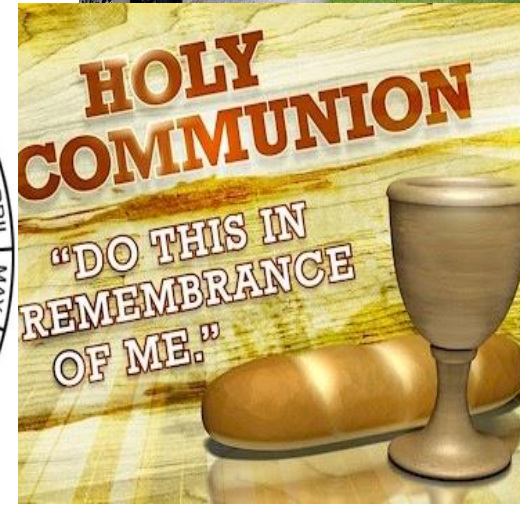
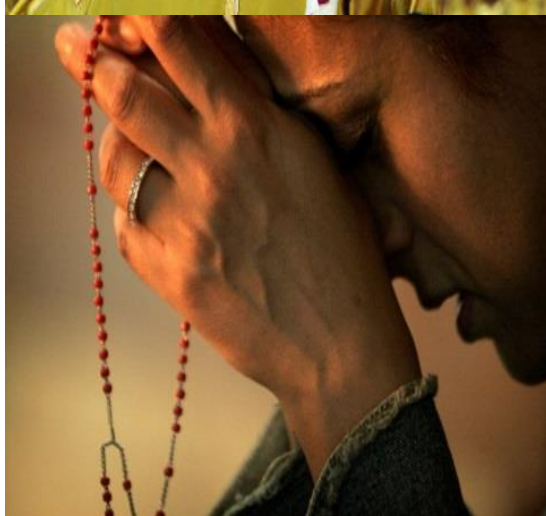


# CHRISTIAN PRACTICES



# STUDENT INFORMATION BOOKLET



# 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 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 Catholics, 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 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.

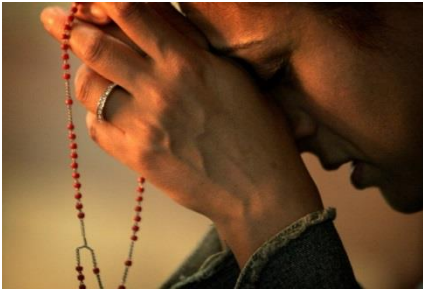
## Prayer

### 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, Non-conformists 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 a 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.

### The significance of private worship and prayer

Worship is not just about attending public services, it affects the whole of a Christians 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

This prayer is especially important for Christians, as it was the prayer that Jesus himself taught his disciples when they asked him how they should pray. It contains some of the key aspects of prayer: praise, confession, prayer for others and for oneself. 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.

The Lord's Prayer	Its meaning
Our Father in heaven	The term 'Father' reminds Christians that the God who created the universe loves and cares for each individual. The 'our' is a reminder that God's love knows no boundaries and that Christians are part of a community. 'In heaven' is a reminder that God is not a human father. It stresses His eternity and transcendence.
Hallowed be your name	May God be treated with honour and respect.
Your kingdom come	May God's kingship and authority be recognised and accepted by all.
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven	May God's purposes be carried out as fully in the created world as they are within the eternal sphere of heaven.
Give us today our daily bread	Christians ask God to give them (and everyone) all they need for the day. This includes spiritual and emotional as well as physical needs.
Forgive us our sins	Christians acknowledge that they fail to live up to their calling and are in need of God's forgiveness.
As we forgive those who sin against us	A reminder that if they are unforgiving, they make themselves unable to receive God's forgiveness.
And lead us not into temptation	A prayer not to be tested beyond their powers to resist.
But deliver us from evil	Acknowledgement of their need of God in the struggle against all that is evil in the world.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever	All the previous petitions are possible because God is the omnipotent and majestic ruler of all.
Amen	A Hebrew word that means 'so be it'. Christians end their prayers with this word to show they mean and assent to what they say.

### Informal prayer

In public worship, this takes the form of extemporaneous (spoken or done without preparation) prayer. Most Christians use their own words at least some of the time in their private prayers. Many prefer informal prayers to set prayer as they seem to come more directly from the heart, meeting their particular concerns. One type of informal prayer is known as arrow prayer. These are short direct prayers addressed to God spontaneously at a time of urgent need or in response to a particular situation. In a time of personal crisis a Christian might pray 'Help me God' or respond to getting through the crisis with 'Thank you God'.

### Key terms

**Prayer:** communicating with God, either silently or through words of praise, thanksgiving or confession, or requested 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 doctrine or practices of the established Church of England

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



Answer the following:

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. (12 Marks)

In your answer you should:

- Refer to Christian ideas
- Give detailed arguments to support this statement
- Give detailed arguments to support a different point of view
- Reach a justified conclusion.

### 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.



## THE SACRAMENTS; BAPTISM

### So 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 practice believer's 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 the 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 the 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.

### 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 river Jordan, two extraordinary things happened that showed God's approval of his son's mission (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)*

### Infant baptism



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.

Some people might ask why a baby who is too young to sin should be baptised. Catholic and Orthodox Christians would say everyone is a descendent of Adam and Eve who committed the first sin. Everyone has a tendency to sin and need 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.

### Why many Christians support infant baptism

- It is in line with baptism of whole households in the early church, for example, Acts 16: 14-15, 31-33, and is part of the Christian tradition.
- It is natural for Christian parents to want to bring up their child as a practising Christian right from the start.
- The child receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is essential to spiritual growth as food is to physical growth. These are qualities such as wisdom and patience.
- It enables the child to receive the other sacraments as soon as it is appropriate.
- If a newborn baby is unlikely to survive, it comforts the parents to know that he or she has become part of the Christian family before dying.



Believers' baptism involves full immersion in a pool.

### 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

### 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.

**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.

**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.

## THE SACRAMENTS; BAPTISM CONTINUED

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 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'.

### Why many Christians support believers' baptism

- Only those old enough to really know what they are doing and be fully committed to the decision should be baptised. This means they have to be (young) adults and it means that baptism will mean more to them.
- Jesus himself was baptised as an adult, as were most people in the Early Church.
- When they are older, children might resent promises made on their behalf when they were babies.
- The idea of cleansing sin does not make sense for a baby.
- For many people, infant baptism is just a meaningless practice that just names a child.
- Many of those who have been baptised as babies do not go to church again, except if they decide to marry in a church.

Read the information sheet and then complete the following activities below:



1. What is infant baptism?
2. Explain why infant baptism is important in Christianity.
3. Should parents have their children baptised if they have no intention of bringing them up as Christians? Explain your reasons
4. What is meant by believers' baptism?
5. Explain why some Christians think baptism should only happen to young people and adults.
6. "All Christians should be baptised". What do you think about this statement? Give arguments for and against and explain your answer. (12 marks)



## 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).

The Christian denominations that celebrate Holy Communion attach a great deal of significance to it. Some celebrate it daily or weekly, thinking that it is so important that frequent celebration is necessary. Others celebrate it monthly or less because they feel it is so important that they want to avoid the danger of losing its significance by overuse.



*There are many names for Holy Communion*

Communion they believe they become present in 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 as an act of fellowship with other Christians and as a 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.

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. Catholics call this belief transubstantiation, believing that the bread and wine are invisibly transformed 'in their substance' into the actual body and blood of Christ. Orthodox Christians do not give a precise definition for what happens at the consecration/blessing of the bread and wine (because it is essentially a mystery that humans cannot explain), but believe that Christ is mystically and truly present. By receiving Holy

### The impact of Holy Communion on individuals, communities & 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 just remember a past event, it becomes a present reality for them. It brings the community of believers 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.

### Celebrating Holy Communion

Although different Christian denominations have their own services for Holy Communion there is a similar pattern in the way most celebrate it:

- The ministry of the Word which focusses 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.

### Key terms:

**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 the Bread and the Divine liturgy

**Transubstantiation:** The Roman catholic belief that the bread and wine are invisibly transformed 'in their substance' into the actual body and blood of Christ.



*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.*



## THE SACRAMENTS; HOLY COMMUNION (continued)

### 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.



Members of the Catholic church receiving Holy Communion during Mass.

### 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 (a commentary that follows the reading of scripture).
- 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 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 the 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 of 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 Reform 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.



An Anglican Holy Communion service



1. Explain the different Christian traditions concerning beliefs about Holy Communion.
2. Explain how participating in the ritual of Holy Communion might have an impact on a believer's daily life.
3. Make a list of the main things that the different services of Holy Communion have in common and another of their differences
4. "It is more important to help the poor than celebrate Holy Communion". Evaluate this statement? Give arguments for and against and explain your answer. (12 marks)
5. How do the services of Holy Communion emphasise equality and community?



## 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 so 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 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 to see problems in a new light. They may also feel cleansed from sin.



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

### Lourdes

Lourdes in south-west France is a place of pilgrimage dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus. It became significant in 1858 when a young girl named Bernadette (born in 1844) had visions of Mary near the river.

Bernadette had a very happy childhood, although she found learning difficult and was illiterate. In 1854 her father had an accident which plunged the family into poverty. Bernadette struggled with asthma and cholera.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February 1858, while she and a friend were at a cave on the banks of the River Gave, she received the first of eighteen visions. The last vision she received from Mary was 16<sup>th</sup> July.

*"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 colour as the chain of her rosary; the beads of the rosary were white."* (Bernadette describing her first vision of Mary)

In one of her visions, Bernadette was told to dig away the growth clogging the spring and drink the water, which was first muddy and then clear. Soon after that, a friend put her dislocated arm in the water and it was healed. The authorities at first doubted Bernadette's claims. However, the priest was convinced. Bernadette had claimed the woman she saw said she was the 'Immaculate Conception'. There was no way that she could have known this phrase, let alone link to the Virgin Mary. Crowds accompanied Bernadette on her visits to the grotto.

From 1858 to 1862 the bishop of that area carried out an enquiry, interviewing Bernadette and others several times. He concluded that the visions were genuine and that a number of inexplicable healings had occurred to some of those who drank or bathed in the grotto's waters. Over time, pilgrim numbers increased. Bernadette herself entered a convent there, dying in 1879.

### Pilgrimage to Lourdes

Today thousands of pilgrims visit Lourdes to pray at the grotto where Mary appeared, to visit the churches at Lourdes, to recite the rosary together, to take part in processions with candles and services, and to drink and bathe in the spring's water. Many pilgrims take home with them Lourdes water, and many shops in Lourdes sell religious artefacts, for example, statues of Mary. Some go to Lourdes on holiday as well as pilgrimage; there are many activities provided in the surrounding area.

In the UK, Roman Catholic churches organise pilgrimages for sick or disabled, their families and volunteer helpers. Special provision is made for the needs of the sick in purpose-built accommodation that has full medical facilities. The volunteers who accompany the sick pilgrims look after their rooms and push hand-drawn carts enabling them to take part in the processions.

Every Easter there is a pilgrimage for 1000 children, who are sick or have special needs. The participants are accompanied by volunteer helpers, doctors and nurses.

### Healings at Lourdes

Since the first cure in 1858 there have been 69 healings that have been declared miracles (they are inexplicable by current medical and scientific knowledge). All claims of healing undergo a rigorous and lengthy assessment by a large panel of medical experts. Any case termed as an 'unexpected cure', that is, a lasting cure where no medical explanation can be found, is referred to the bishop of the area where the person lives. It is he who will declare whether or not the cure is a miracle. Danila Castelli had had to have many operations for the removal of growths and

#### **Key terms:**

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

## PILGRIMAGE (continued)

was found to have a tumour which caused others. Medical treatment was not effective, but in 1989 she bathed at Lourdes and claimed to have been cured. It was not until 2010 that the Lourdes Office of Medical Observations certified the cure. In 2011 the Lourdes International Medical Committee concluded that her cure 'remains unexplained according to scientific knowledge' and all the information was then sent to Danila's bishop. In 2013 he recognised her healing as miraculous.

Most of those who go to Lourdes do not experience such healing, but almost all come away feeling that they have been healed spiritually. They are enabled to come to terms with their illness or disability and have peace of mind. Those with terminal illness often feel able to face their imminent death more positively.



### Iona

Iona is an island off the west coast of Scotland. In the 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

*The abbey church on Iona*

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.

### Iona, a modern centre of pilgrimage

In 1938, George Macleod, a minister in Glasgow, brought to Iona a group of unemployed skilled craftsmen and men training to be ministers. His plan was that they should rebuild the actual monastic buildings which had fallen into ruin and disrepair. At the same time, they would rebuild the community life which St Columba had first set up by living together and sharing everything. That led to the foundation of the ecumenical Iona Community. Ecumenical means ones which includes all Christian denominations. This group of men and women are committed to a way of life that reflects the Gospel and is relevant to the modern world. It has a global membership who are committed to a rule that requires daily prayer and Bible reading, stewardship of time and money, regular meeting with other members and an active concern for justice, peace and the environment.

### Pilgrimage to Iona

Iona has a longer history than Lourdes. Its rich history has newly made it a centre of pilgrimage. Individuals and family groups go there. Guests and staff share the practical tasks such as washing up. Others come as part of larger groups from churches or schools. Special programmes are organised for those staying within one of the community's two centres, as well as 'open weeks' that have a range of activities and workshops on Christian themes. As well as

meeting together for worship (The Iona community hold daily services in the abbey church), visitors hold discussions, often on issues relating to justice, peace and conservation of the environment. They will spend one day in pilgrimage around Iona (normally a seven mile hike), visiting the island many holy and historic sites. There is also time for silence, for reflection or meditation, reading the Bible, entertainment and crafts sessions, boat trips and for enjoying the area's natural beauty.

### Different views on pilgrimage

People hold very different views on the importance and value of pilgrimage.

For some Christians it is a very important part of their faith for many reasons:

- It enables time to be taken out from the often very pressured and secular everyday lives they lead. They return from pilgrimage refreshed, renewed and with a new vitality to cope with the demands of life.
- It offers an opportunity for spiritual growth. They have time to meditate and pray.
- Visiting places associated with Jesus or the great holy men and women of the past gives inspiration and encouragement to them to lead lives that more closely reflect the values of the Gospel.
- They may have a particular purpose in going to a holy place, for example, a sick person going to Lourdes for healing
- They meet Christians from very different backgrounds and cultures. This deepens their faith as they gain new insights.

Others, both Christian and non-Christian do not think pilgrimage has any value. They may argue this because:

- It is often costly and shows poor stewardship as the money could be put to better use.
- It is not necessary, as spiritual development, can be gained through regular attendance at church and through daily prayer and Bible reading.
- Reading about Jesus and about the great Christians of the past gives the same insights as pilgrimage.
- Any spiritual 'high' may well be temporary and the effects may soon wear off when everyday life kicks in again.

Charity?



Pilgrimage?

### Reflection

1. Why is pilgrimage an act of worship?
2. Explain the differences between a pilgrimage to Lourdes and a pilgrimage to Iona.
3. "All Christians should make a pilgrimage to a holy place." Evaluate this statement? Give arguments for and against and explain your answer.



## 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.

### Christmas

Christmas commemorates the Incarnation of Jesus, the belief that God became human in Jesus. In Great Britain, Christmas is celebrated on 25<sup>th</sup> December. The celebrations last 12 days ending with the feast of Epiphany. Trees and homes are decorated with lights and nativity scenes. Light 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

reading 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. At Midnight Mass, Holy Communion (Eucharist) begins in near darkness, the church being lit only by candles. When the Gospel reading takes place the lights come on, symbolic of the birth of Jesus the light of the World. 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.

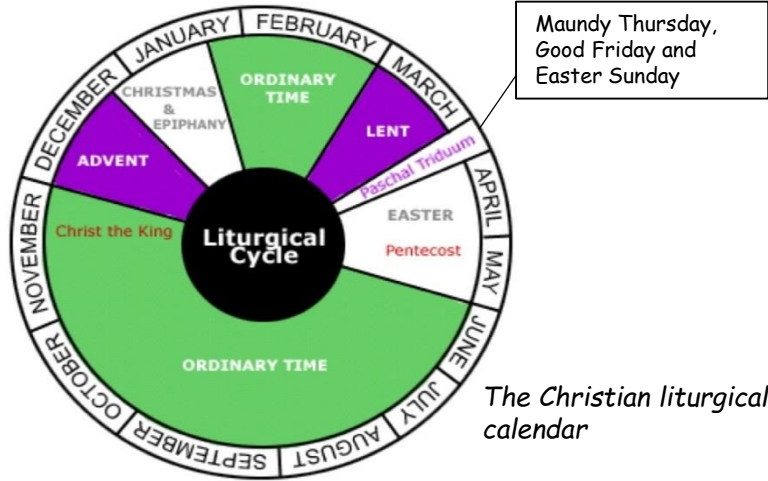
*'Father, you make this holy night radiant with the splendour of Jesus Christ our light. We welcome him as Lord, the true light of the world. Bring us eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever'*

(Opening prayer of the Catholic Midnight Mass at Christmas)

### The importance of Christmas to Christians in Britain today

Christmas is important for many reasons:

- Christians thank God for, and celebrate with joy, the incarnation.
- It is a time for both giving to and receiving from loved ones, so is symbol of shared love.
- It is a time to remember those who, like Jesus and his family, live in difficult circumstances. Christians should give generously to charities that support those in need.



- It highlights Christmas and its meaning to non-Christians.

### 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.

The key events of the week are:

- Palm Sunday - Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey to show he was humble
- Monday - Jesus destroys the stalls in the Temple.
- Tuesday - Jesus was teaching in the Temple.
- Wednesday - Jesus spends the day with Martha and Mary in Bethany and Judas agrees to betray Jesus.
- Maundy Thursday - Jesus has his last supper, is arrested and his trial begins.
- Good Friday - Jesus is brought to Pontius Pilate for trial. He is scourged (whipped), nailed to the cross and left to die.
- Saturday - Jesus' body is in the tomb.
- Easter Sunday - The women go to the tomb but Jesus' body is not there. Jesus is risen.

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 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.

### Key terms:

**Festival:** A day or period of celebration for religious reasons.

**Christmas:** The day commemorating the birth of Jesus (25<sup>th</sup> December in most churches); also, the season of 12 days ending with 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

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY - FOOD BANKS AND STREET PASTORS

### What is the church?

If asked to define the word 'church', many answer that the church is the building 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)*

### 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 perfectly 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)*



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

### 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 the 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 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 problem.



The Oasis Project, Plymouth.



### Key terms:

**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.

**Food bank:** a place where stocks of food, typically basic provisions and non-perishable items, are supplied free of charge to people in need.

**Street pastor:** A trained Christian volunteer who patrols the streets of towns and cities at night, helping and caring for people in practical ways.

**Agape:** A word used in the Bible that describes selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love.



The Trussell Trust logo.



## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY - FOOD BANKS AND STREET PASTORS (CONTINUED)

### Why should Christians be involved in the local community?

The teaching of Jesus, for example in the parable of the 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. Lex 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



*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)

young people and they patrol within and around schools to help prevent behaviour problems. Recently there 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.

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*

## CHURCH GROWTH - CHRISTIAN MISSION AND EVANGELISM

### Christian numbers - Some quick facts

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 still estimated that in China there will soon be more Christians than in any other country in the world. In 1900 there were no Protestant churches in South Korea, now the capital city of Seoul alone has 7000 with the Yoido 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.

### Christian mission and evangelism in the UK

Mission and evangelism go together. Mission literally means 'a sending' and in Christian terms it is about the belief that you have been 'sent' to do something. Evangelism is the term used for spreading the Word, by preaching the gospel. Christianity has always been a missionary faith and over the centuries it has spread throughout the world. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as highlighted in the first section, the Church continues to grow in many parts of the world, for example Africa. However in Europe it has suffered a decline. Many people have become alienated from traditional forms of worship that seem tied to the past rather than looking to the future. Therefore, in recent years, there has been a renewed focus on Europe, preaching the gospel in ways that are relevant to the modern world and encouraging new forms of worship. Many churches are trying to combine these fresh approaches with what they believe to be the timeless values from the past and without compromising key beliefs. Some churches support individuals who act as missionaries to the local community.



Vidas and Rita Rimkai live in Gloucester. They have received training from the European Christian Mission (ECM) and now work as missionaries alongside local churches in their area. They welcome people into their homes, turning general conversations into worship. They organise meals and a free shop at their local Baptist church for refugees and asylum seekers.

Many Christians believe that they too can be missionaries in their daily lives, simply by showing love of God and neighbour.

*One form that Christian mission might take*

### The Church Army

The Church Army is a lay (not ordained) Anglican organisation committed to evangelism. Its evangelists are trained over four years and are licensed by the Church of England and Ireland to work throughout the UK. They are committed to enabling people to find faith, showing the love of God as revealed in the Christ. In particular, they bring the gospel of salvation to the vulnerable and marginalised in society, and encourage the church as a whole and locally to live up to its calling.

The Church Army is involved in:

- Running clubs for children, and working with families.
- Projects for young people. For example: The Church Army bus that is somewhere for teenagers to chat with each other over coffee; an adventure project for troubled and vulnerable teenagers.
- Working with drug addicts
- Acting as chaplains, for example in hospitals or prisons.
- Visiting the elderly and providing lunch clubs for them.
- Providing alternative forms of Church.

### Christian mission and evangelism in the world

Whilst a lot of missionary work is now in Europe, there is still a need further afield. Serving in Mission (SIM) is an international evangelical and interdenominational organisation with a base in the UK. They send mission workers to more than 70 countries across the world. For instance, the support of their church in Hampstead has enabled the Curry family to work for SIM in Wes Africa. Andrew teaches English to university students, and to those who wish to hear it he proclaims the gospel. Sue works in a medical clinic with a special focus on those with diabetes and children suffering from malnutrition. Both see their work as carrying out the commission given by Jesus to his disciples.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram terrorist group has shown very high levels of violence towards Christians. The Nigerian branch of SIM has a project in an area where Boko Haram destroyed all the churches. The people there have suffered terribly, and SIM is enabling 12 pastors to return to their work there. SIM Nigeria is also sending four specially trained pastors to run trauma healing workshops and to organise the building of temporary structures for worship. These people are working with victims in several ways. It is not just about preaching the Gospel, because they realised these people also need specialised mental health treatment if they are to recover.

### Key terms:

**Mission:** The vocation or calling of a religious organisation or individual to go out into the world and spread their faith.

**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



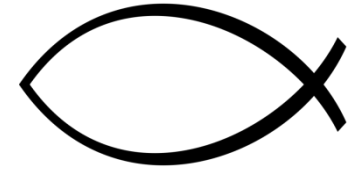
*One activity offered by the Church army for young people who have difficult home lives.*



*The logo for the Serving in Mission evangelical organisation.*



## CHURCH GROWTH - CHRISTIAN MISSION AND EVANGELISM (CONTINUED)



*The Ichthus symbol: the Greek characters mean - Jesus Christ, God's Son and saviour.*

### The Ichthus Fellowship

Although attendance in many traditional churches is declining in the UK, there is growth in other denominations, particularly in the evangelical and Pentecostal churches. The Ichthus Fellowship takes its name from the ancient Christian symbol of a fish which was used by Christians to represent Jesus Christ, God's Son and Saviour. This **fellowship** started with the intention of evangelising by planting churches throughout London and Kent. 'Planting churches' means establishing new churches in communities, so that, like plants, the Christian community thrives and grows. This movement has now

spread and there are many link churches throughout the UK and abroad, such as the King's Church, which operates in many cities. These are linked to a central church, but are not physical churches in their own right. Ichthus' central aim is a simple one: to worship Jesus. They do this through worship, Bible studies, shared meals, serving those in need, and so on. Services in these churches attract hundreds of people of all ages. The structure of the organisation is threefold and shows how Ichthus differs from traditional denominations:

- *Celebrations* where people from a number of churches come together.
- *Congregations* where local churches meet for worship and service to the community.
- *Cells* where smaller meetings for prayer, discussion and support in faith occur in homes.

### Fresh Expressions of Church

The Church of England came up with this term, which is also used by the Methodist Church. It describes new churches that are different in approach from the churches that planted them because they are intended for a different group of people from those already attending the original church. It is not a 'one size fits all' approach. The form of the new church is one that suits the location and the context of its planting; it is often not a traditional church building.



*Fresh Expressions reaches out to everyone.*

So, for instance, there is a church for surfers and another for young people in a skate park. Other 'fresh expressions' of church can be found in pubs, cafes and schools. These churches are intended for those who have never been to church or who have been and do not want to go back. The aim is to attract new 'disciples for Christ'. When Jesus called his first disciples, he said 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' This is what those who plant new churches see themselves as doing.

In Margate, the Salvation Army has planted a church for the large Roma community which comes from Eastern Europe. In this new church, the Roma people have been enabled to develop

a form of worship that suits their culture. Those members of the Salvation Army who founded it are now helping individuals from the Roma community to become evangelists themselves.

In Bradford, as part of the Sorted Project the church Army has planted a church for young people run by young people. It attracts about 150 young adults, teenagers and children each week, and many as a result have been baptised and confirmed.

### Mission and evangelism at Spring Harvest

Spring Harvest is a Christian organisation that holds events for people of all ages at Butlins' holiday camps in Skegness and Minehead. It is open to individuals or families and also groups from schools or churches. Different age groups have different meetings, but all follow a common theme. There are two priorities: to deliver excellent Bible teaching and to seek God's presence in worship inspired by the Holy Spirit. A wide range of age-appropriate activities are run for children and teenagers and special provision is made for those with special needs. There are also discussion groups, prayer sessions, craft activities and time for games and fun. There are two intentions: to help some have a first personal experience of God, and to deepen the commitment of others.



*The Spring Harvest logo.*

### Quick response questions

1. What is meant by the terms mission and evangelism?
2. Why have Christian denominations begun to do missionary work in Europe?
3. Describe the work of the Church Army. Do you think their work is important?
4. Explain the work of SIM.
5. Explain why the Ichthus Fellowship is important in the UK Christian movement.
6. What is Fresh Expressions of Church?
7. What is Spring Harvest? What are its priorities?

### Time to practice evaluation questions

Look at the evaluation questions below and pick two of them to answer. In answering the questions you are not required to produce in depth 12 mark responses; but they are going to help you practice developing well balanced arguments for and against both sides (a key skill for those 12 markers).

1. 'Every Christian should be an evangelist in order to help the Church grow.'
2. 'Religion is not relevant in the modern world.'
3. Helping those in need abroad is the most important part of Christian mission.'
4. 'Christians in the UK must focus on the UK if they want their religion to continue.'

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH AND HOW CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO PERSECUTION.

## Working for reconciliation

Imagine two close friends fall out. The good relationship they once had is now strained to breaking point. They stop talking and have little to do with each other. 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 humans 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 reconciled to God but should be reconciled to one another.

*"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)*

*"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)*

So the Worldwide Christian Church has a key 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 with 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.



The 'Reconciliation' statue at Coventry Cathedral.

In 1940, during the Second World War Coventry Cathedral was bombed. Local Christians were determined not to get revenge but to show forgiveness to those who were responsible. The Cathedral has since become a world centre for reconciliation. The Community 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.

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.

## 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.



## 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.

*"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)*



*The Corrymeela Community gives people from a variety of political and religious backgrounds the opportunity to discuss, and overcome their differences.*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH AND HOW CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO PERSECUTION. (Continued)

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)

### 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 their 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 claim assurance and hope of eternal life that Christians have.

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)



*Baber George and his family*

### 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<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 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.



*The Barnabas Fund logo. This organisation tries to raise awareness of the plight of Christians who are persecuted for their faith*

### 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.



*The Christian Solidarity Worldwide organisation logo.*



*Christian Solidarity Worldwide campaigning for human rights*

## THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO WORLD POVERTY

### Poverty in less economically developed countries

Less economically developed countries (LEDs) are the poorest countries of the world. Many are found in Asia and Africa.. Religious voluntary aid agencies such as CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund help people in LEDs because of the extreme poverty in which so many people live.

### Why should Christians respond to the problem of world poverty?

Many Christian charities follow the example of Jesus in working to relieve poverty. Jesus told a rich man to sell everything and give it 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)*



Food provided by Christians for orphaned children in Kenya.

### Helping LEDs

Generally speaking, Christian support agencies help those in need in very similar ways. They provide different types of aid, such as:

**Emergency aid** is an immediate response, generally to a disaster. Food and bottled water are essential to prevent hunger, dehydration and water born diseases. Medical kits are often requested to deal with injuries and with outbreaks of life-threatening diseases such as cholera. There may be an urgent need for tents and blankets or temporary shelters. Teams of specialists like doctors and engineers may be needed.

**Short-term aid** then takes over as the emergency teams start to leave and the process of rebuilding begins. Families need uniting, homes need to be rebuilt and children need to be back at school, especially if they are orphans. They will not have the means to recover easily from the situation.

**Long-term aid (development)** is a vital part of support for LEDs. This is about tackling the root cause of the problem and enabling communities to become self-sufficient (so they can look after themselves) instead of becoming aid-dependent, as has sometimes happened in the past. Examples of long-term development are educational programmes, well-digging and the training of medical and health workers.

### The Christian response to poverty

Christianity has a long history of trying to help those in need no matter where in the world they are. CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund are three Christian charities that are part of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) which responds to crises such as a natural disaster or the mass displacement of people in a civil war that creates refugees. DEC's appeals on radio and television are free, saving vital money that can be used to respond. The humanitarian agencies involved all work together to raise money from the public. All three Christian agencies work through partner organisations in the affected country who can be relied on to know what is most needed and where.

### Work in the UK

All the aid given by CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund is made possible by work done in the UK. There are three main ways in which these groups work:

- **Campaigning.** Putting pressure on those in positions of power, particularly the government, for example by lobbying, sending petitions or peaceful protest. This can lead to more determination from government to secure justice for LEDs.
- **Increasing public awareness.** Often achieved through persuading sympathetic celebrities to speak out in the media. Educational resources are produced for schoolchildren of all ages who are the ones in the future who will bring change and justice.
- **Fund-raising.** The three charities all have their own particular ways of raising money, but all three spend most on their emergency and long-term development work. A small amount is used for costs associated with fundraising and administration.

This work then enables a constant flow of money to resource their work in LEDs.

### Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

CAFOD, which began in the 1960s, 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 countries 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: '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

**CAFOD**  
*Just one world*

CAFOD is the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales





## THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO WORLD POVERTY (continued)

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.



*Organisations like CAFOD, Tearfund and Christian Aid run campaigns and participate at demonstrations; These pictures are from the Climate March in London, November 2015.*

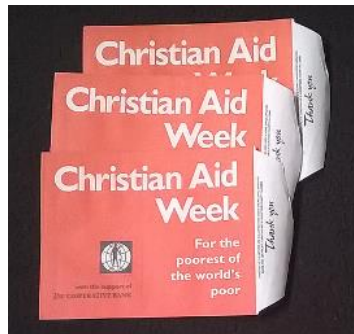
### Christian Aid

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 fund raising event is the annual Christian Aid collection in May.

In promoting their long-term aid, Christian Aid used the proverb: 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.' From 2012, it has focussed on ending global injustice by empowering those who are disadvantaged.

**Christian Aid**  
We believe in life before death

*The slogan behind the work Christian Aid do.*



*Envelopes like the ones above are posted through letterboxes during Christian Aid week to help raise funds.*

### 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, travelling to places in great need, responding to disasters and helping vulnerable communities to transform out of poverty.

Much of Tearfund's money is raised through fund-raising by evangelical churches and individuals. It encourages young Christians in the UK to become part of its projects through gap years or mission trips.

Like CAFOD and Christian Aid, Tearfund provides both emergency aid and sustainable long term development. However, its work is not just about the physical needs, it is also concerned with the spiritual needs of those it serves. Across the UK, churches donate, hold fundraising events, pray and raise awareness to make possible all the work that Tearfund do.

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 90,522 churches worldwide, and had seen literally tens of millions of people freed from poverty. A particular area of concern for the past fifteen years has been human trafficking.

### Different views on supporting LEDCs

There are different views on whether people in the UK should give aid to LEDCs. As you will see from the statements below some agree and some do not:

- In the past money given for health and education has been spent on weapons or on rulers' palaces.
- Developed countries are responsible for much of the poverty in LEDCs, so have a duty to help
- We should treat others as we would want to be treated.
- Where corruption is a problem, the LEDCs must themselves put that right
- We are all God's children, with responsibilities for one another.
- The UK has enough problems of its own. These must come first.
- Christians should see helping others as helping Jesus.
- Giving aid makes countries aid-dependent - they need to become self-reliant



CHRISTIAN ACTION WITH THE WORLD'S POOR

*The Tearfund logo.*



*Praying is at the heart of the Tearfund movement and the principle of following Jesus to where the need is greatest is a strong factor in its motivation and work*