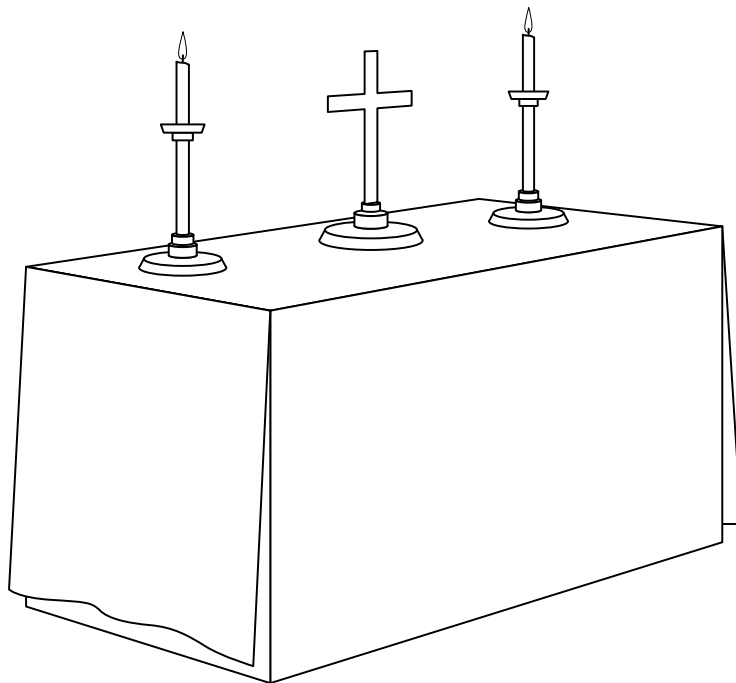


The altar and the cross

The cross and the altar make the centrepiece of the church.



Q1. (i) Label the altar in the picture.

(ii) Show where the screen is placed by drawing a simple screen in the picture.

Q2. How can you tell that the altar is important?



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Q3. What do the windows around the altar do?



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Q4. How is the altar separated from the rest of the church?



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Q5. What do Christians consider Jesus to be?



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Q6. What does the altar remind Christians about?



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Answers

- (i) Make sure the children label the altar table and not the cross.
 (ii) A screen should be drawn behind the altar.
- All the pews face towards it so everyone can see it.
- Bathe the altar in sunlight during the day.
- By a railing.
- The sign of God.
- The table at which Jesus and his disciples had their last meal together before Jesus was crucified.

Lesson objectives

- ▶ To help children distinguish between the altar and the cross.
- ▶ To explain the purpose of the altar and the cross.

Lesson objectives

- ▶ The children can distinguish between the altar and the cross.
- ▶ The children can explain the purpose of the altar and the cross.

Teaching notes

The altar takes Christians back to the time of the supper when Jesus had his last meal with his friends before his death. For the first two centuries after the death of Jesus any handy table would be used as an altar. Later, when church buildings were set up, the altars were often made of stone. In the United Kingdom from the sixteenth century altars were often made of wood. If an altar is made of wood it will also contain a stone which has five crosses one at each corner and one in the centre. The altar is covered with fine linen altar cloths. The front altar cloth may be coloured. At ordinary

times the cloth is green as shown in the picture in the student book. At Christmas and Easter a white frontal is used. In Lent a purple cloth is used and on days when Christian martyrs are remembered a red frontal is used.

The front altar frontal may also carry a symbol. On the frontal shown on page 10 of the student book the symbol is the oldest Christian symbol, called the labarum. It features the two Greek letters chi and rho which are the first two letters of the word Christ in Greek.

The candles are lit during a service to remind Christians that Jesus is the light of the world.

Most of the worshippers in the Middle Ages were illiterate and the images on the screen and elsewhere helped to remind them of stories from the bible. Some churches may have ancient paintings on the wall for this purpose but most were destroyed in the reformation.

Crosses which have a figure of Christ on them are called crucifixes.

Complementary work

The children can find out when the Eucharist is celebrated at an Anglican church and when Mass is celebrated at a Roman Catholic church.

Resources

The children could look on the notice boards of the churches or visit the church's websites if the churches have them.