (cave) near the river. Bernadette spoke of praying the rosary with Mary who looked lovingly upon her. Mary told Bernadette to dig for a spring of water, which was discovered to have healing properties. Now thousands of pilgrims visit Lourdes to pray at the grotto where Mary appeared, to recite the rosary together, and to bathe in the water where it is claimed that 67 miracles and over 6000 other cures have taken place. Many of these pilgrims are sick or disabled and are accompanied by able-bodied helpers.

“ As I raised my head to look at the grotto, I saw a Lady dressed in white, wearing a white dress, a blue girdle and a yellow rose on each foot, the same color as the chain of her rosary; the beads of the rosary were white. ”

Bernadette describing her first vision of the Virgin Mary

■ Iona

Iona is an island off the west coast of Scotland. In the 6th century AD, St Columba, an Irish missionary who brought Christianity to Scotland, established a small monastic community there. It is now the home of the ecumenical Iona Community and a place of Christian pilgrimage dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Some people think Iona is a ‘thin place’, where the veil between the spiritual world and the physical world is thin. Iona is remote and windswept, so for many pilgrims it feels like a place where nature reveals God’s infinite power and presence.

The Iona Community hold daily services in the abbey church, lead a seven-mile hike to the island’s holy and historic spots, and conduct workshops on Christian themes. Pilgrims are asked to help out with daily chores and meals while staying there. There is time for silence, for reflection or meditation, for reading the Bible or holy books, and for enjoying the area’s natural beauty.

▲ The abbey church on Iona



Research activities

- 1 Find out more about the life of Bernadette Soubirous. Why do you think it took a long time for the church to believe what she said?
- 2 Take a virtual tour of Iona. Describe what you see, and explain its attraction for Christian pilgrims. Visit the ‘REQuest’ website (a helpful resource that explores the Christian faith) and search for ‘Iona pilgrimage walk’.

Extension activity

Using the Internet, research other places of pilgrimage for Christians.

★ Study tip

It may be helpful to consider the importance of pilgrimage both for individual Christians and for the Christian community.

Summary

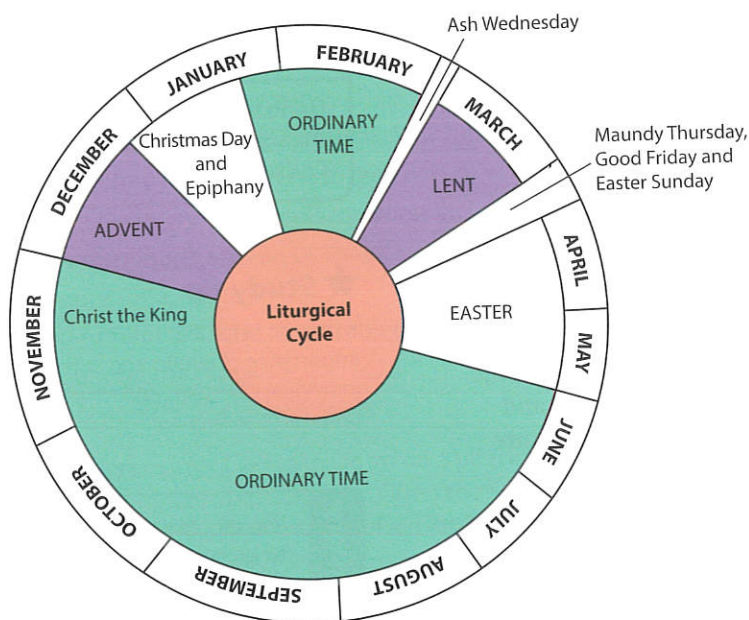
You should now be able to explain the role and importance of pilgrimage for Christians and to describe two contrasting examples: Lourdes and Iona.

2.7

Celebrating festivals

■ Festivals

Festivals have an important role in helping Christians remember the major events in their religion and to plan their public worship. Many Christians celebrate the same cycle of festivals each year. The Christian calendar has two main seasons: Advent, **Christmas** and Epiphany; Lent, **Easter** and Pentecost. By living through the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Christians remember the central teaching of their faith – that God gave his only Son to save them.



▲ The Christian liturgical calendar

■ Christmas

Christmas commemorates the Incarnation of Jesus, the belief that God became human in Jesus. In Great Britain, Christmas is celebrated on 25 December. The celebrations last 12 days ending with the feast of the Epiphany. Trees and homes are decorated with lights and nativity scenes. Lights represent Jesus as the light coming into the world of darkness and nativity scenes show the baby Jesus being born in poverty. Many churches have carol services with readings from the Bible showing God's promise of a saviour and the events of Jesus' birth. Children act out nativity plays, and Midnight Mass takes place on Christmas Eve. Christians send Christmas cards and exchange gifts which recall the wise men's gifts to Jesus. It is seen as a time of 'peace and goodwill' when Christians give to charity as God gave the gift of Jesus, his Son.

Objectives

- Understand the role and importance of festivals for Christians.
- Understand how and why Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter.

Key terms

- **festival:** a day or period of celebration for religious reasons
- **Christmas:** the day commemorating the Incarnation, the birth of Jesus (25 December in most churches); also, the season of 12 days ending with the Epiphany (when Christians remember the visit of the wise men)
- **Easter:** the religious season celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead; it starts on Easter Day and finishes with the feast of Pentecost

Links

Look at pages 16 and 17 for the meaning of Jesus' Incarnation for Christians.

Look back to pages 30 and 31 for information on the significance of Jesus' resurrection and atonement for Christians.

“ Father, you make this holy night radiant with the splendour of Jesus Christ our light. We welcome him as Lord, the true light of the world. Bring us to eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. ”

Opening prayer of the Catholic Midnight Mass at Christmas

Easter

Easter is the most important Christian festival. It celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. During the week leading up to Easter (Holy Week) Christians remember the events that led to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Jesus was crucified on ‘Good Friday’ and laid in the tomb. Special services are held and processions in the streets are led by a person carrying a wooden cross.

On Easter Sunday (Easter Day) the churches are filled with flowers and special hymns are sung celebrating the resurrection. Orthodox Christians walk around the church at midnight on Saturday and then enter the darkened church with lighted candles or lamps. This symbolises entering the empty tomb. The priest announces ‘Christ is risen!’ and the congregation answers ‘He is risen indeed’. Catholics and Anglicans also have a Saturday night vigil that begins in darkness, includes the lighting of a large Paschal candle to symbolise the risen Christ, and ends with Holy Communion. Many churches organise open-air sunrise services and share breakfast together, usually eating eggs, a symbol of new life.



▲ The Paschal candle is lit from a new fire that symbolises Christ breaking through the darkness of sin and death

“ Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life. ”

Traditional hymn sung by Orthodox Christians at the Easter Divine Liturgy

Activities

- 1 Explain how Christians celebrate Christmas and Easter, and the reasons for these festivals.
- 2 With a partner or in a small group discuss how celebrating festivals might help people understand the importance of belonging to a Christian community.
- 3 ‘Christmas is no longer a religious festival.’ Evaluate this statement.

Research activity

Look at the diagram of the liturgical calendar on page 48 and try to find out what events are remembered at other times of the year besides Christmas and Easter. Write down the advantages and disadvantages of celebrating the same festivals every year.

★ Study tip

Try to explain different ways of celebrating Christmas and Easter in various religious traditions.

Summary

You should now understand the role and importance of festivals for Christians and be able to describe how and why Christmas and Easter are celebrated.

2.8

The role of the Church in the local community: Food banks

■ What is the Church?

If asked to define the word 'church', many answer that the church is where Christians worship. This is correct but it is not the sense in which the word 'church' is used in the Bible. The word 'church' comes from the Greek word 'ekklesia' which is defined as an assembly, or a gathering of Christian people. The root meaning of 'church' is not that of a building, but of people. Originally the early **Church** did not have a special building and Christians met together in people's homes. The New Testament explains that the Church consists of a group of believers under the leadership of Jesus. First and foremost the Church is made up of the followers of Jesus in the local community.

“ And God placed all things under his (Jesus') feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body. ”

Ephesians 1:22-23 [NIV]

■ What does the Church do?

The church as a building provides a location where Christians from the local community can meet, worship, pray, obtain spiritual guidance and socialise. Often events take place on weekdays as well as worship on the Christian holy day of Sunday. Some activities are specifically for Christians such as prayer meetings or Bible studies; others fulfil a need in the local community, for example a mothers' and toddlers' group or youth club.

The role of the Church is not confined to the building. Throughout its history the Church has been a major source of social services like schooling and medical care, it has been an inspiration for art and culture and it has campaigned for justice and championed the neglected. In modern Britain the Church has become involved in projects that help the local community, such as food banks. This work fits with Christian teachings to act with compassion to those in need.

“ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. ”

Matthew 25:35-36 [NIV]

Objectives

- Understand what is meant by the Church.
- Understand what help the Church provides for local communities, e.g. food banks.

Key term

Church: 1. The holy people of God, also called the Body of Christ, among whom Christ is present and active:
2. A building in which Christians worship

Activities

- 1 Explain what is meant by the Church.
- 2 Explain what the Church does.
- 3 Copy down Matthew 25:35-36 and explain its meaning for Christians.
- 4 Describe how food banks operate and include the work of the Trussell Trust and the Oasis Project.
- 5 'There will always be a need to feed hungry people in Britain.' Evaluate this statement.

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Summary

The Trussell Trust

Founded in 1997 by Carol and Paddy Henderson, the Trussell Trust food banks provide emergency food, help and support to people in crisis in the UK. Based on Christian principles, shown, for example, in the parable of the Sheep and Goats, the aim is to bring people together (religious and non-religious) to work towards ending poverty and hunger in Britain. Rising prices, cuts in welfare benefits, redundancy, family breakdown, and unexpected expense may all contribute to an emergency situation.

Non-perishable food is donated to the food banks by churches, supermarkets, schools, businesses and individuals and is sorted by volunteers, including making sure that it is within date. Care professionals such as doctors, health visitors and social workers identify people in crisis and issue a food voucher. In exchange for their food voucher, three days of nutritionally balanced food is provided. Some of the food banks provide courses designed to help



▲ A Trussell Trust food bank set up by a network of churches in South Molton, Devon.

people 'eat well and spend less'. There are around 420 Trussell Trust food banks in the UK and in a year they provide food for nearly 1,000,000 people.

The Oasis Project

The Oasis Project of the Plymouth Methodist Mission Circuit is a community hub with an internet café, creative courses, a job club, training opportunities and a base for meetings. It also runs a food bank. Paid staff are supported by volunteers and session tutors. Around 200 people use the centre each week and spiritual and practical support is given to those who need it because of ill health, learning disability, domestic violence, substance abuse, low income and housing problems.



▲ The Oasis Project, Plymouth.

Research activities

- 1 Read Matthew 25:31-46 (the parable of the Sheep and Goats). Explain how this parable may inspire Christians to provide for those in need.
- 2 Find out if there is a food bank in your local area.

★ Study tip

Aim to learn teachings which encourage Christians to help the needy and understand the work of food banks.

Summary

You should understand that the biblical interpretation of the Church is the followers of Jesus who have a Christian duty to show a love to the community and support the needy, for example through food banks.

2.9

The role of the Church in the local community: Street Pastors

■ Why should Christians be involved in the local community?

The teaching of Jesus, for example in the parable of Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31–46), shows that Christians should not ignore the needs of society because showing **agape** love is part of the Christian way of life. Churches should respond practically to the needs of their local communities. These needs vary; for example, they might include a lack of facilities for young people, insufficient care for the vulnerable, the problem of gang culture or people feeling frightened on the streets. Churches have tried to meet these challenges with local projects such as Street Pastors.

■ Street Pastors

Rev. Les Isaac started the interdenominational network of Street Pastors in Brixton, south London, in 2003 with 18 volunteers. It was an initiative of Ascension Trust, a Christian charity, where Christian adult volunteers receive training in order to patrol the streets in urban areas. They do not have the power to enforce the law but provide a reassuring presence in local communities. Initially the main aim was to challenge gang culture and the use of knives and guns in some areas of London. As Christians elsewhere began their own groups, the focus widened to include responding to drunkenness, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime.

Street Pastors aim to help and care for vulnerable people in practical ways, working closely with councils and the police in their local communities. Wearing a blue, reflective 'Street Pastor' uniform, their aim is not to actively preach but to provide a positive service to their local areas. Their work includes listening to people's problems, giving guidance regarding agencies which might be able to help and discouraging anti-social behaviour. They are backed up by prayer partners (Prayer Pastors) who pray for the Street Pastors and the work they are doing. Sometimes they communicate with each other via mobile phones.

Since 2003 Street Pastors has grown rapidly and they now operate in nearly 300 locations worldwide with around 14,000 trained personnel.

A sister organisation, called School Pastors, was set up in 2011 with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour, illegal drug use and bullying. Within school, School Pastors mentor young people and they patrol within and around schools to help prevent behaviour problems. There recently has been the development of College Pastors, Rail Pastors, and (in the event of a disaster) Response Pastors.

The mission of the Church includes trying to make a positive contribution to the local community and being a good neighbour. This idea is summed up in James 2:14–17.

Objective

- Investigate different ways the Church makes a positive contribution to the local community, including the work of Street Pastors.

Key term

- **agape:** a word used in the Bible that describes selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love



▲ Street Pastors wear a blue, reflective uniform when patrolling the streets, providing a reassuring presence in urban communities

“ Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ”

James 2:17 [NIV]

This has resulted in organisations such as the Neighbourhood Prayer Network, the Boys' and Girls' Brigades, the YMCA, and projects designed to help people's physical well-being such as Parish Nursing.

Parish Nursing

Parish Nursing Ministries UK is a Christian charity which supports whole person healthcare through the local church. In Walton Parish, Felixstowe, three churches partner a project that provides registered parish nurses to promote well-being in body, mind and spirit. Their work includes diagnosing early signs of health problems, training and coordinating volunteers to help alleviate loneliness or provide

support during times of crisis, and giving additional help to the NHS. They encourage healthy living through exercise and a healthy diet, and provide education and health advice. Their focus is on the person rather than just their medical condition, and they will listen to problems, give reassurance, pray with them if asked and direct them to specific services if required.



▲ The Salvation Army is well known for its work in supporting people in the community.

Extension activities

- 1 Use the Internet to find out about other Christian community caring projects, such as the Neighbourhood Prayer Network, the YMCA and the work of the Salvation Army.
- 2 Find out if there are any community caring projects, such as Street Pastors or Parish Nurses, in your local area.

Discussion activity

'All Christians should do something practical to help their community, including praying for their neighbours.' Do you agree?

Activities

- 1 Explain the teachings that encourage Christians to take action to help people.
- 2 Give two examples of how the Church works to support the local community and explain the work the Church does in their local communities, including the role of Street Pastors.
- 3 'Street Pastors are a great support for the police.' Evaluate this statement.
- 4 Do you think having School Pastors is a good idea? Explain your opinion.

★ Study tip

It would be useful to be able to explain the role and importance of Street Pastors within their local communities.

Summary

You should be able to explain the significance of Christian involvement in the community and describe Christian activities, including the role of Street Pastors.

2.10

The place of mission and evangelism

■ The place of mission

The Church not only provides a place to worship and learn about God, it also has a **mission** to spread the good news to non-believers that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came into the world to be its saviour. Matthew's gospel ends with what is known as the **Great Commission**:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Matthew 28:19–20 [NIV]

These were some of the last words that Jesus gave to his disciples and they sum up the mission of the Church: Christians are not only called to know Jesus in their lives but also to make him known to others. In Matthew's account of the call of the first disciples, Jesus says to Simon Peter and Andrew: ‘Come, follow me [...] and I will send you out to fish for people.’ (Matthew 4:19).

When the early disciples received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, this gave them the gifts necessary to carry out the Great Commission (1 Corinthians 12:4–10).



▲ A Christian missionary offering her skills as a nurse to help the poor and disadvantaged at Nirmal Hriday, a hospice for the destitute and dying in Kolkata, India

Christians have the responsibility, according to the Great Commission, to tell others of their faith. This may be spreading the word to people they meet in everyday life or, for some, through organised events or preaching. Others may feel called to go to other countries and

Objective

- Understand the place of mission and evangelism in the Church.

Key terms

- **mission**: the vocation or calling of a religious organisation or individual to go out into the world and spread their faith
- **The Great Commission**: Jesus' instruction to his followers that they should spread his teachings to all the nations of the world
- **missionary**: a person sent on a religious mission, especially to promote Christianity in a foreign country through preaching or charitable work
- **evangelism**: spreading the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness

Discussion activities

In pairs or small groups, discuss the following statements. Devise at least two arguments to support the statement and two to oppose it, and write them down.

- ‘Every Christian should be an evangelist.’
- ‘The main job of a Christian is to tell others about their faith.’

become **missionaries**, which involves **evangelism** and in some cases humanitarian work among the poor and disadvantaged. The main aim is to persuade people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour (see Romans 10: 9–10) and to extend the Church to every nation of the world. The New Testament book, the Acts of the Apostles, explains how the early Christian Church grew in this way and includes, for example, the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul.

★ Study tip

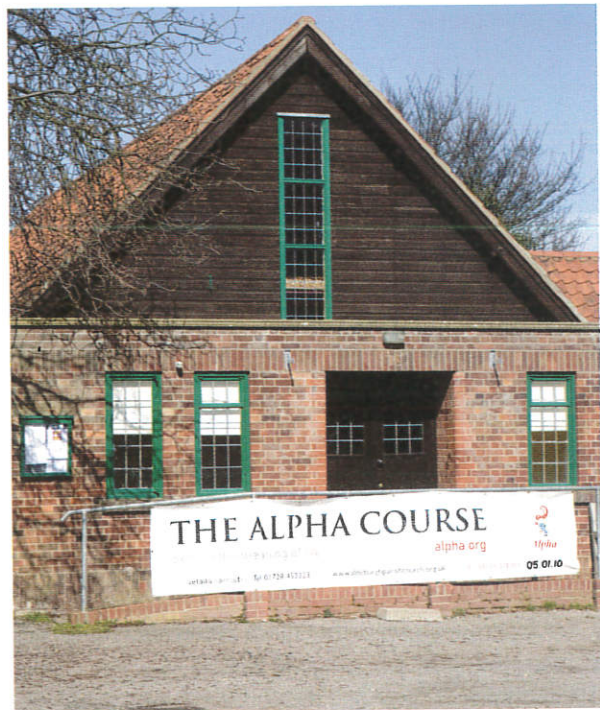
Be prepared to explain the importance of mission and evangelism in the Church.

The Alpha Course

Originally known as the Alpha Course, Alpha was started in 1977 by a Church of England curate, Reverend Charles Marnham, at Holy Trinity, Brompton, London. The aim was to help church members understand the basics of the Christian faith but soon it began to be used as an introduction for those interested in learning about Christianity. The organisers described this evangelistic course as 'an opportunity to explore the meaning of life' through a series of talks and discussions.

The idea caught on and many of the major Christian denominations in Britain and abroad began using it. In the 1990s the Reverend Nicky Gumbel from Holy Trinity, Brompton was involved in revising the course and encouraging its use.

Alpha courses take place not only on church premises but also in peoples' homes, universities, workplaces, prisons and other venues. Worldwide, millions of people have taken part in this course and other related courses have been started. These include relationship and marriage courses for adults and study programmes for young people.



▲ A banner for the Alpha course outside a church hall

Activities

- 1 Explain the place of mission in the Church.
- 2 Why is Jesus' instruction in Matthew 28 known as the Great Commission?
- 3 Give one way that an evangelist may be different to a missionary.
- 4 Explain why the Alpha course was introduced.
- 5 How was the Alpha described by the organisers?

Extension activities

- 1 Use the Internet to find out more about the Alpha Course. Why do you think it has become so successful?
- 2 Find out about two of the places that Paul visited on his missionary journeys and record what happened according to the account in Acts (for example, Acts 16:16–40; 17:6–34)

Summary

You should be able to understand what is meant by mission and to explain the role of missionaries and evangelists. You should also understand the Christian teaching which inspires them in their work.

Christian numbers

It is difficult to know how many Christians there are in the world. Estimates vary from 1.5 to 2.5 billion. Up to a third of the world's population claim some sort of Christian faith. This figure includes people who may know little of the Christian faith and rarely attend church but in a census declare themselves as Christian. The Church has grown rapidly from the time of Christ and is still doing so in South America, Africa and Asia. This is not the case in the USA and Europe, despite Church growth programmes, or in the Middle East where Christians have suffered much persecution.

In 2010 there were nearly 1.1 billion Catholics, a big increase on the estimated 291 million in 1910. Despite opposition from the communist government, it is estimated that in China there will soon be more Christians than in any other country of the world. In 1900 there were no Protestant churches in South Korea, now the capital city of Seoul alone has 7000 with the Yoido Full Gospel Church reporting that it has a million members. It is estimated that churches in Africa are increasing by an average of 34,000 people per day. Worldwide, something like 80,000 people become Christians each day, and over 500 new churches are formed.

Activities

- 1 Approximately how many Christians are there in the world?
- 2 Name three areas where the Church is growing rapidly.
- 3 List three ways in which the Church gets its message to people.
- 4 Describe the work of Reinhard Bonnke and CfaN, and explain their importance in spreading the Christian faith.
- 5 Explain the difference between a convert and a disciple.

Objective

- Understand where and how Christianity is spreading worldwide and the strategies used to encourage Church growth.

Discussion activities

- 1 Why do you think the number of Christians in Britain is not increasing at the rate the Christian Church is expanding in Africa?
- 2 'Christians should just rely on evangelists for Church growth.' Evaluate this statement.



▲ A new church being built at Bungoma, in a rural part of Kenya, near the border with Uganda



▲ The Methodist church in Shama, Ghana, in 2012 – so packed that many could not get inside; a new larger church has now been built

Christ for all Nations (CfaN)

Begun in 1974 under the leadership of evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, this organisation has held evangelical missions throughout the world and in Africa in particular. Bonnke studied at the Bible College of Wales in Swansea and was a Pentecostal minister in Germany for seven years. He believed God called him to be an evangelist in Africa when he was ten years old. He went to Lesotho and from there he has held evangelistic meetings across the continent and beyond.

At first he was depressed that attendances were small but he had a dream repeated four times in which he believed God spoke to him and said, 'Africa shall be saved.' This inspired him to organise large rallies, and a tent which held up to 34,000 people was soon too small. His open-air meetings now attract hundreds of thousands of people, with one meeting in Nigeria attracting an estimated 1,600,000. Towering sound systems are used which can be heard for miles and it is claimed that many miracles of healing occur at the meetings. Bonnke is supported by American evangelist Daniel Kolenda. Each event is a major operation backed up by local churches.

Bonnke's books and booklets have been translated into over 123 languages and dialects, and nearly 200 million have been printed. CfaN has offices in the USA, Canada, Germany, the UK, Nigeria, South Africa, Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong. It claims that over 74 million people worldwide have filled in decision cards to follow Christ at its meetings. Over 55 million of these have been in Africa.



▲ Reinhard Bonnke, the evangelist who leads Christ for All Nations; behind him is a photo from one of his missions in Africa

Discipleship

The Church's mission of sharing Christ does not end with people deciding to become Christians. The Great Commission as described by Jesus was to make disciples, not just new believers. So the Christian mission involves not only evangelism but also the training of new **converts** in the way of following Jesus. For this purpose each individual Christian has a part to play in spreading the faith and encouraging fellow believers. This can be done by sharing testimonies (describing what God has done in their lives), inviting people to Christian meetings, prayer, advertising, using the media (Premier Christian Radio, God TV, Facebook, Twitter, newspapers and magazines), fellowship meals, and social events.

Key term

- **convert:** someone who has decided to become committed to a religion and change his or her religious faith

Extension activity



Use the Internet to find out the mission and vision statements of God TV. Explain how these statements compare with the instructions given to the followers of Jesus in the Great Commission.

Summary

You should now understand how Christianity is spreading, as individuals share their faith, churches organise growth programmes, and evangelists hold rallies.

★ Study tip

Be aware of some of the strategies used by the Church to aid its growth.

2.12

The importance of the worldwide Church

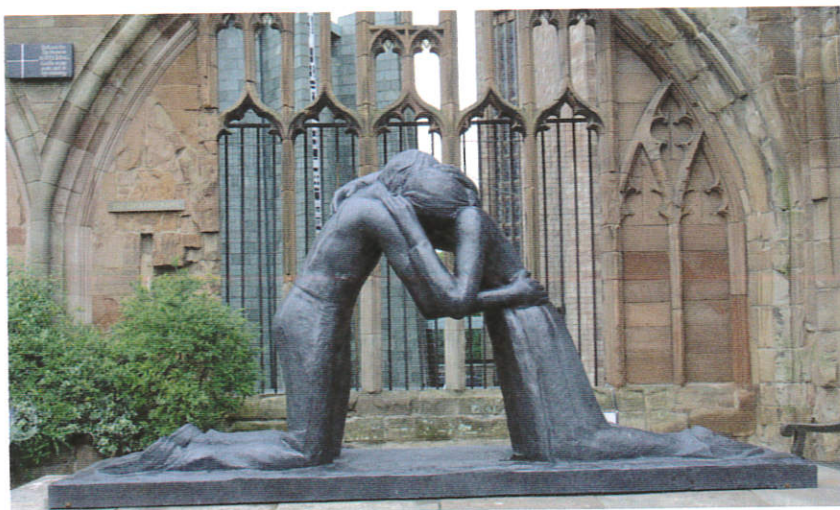
Working for reconciliation

Imagine two close friends who fall out. The good relationship they once enjoyed is strained to breaking point. They stop speaking to each other and have so little to do with each other that they become strangers. They desperately need to be reconciled, to get over their differences, and restore their relationship. The primary mission of the worldwide Church is to proclaim that Jesus came so that the relationship between God and people can be restored. Christians argue that sin caused this relationship to be broken and separated the world from God who is holy. Romans 5:10 says that people have become enemies of God, but the message of the Church is that Jesus came to change that.

Christians believe that when Jesus died on the cross and rose again he saved human beings from sin, and through his grace made it possible for 'God's enemies' – humankind – to be forgiven and become his friends. One of the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church is called the sacrament of Penance and **Reconciliation**, and is a response to 2 Corinthians 5:18–19. Matthew 5:23–24 states that Christians are not only to be reconciled to God but should be reconciled to one another.

So the worldwide Church has a role to restore people's relationship with God and with one another. From news bulletins it is clear that there is much disharmony and hatred in the world resulting in violence and bloodshed. Even sections within the Church have fallen out and fought each other, for example in Northern Ireland there has been conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Recently the Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP) was set up to bring together Christians from all over Northern Ireland to discuss initiatives to develop peace and understanding.

In 1940, during the Second World War Coventry Cathedral was bombed. Local Christians were determined not to get revenge but to show



▲ The 'Reconciliation' statue at Coventry Cathedral

Objectives

- Understand the role of the Church in working for reconciliation.
- Understand the problem of the persecution of Christians.

“ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ”

Romans 5:10 [NIV]

Key terms

- **reconciliation:** a sacrament in the Catholic Church; also, the restoring of harmony after relationships have broken down
- **persecution:** hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of race, or political or religious beliefs

Activities

- 1 What is meant by reconciliation?
- 2 Explain the role of Jesus in reconciling people to God.
- 3 How can Christians help different groups who often oppose each other to be reconciled to one another?
- 4 Explain the importance of the Corrymeela Community.
- 5 Explain the problem of persecution that many Christians face.

forgiveness to those who were responsible. The cathedral has since become a world centre for reconciliation. The Community of the Cross of Nails at Coventry Cathedral works with partners in many countries with the aim of bringing about peace and harmony.

■ Persecution

Despite the work of Christians to bring reconciliation and peace, the International Society for Human Rights, claims that 80 per cent of all acts of religious discrimination in the world today are directed at Christians. The Pew Research centre reported that, in 2012, Christians were discriminated against in 139 countries – almost 75 per cent of the world's nations. The **persecution** ranges from forcing Christians to pay an extra tax, not allowing them to have good jobs or build churches to attacks on their homes, churches and family, and even murder. It is believed that many thousands of Christians are killed each year because of their faith. In 2015 it was reported that the ten countries where the most serious persecution was taking place are North Korea, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, Eritrea and Nigeria.

The Corrymeela Community

The Corrymeela Community was begun in 1965 by Ray Davey, a former chaplain who witnessed, and was profoundly affected by, the bombing of the city of Dresden during the Second World War. The community seeks to promote harmony and reconciliation. People from various backgrounds gather at the residential centre on the north coast of Ireland for a time of peace-building through the healing of social, religious and political divisions. They include people from youth, school and university groups, family and community organisations, faith communities, and political parties. Those who attend are given the opportunity to talk and listen to each other and explore ways of moving from violence and distrust to working together constructively.



▲ Corrymeela gives people from a variety of political and religious backgrounds the opportunity to discuss, and overcome their differences

Christians have faced persecution throughout the history of the Church. The apostle Paul warned that 'everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted' (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus told Christians to expect persecution from the world because if they persecuted him, they would persecute his followers too (John 15:18–19).

The World Council of Churches has a programme to try and bring about reconciliation between Christians of different denominations and members of other faiths. For example, in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace initiative, they seek to work together to help heal a world filled with conflict, injustice and pain. This includes supporting member churches, inter-religious dialogue and cooperation in attempting to build a just community for all.

Discussion activity

In small groups try to think of reasons why Christians face persecution in many countries and discuss whether Christians ever get persecuted in Britain today.

Extension activity

Use the Internet to find out about the Corrymeela commitment; you can find it on their website. What do you think of their aims?

★ Study tip

Try to find out what the Church is doing in an effort to bring about reconciliation.

Summary

Christians believe that they should work to bring reconciliation, firstly between God and humans, and secondly with other people who have views different to their own. Many Christians are being persecuted for their beliefs.

2.13

Christian persecution

Jesus said:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.”

Matthew 5:10–12 [NIV]

■ How do Christian churches respond to persecution?

Not all persecution has a totally negative effect. It may also help Christians to develop their faith and strengthen their convictions as believers. When their beliefs are challenged Christians have to decide whether or not to be fully committed to the faith (see James 1:2–4). Christians believe that those who suffer for their beliefs share in a unique way with Jesus: ‘I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings’ (Philippians 3:10) The second-century Church Father Tertullian wrote that ‘the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church’. He was claiming that the Church grows because of persecution because people witness the calm assurance and hope of eternal life that Christians have.

Pastor Baber George

Baber George from Pakistan was imprisoned for being in a gang war and there he became a Christian. He joined the Full Gospel Church, went to Bible school, and joined the organisation Operation Mobilisation to share the gospel with non-Christians. He set up new churches and helped to organise missions and conferences in city stadiums and social projects that assisted the poor and uneducated. He became a peace ambassador for the organisation Interfaith Harmony and spoke out against the persecution of Christians.

This upset some extreme Muslims who accused him of blaspheming against Islam and his home was attacked and demolished. The police refused to assist him and a fatwa (death sentence) was issued by radical Muslims against him and his wife and three children on 12 October 2011. They fled for their lives to Sri Lanka. While waiting for the United Nations to arrange asylum for them, and unable to work, the family relied on sympathetic Christians

and organisations such as the Barnabas Fund to pay their rent and provide food. They lived among other Christian refugees who had also fled from Pakistan. After 40 months in Sri Lanka, Baber George and his family were finally given asylum in the USA.



▲ Baber George and his family

Objective

- Understand how Christian churches respond to persecution.

Research activities

Research three ways in which Christians support those who live in countries where it is forbidden to follow Jesus.

Extension activity

Find out about the Christian organisation Open Doors from its website. How does it work to support Christians facing persecution?

Whether faced with verbal or physical abuse, Christians are still encouraged to show love: 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.' (Romans 12:21) Jesus said, 'If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.' (Matthew 5:39)

■ Supporting the persecuted

In Corinthians, Paul likens members of the Church to different parts of the body and says, 'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it' (1 Corinthians 12:26). So the Church campaigns on behalf of persecuted Christians and supports them where possible. For example, during the Communist persecutions in Eastern Europe, Christians like Brother Andrew, Daniel Scalf and David Hathaway smuggled Bibles into the USSR (Russia) to help strengthen the Christians there.

The Barnabas Fund

The Barnabas Fund sends financial support to projects that help Christians who are suffering from discrimination, oppression and persecution because of their faith. These projects aim to strengthen Christian individuals, churches and their communities by providing material and spiritual support. One of their aims is to raise awareness of the plight of those who are persecuted.

■ Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)

CSW is a Christian human rights organisation that campaigns for religious freedom for all. It uses four main strategies:

1. Documenting and raising awareness of religious persecution.
2. Attempting to influence governments whose policies or actions affect the oppressed.
3. Offering training in the basics of international human rights' law.
4. Helping the oppressed to speak up for themselves more effectively.



▲ Christian Solidarity Worldwide campaigning for human rights

Activities

- 1 What did Jesus say about persecution?
- 2 Give two reasons why some forms of persecution might not have totally negative effects.
- 3 Explain how Baber George was persecuted.
- 4 Explain the work and importance of the Barnabas Fund and CSW.

Discussion activities

- 1 'It is not possible to "rejoice and be glad" if you are suffering persecution.' Discuss this statement in pairs or small groups, recording two reasons for and against it.
- 2 Do you think there will ever be a time when religious persecution will cease? Explain your answer.

★ Study tip

Try to find out more about how Christian organisations try to help those who are persecuted for their faith.

Summary

You should be aware that Christians have faced persecution since the religion began. You should understand that the Church gives support through prayer, by raising awareness and with practical help for those who are suffering.

2.14

The Church's response to world poverty

Why should Christians respond to the problem of world poverty?

Many Christian charities follow the teaching and example of Jesus in working to relieve poverty. Jesus told a rich man to sell everything and give to the poor (Mark 10:21). In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Jesus told of a rich man who ended up in hell having ignored the plight of a beggar (Luke 16:19–31). The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches the importance of caring for all people. Jesus helped outcasts such as lepers, tax collectors, sinners and the mentally ill.

Christians believe they should present Jesus to the world through helping the disadvantaged. The passage from 1 John 3:17–18 says:

“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”
1 John 3:17–18 [NIV]



▲ Food provided by Christians for orphaned children in Kenya

Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

Begun in the 1960s, CAFOD is the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. It works to bring hope and compassion to people of all faiths and none in poor communities in Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East. The Catholic Church believes action needs to be taken to remedy the injustice of people suffering while others have so much: ‘God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples [...] goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.’ (*Gaudium et Spes* 69) Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Populorum Progressio* quotes St Ambrose:

Objectives

- Understand the Church’s response to world poverty.
- Understand the motivation and work of three Christian charities.

Activities

- 1 Explain three teachings that inspire Christians to help those in poverty.
- 2 Write down examples of how CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund help countries where there is conflict, natural disasters or extreme poverty.
- 3 Explain the importance of these Christian charities.
- 4 ‘Religious charities should just concentrate on emergency aid.’ Do you agree?

'You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his [...] The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich.'

CAFOD helps to increase access to clean water, education and healthcare, and lobbies employers to adopt fair working practices and conditions. Working with partners, it aims to set up effective programmes and services in poor communities, and lobbies the UK and EU governments to help developing countries. It encourages Catholic schools and parishes to pray, give and campaign to help disadvantaged communities. During conflicts and disasters, CAFOD acts with local organisations to provide food, water and shelter for people who have lost everything, and helps them rebuild their lives.

■ Christian Aid

Christian Aid is the official relief and development agency for 41 church denominations in Britain and Ireland. Begun in 1945 they aim to encourage sustainable development, stop poverty and provide emergency relief in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, South America and the Caribbean. Their stated vision is that: 'Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives. Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality.' Their slogan is 'We believe in life before death' and they work to help the world's poorest whatever their religion, nationality or race. Christian Aid has around 700 local partner organisations in 50 countries. They campaign with the Fairtrade Foundation, Stop Climate Chaos, and Trade Justice Movement. They are members of the ACT alliance, a coalition of Christian denominations and church-related organisations that provide emergency food aid, shelter, water, sanitation and poverty reduction programmes. Their biggest fundraising event is the annual door-to-door collection during May.

■ Tearfund

In 1968, there was a terrible famine in Biafra, Nigeria, and churches in the UK wanted to do something to help. In response, an organisation called the Evangelical Alliance launched Tearfund – known at first as The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund.

The Church remains central to the vision and mission of Tearfund to this day, as its staff and partners follow the example set by the stories of Jesus, traveling to places in great need, responding to disasters and helping vulnerable communities to transform out of poverty.

Across the UK, churches donate, hold fundraising events, pray and raise awareness to make possible the work of Tearfund. And in nearly 50 countries around the world, Tearfund works closely with local churches to enable the world's poorest people to work themselves out of crushing poverty. In 2015, Tearfund was working with a massive 90,522 churches worldwide, and had seen literally tens of millions of people freed from poverty.



▲ Organisations like CAFOD, Tearfund and Christian Aid run campaigns and participate at demonstrations; this photo is from the Climate March in London, November 2015

Research activities

- 1 Use the Internet or library to research projects that CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund are currently involved with.
- 2 Find out about one of the campaigns they are linked with, for example 'Make Poverty History'.

★ Study tip

Try to explain why and how Christian organisations try to help those in poverty in other countries.

Summary

You should be able to describe the work of CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund, and explain how the motivation behind their work is in response to the teaching of Jesus.

Worship and festivals – summary

You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain the meaning and importance of worship for Christians
- ✓ explain the differences between liturgical, informal (non-liturgical) and private worship and the importance of each
- ✓ explain the nature and use of prayer, including the Lord's Prayer, set prayers and informal prayer and the significance of these different prayers for individuals, the community and society
- ✓ explain the meaning and role of sacraments for some Christians and why other Christians do not have sacraments
- ✓ explain the different forms of baptism, including infant baptism and believers' baptism
- ✓ explain the reasons for different views about infant baptism and why some Christians do not consider baptism essential
- ✓ explain the sacrament of Holy Communion, its importance for Christians and different interpretations of its meaning and be able to refer to 1 Corinthians 11:23–27
- ✓ explain the ways in which Holy Communion is celebrated in different Christian churches
- ✓ explain the role and importance of Christian pilgrimage, including the contrasting examples of Lourdes and Iona
- ✓ explain the role and importance of festivals for Christians and how and why Christmas and Easter are celebrated.

The role and importance of the Church in the local and worldwide community – summary

You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain what is meant by the Church
- ✓ explain how and why the Church helps local communities, including food banks and Street Pastors
- ✓ explain the role and importance of mission and evangelism in the Church
- ✓ explain where and how Christianity is spreading worldwide and the strategies used to encourage Church growth
- ✓ explain the importance of the worldwide Church, including its role in working for reconciliation
- ✓ explain how Christian churches respond to persecution
- ✓ explain how and why the Church responds to world poverty, including the work of one Christian charity: Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, Tearfund.

Sample answer – the 4 mark question

1. Write an answer to the following examination question:

Explain two contrasting types of Christian pilgrimage.

[4 marks]

2. Read the following student sample answer:

"Some Christians like to visit an important historical site linked to their faith. For example, if they went to Lourdes they may visit some of the places linked to Bernadette. Many of these have become tourist sites where people are more concerned with making money than religion. However, they would see the grotto where it is reported that Bernadette saw visions of Mary and hear stories of miracles which have taken place at Lourdes. No doubt it would be a happy occasion going with other Christian friends and they are likely to remember their pilgrimage for a long time."

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer. Is the focus of the answer correct? Is anything missing from the answer? How do you think it could be improved?
4. What mark (out of 4) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO1). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?
5. Now swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 4) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Sample answer – the 5 mark question

1. Write an answer to the following examination question:

Explain two reasons why Christians pray.
Refer to Christian teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

2. Read the following student sample answer:

"Christians pray in order to speak to God. They believe that God hears what they say and answers prayer. Sometimes they pray to thank God for something. On other occasions it can be a request, asking God to do something for them or someone else. Sometimes they use prayers that have been written by someone else or on other occasions they make the prayer up as they pray."

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer. It makes some good points but it fails to do something which is important. How do you think the answer could be improved?
4. What mark (out of 5) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO1). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?
5. Now swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 5) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Sample answer – the 12 mark question

1. Write an answer to the following examination question:

'The most important religious festival for Christians is Christmas.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Christian teaching
- give developed arguments to support this statement
- give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

2. Read the following student sample answer:

"The Christmas festival is a time for celebrating the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. It is a very joyful occasion as it reminds Christians that God loves the world. As Jesus was born in very poor surroundings – a stable – it shows that he came for everyone. Even the first visitors, the shepherds, can be seen as representing ordinary working people whereas the Magi represented the important and wealthy.

The festival also reminds Christians that Jesus came to fulfil the prophecies. The prophets had predicted that God would send a Messiah to Israel and Christians believe that Jesus is this Messiah and so celebrate with joy and thanksgiving. Even those who are not Christians join in with the celebrations with parties, decorations, exchanging of presents and cards. Young and old alike take part in carol singing and in many churches and primary schools there are nativity plays remembering the birth of Jesus. So it could be said that Christmas is the most important festival for Christians.

On the other hand many Christians would argue that Easter is more important. If Jesus had just come and lived a good life, helping those in need and performing a few miracles he would quite possibly have been forgotten about years ago. The important point is that Jesus came to be the saviour, to die on the cross and rise again from the dead. Good Friday and Easter Sunday are therefore vitally important in the Christian faith as Jesus paid the price for sin and rose again from the dead. So Easter has to be a more important festival than Christmas.

Personally, though I enjoy the celebration of Christmas more I believe that Easter is the most important because the whole purpose of Jesus coming to the world was to conquer sin and death and make it possible for people to be reconciled to God."

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer. Consider the following questions:

- Does the answer refer to Christian teachings and if so what are they?
- Is there an argument to support the statement and how well developed is it?
- Is a different point of view offered and how developed is that argument?
- Has the student written a clear conclusion after weighing up both sides of the argument?
- What is good about this answer?
- How do you think it could be improved?

4. What mark (out of 12) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the introduction (AO2). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?

5. Now swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 12) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Practice questions

- 1 Which one of the following is the name given to adult baptism?
A) Infant baptism B) Eucharist C) Holy Communion D) Believers' baptism [1 mark]

- 2 Give two examples of important places of Christian pilgrimage. [2 marks]

★ Study tip

This question only requires the naming of the two places. Do not waste time by answering in sentences.

- 3 Explain two contrasting ways in which Christians worship. [4 marks]

★ Study tip

Do not forget to develop the points you are making. This may be done by referring to examples and by giving detailed information. Aim to include *contrasting* ways in your answer.

- 4 Explain two ways that Christian charities help the poor in less economically developed countries.
Refer to Christian teaching in your answer. [5 marks]

★ Study tip

Remember that this question asks you to refer to Christian teaching in your answer. It is asking for two ways that charities help. To fully answer this question, try to use a Christian teaching and explain how this has inspired charities into action.

- 5 'The most important duty of the Church is to help people in need.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Christian teaching
- give developed arguments to support this statement
- give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

★ Study tip

Read the statement carefully and make sure that your answer is fully focused on what it is saying.

★ Study tip

You should aim to develop contrasting viewpoints to show differences between those who think helping people in need is the most important duty of the Church and those who think other duties are more important.