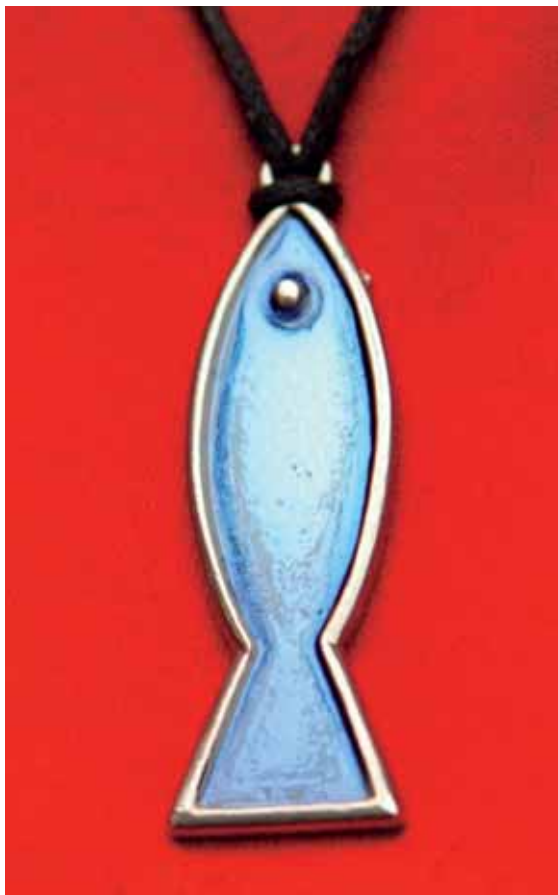


Curriculum Visions

Christian

faith and practice



Teacher's Guide

in PDF format for printing

Lisa Magloff

Curriculum Visions

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Author

Lisa Magloff, MA

Religious Adviser

Aella Gage

Editors

Brian Knapp, BSc, PhD, and Gillian Gatehouse

Art Director

Duncan McCrae, BSc

Senior Designer

Adele Humphries, BA

Photographs

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Illustrations

David Woodroffe

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Unit 1: What it means to be Christian

Most of the children, no matter what faith they are, will already be familiar with some of the aspects of the Christian faith, so you might want to begin your study by eliciting from students what they already know about Christianity. When Jesus Christ is mentioned, you might like to point out that although there are many different traditions in Christianity, such as Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, etc., all Christians have one thing in common – their belief in Jesus Christ the Saviour. The word Saviour means that Christians believe Jesus was sent to earth by God in order to show people how they can be ‘saved’ from sin and go to heaven.

One major difference between Christianity and many other monotheistic religions, like Islam and Judaism, is that Christians believe that the founder of the religion, Jesus, was actually a part of God. In contrast, Muslims believe that Mohammed was a messenger of God, someone God spoke to and sent messages to. Jews believe that the founders of Judaism, such as Abraham and Isaac, were also ordinary people who received messages from God. Similarly, Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak and the nine Sikh gurus who came after him and helped to found Sikhism were all divinely inspired by God. Hinduism has no one founder, but Hindus believe that many people throughout history have been inspired and influenced by God and that God can talk to humans through beings called gods, which are parts of God. Buddhists believe that Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, discovered for himself how to become enlightened.

So, the idea that Jesus was actually a part of God is one way that Christianity differs from the other five religions we study. In Christianity, belief and faith in Jesus as the Saviour are more important than anything else.

Because Christianity has been the major religion throughout Europe for more than 1,600 years, it has had a tremendous influence on western history, literature, art and thought. Christian ideas and images pop up all around us in the western world. You may like to show the children a copy of a famous Renaissance or medieval painting with some Christian images in it (such as the Sistine chapel or the Ghent altarpiece – you can find photos of hundreds of paintings online at www.wga.hu) and point out the way that artists and writers

used these images in their work. This needs to be done sensitively though, because some non-Christian children may have the experience of feeling left out of the culture.



Unit 2: A Christian way of life

As in many religions, community plays an important part in Christianity. The heart of Christian worship is a communal worship. This began at the very beginning of Christianity. In the years immediately after Jesus' death, Christians would simply gather each week for a meal where they would remember Jesus and his teachings. That was the first type of Christian worship service. Over time, this evolved into the mass and other worship ceremonies.

There is a great variety in the worship styles of different churches. For example, in some Protestant traditions, such as Quaker, there is no clergy at all and worshippers speak or pray when they feel inspired by God. In Russian Orthodox, the entire ceremony may be conducted by the clergy out of sight of the worshippers. The Eucharist ceremony, which we will discuss in detail later, is the heart of the worship service, but in most churches this ceremony does not happen every day, or even every Sunday.

For now, you may like to have the children discuss how religion plays a part in everyday life for many people. You could show pictures of Tibetan Buddhists spinning prayer wheels while they walk; Hindus worshipping



at work or home; Muslims praying or Muslim women wearing a headscarf with western clothing; Christian roadside shrines in Latin America or sports stars crossing themselves after a win (very popular in America); and a Sikh wearing a turban along with everyday clothes or a uniform. All of these show religion in daily life. You could then ask the children to think of other ways that people of different faiths bring religion into everyday life.

This section also discusses monks and nuns, and many children will have had the experience of seeing nuns on TV or in the movies, dressed in habits. In reality, the Vatican adopted new rules for nuns' habits after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) and many nuns now wear normal clothes. There are many traditions of monks and nuns. In the Middle Ages, life in a monastery (or a convent) could be very hard; monks would sleep in tiny rooms, with no soft beds or blankets. There might be only one meal a day and monks might have to wake up at 2am for prayers. Today, life in most monasteries is easier, but these are still places for people to dedicate their lives to God.

The first Christian monks and nuns were hermits – people who lived a life of purity and prayer on their own in lonely places. The first monastic community (group of monks or nuns living together) was started in Egypt around 320.

In the west, the tradition of monasteries began with Saint Benedict (480–547) when he started the first Benedictine Monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy, in 529.

In the UK large monasteries are also called abbeys and small monasteries are called priories. There are many ruins of medieval abbeys and priories in the UK, but children may be surprised to know that there are still many active abbeys and priories in the UK. Today, many Christians go to monasteries for short periods of time (a week or two) for a retreat. There they live similarly to the monks and nuns.

You may also like to point out that other religions also have people who devote their lives to God. For example, there are monks and nuns in Buddhism. And in Hinduism there are many types of holy men, who devote themselves to God in various ways. Some do it by travelling around India, teaching and praying. Some of these people go through extreme tests. For example, one type of holy man in India is the 'sky-clad monk'. These are people (men) who never wear any clothes at all and have no possessions. They believe this brings them closer to God.

You might also like to have the children read about life in a medieval monastery and a modern monastery and compare them. Below are some short passages you might like to use for this. Children can see that although life is much easier in a modern monastery, the emphasis is still on devoting as much time as possible to God.

A day in the life of a medieval monk

A monk's day began with the ringing of bells, some time between midnight and 2 a.m., signalling the first prayers of the day. After a short nap, prayers were again held at sunrise, and then at three-hour intervals throughout the day. In all, about five hours a day were spent in group prayer, and each monk would spend another three or four hours a day in private prayer and meditation.

In winter, meals are served once each day, after midday prayers. In summer, when there is more work to do, there are two meals a day. About 100 days of the year are fast days and no food is served at all. Meat is forbidden, except in case of illness. Monks were required to be silent while eating, and developed a sign language to communicate. One monk might read aloud from the Bible during the meal.

At least three hours each day were spent in manual labour, such as working in the fields or with the animals, or copying or illustrating manuscripts in the scriptorium. The rest of the day is spent in studying Latin and in Bible study.

The day ends around 7 p.m., when the monks go to bed.

A day in the life of a modern monk

6.00 a.m.

The day begins with the service of vigils in the Abbey Church. During Vigils psalms are sung and there are readings from the Bible and the writings of other Christian leaders. After this, there is a half-hour break for private prayer.

7.00 a.m.

Lauds worship service. This is a worship service of Praise, when the monks ask God's blessing on the day's work.

7.30 a.m.

Breakfast is eaten in silence in the dining hall, or refectory.

8.30 a.m.

Mass. The whole community gathers together for the celebration of the Eucharist.

9.15 a.m.

After Mass, the monks go about their different jobs. These might include cleaning the monastery, repair work, taking visitors around, teaching, visiting a local parish or monastery administration, such as running the monastery website.

1.10 p.m.

Midday prayer. This is followed by lunch, which begins by singing grace together. Lunch is eaten in silence, but during the meal, one of the monks reads from the Bible or from the work of a learned Christian. After lunch everyone returns to work.

5.45 p.m.

Vespers. For most of the community, the working day is done, and it is time to give thanks to God for the graces he has given during the day, in prayer and singing. After Vespers, there is a half-hour of silent prayer and meditation.

6.45 p.m.

Supper. As with the other meals, this is eaten in silence, while a monk reads. This reading may be lighter, for example, a biography, history or travel writing. After dinner, everyone helps to clear up.

7.15 p.m.

Community Recreation. This is time to relax together as a monastic family, to swap news, ideas, stories, and just to be together.

8.00 p.m.

Compline. The last worship service of the day. This is sung by heart in the darkened Church. After compline there is silence in the monastery until breakfast the next morning. Some monks will go to bed soon after compline, others may read, pray or study.

Unit 3: The life of Jesus

The life and teachings of Jesus are the basis of the Christian faith. The New Testament describes the life of Jesus, although most of the New Testament focuses only on his birth, teachings and death. You might like to introduce this section by reading about the birth of Jesus from the Bible, for example, Matthew 1:18 to Matthew 2:23. The quotes in the student book are all taken from the New International Version of the Bible, which can be found online in an easily searchable version at www.ibs.org/niv/index.php.

The Old Testament prophesied that a saviour would one day be sent by God to save the Jewish people. Because the people who wrote the New Testament were Jewish, they were very concerned to show that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in the Old Testament, so they could show that Jesus was the promised Saviour. This is one of the reasons why there are a lot of stories about Jesus' birth in the New Testament. For example, Mary's husband Joseph was a member of the House of David, that is, he was distantly related to King David. The Old Testament says that the Saviour would be a descendant of King David. Even though Jesus was the Son of God and not of Joseph, this still fulfils the prophecy in the Old Testament.

Jewish worship and practice at the time of Jesus was very different from how it is today. The centre of Jewish worship was the Temple, in Jerusalem. This was the only place where worship could take place, although people also celebrated festivals in their homes. But the Temple was the only place where sacrifices could be made to God and this was an important part of ancient Jewish worship. The only people who could make the sacrifices were the priests, who all belonged to hereditary groups called the Kohanim and the Levites. Jesus challenged the authority of these groups by preaching that anybody could worship God and that sacrifices were no longer necessary. This is what angered the priests. Jesus also preached that he was the Messiah, the Saviour promised in the Old Testament. This also angered the priests, because it usurped their authority. For these reasons, the priests wanted to get rid of Jesus.

As far as the Romans were concerned, however, Jesus' death was purely political. In ancient times, the word Messiah meant a military leader as well as a spiritual leader. So, the Romans would have seen anyone claiming to be the Messiah (or the 'King of the Jews') as a threat to their rule (in fact, 100 years after Jesus, another person claiming to be the Messiah led an armed

revolt against Roman rule). Crucifixion was a common method of execution in ancient Rome.

The resurrection may be difficult for children to understand. Many Christians believe that Jesus came back from the dead and continued to preach to his followers until God took him up into heaven. This is an important part of the story of Jesus' life for many Christians, because it shows that Jesus was really a part of God. However, many people also believe that the story also refers to Jesus' message – the resurrection is also the idea that Jesus is always with us because his message is still with us. Christianity is the only religion we study where the founder of the religion comes back from the dead.



Unit 4: Statements of faith

There are actually many different Christian statements of faith. We have chosen here to show one of the most common, the Apostle's Creed. This creed is called the Apostle's Creed because it sets out what the Apostles believed. It was probably written in the 4th century. In fact, many Christian creeds were written in order to refute certain heresies. In church, people would have to recite the creed in order to prove they were not heretics. The Apostle's Creed, for example, may have been used to show that a person was not a follower of Gnosticism, an early Christian heresy (one Gnostic belief was that Jesus did not really have a physical body and so could not have been crucified). Later, the creed became a way of simply reaffirming what people believed, or a way of learning about the faith. Today, many churches write their own creeds.

The idea of a statement of faith is used in some other religions as well. In Islam, for example, the statement of faith is called the shahada. This simply says, "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His prophet." There are also many Buddhist creeds, such as the Shin Buddhist creed (Shin Buddhism is common in Japan), which states:

I rely on Buddha, with my whole heart, for the attainment of Nirvana.

I give up trust in my powerless self and abandon all practices that rely on the false ego.

I know that, because of Buddha's Boundless Compassion, I am assured of re-birth the very moment I put my trust in the Buddha.

I call the name, "Namo Amida Butsu" [this is the name of the Buddha in Shin Buddhism] in happiness and thanksgiving for the gift of the Universal Vow.

I am grateful to Shinran Shonin [the founder of Shin Buddhism] and his followers for leading me to this profound teaching.

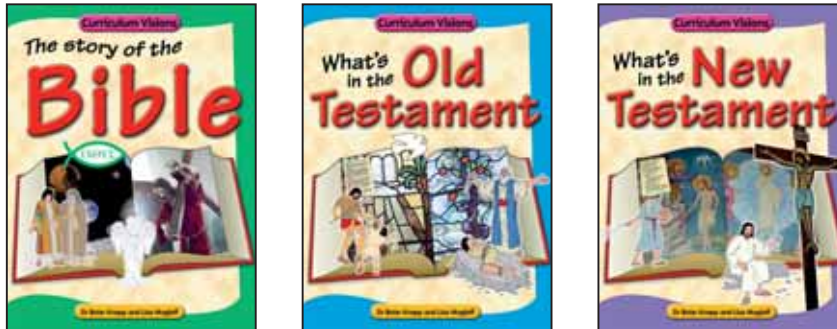
I will try to live, throughout my life, according to the way that they have taught.

Even if children do not understand everything in this creed, they can see that the form of it is similar to the Christian creed.



Unit 5: The Christian Bible

The Bible is covered in detail in the three Atlantic Europe Bible student books, which are part of this series. You might like to discuss different holy books, or scriptures, used in different religions.



Jesus did not write anything down, so the New Testament is a record made by Jesus' followers after his death. In fact, much of the New Testament, the books called Acts and Epistles are actually not about Jesus at all. They are a collection of letters and writings made by Jesus' disciples. They are instructions to the early Christians about how they should worship and the things they should believe in. You can think of them as an historical record of the first years of the Christian church.

The Roman Catholic and Anglican Bibles are actually slightly different. The Roman Catholic Bible contains several extra books, called Apocrypha. These are writings from both the Old Testament and the New Testament that have not been included in the Anglican Bible for various reasons. The Orthodox churches also include several Apocrypha in their Bibles.

You may like to use the information below to compare holy scriptures from different religions. Some examples are given here, or you can choose your own.

Torah

From Genesis 1:1–3

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

From Proverbs 23

The truly righteous man attains life,
but he who pursues evil goes to his death.
A gossip betrays a confidence,
but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.
One man gives freely, yet gains even more;
another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

Buddhist scripture

There are many Buddhist holy books. Perhaps the most important of these is called the Pali Canon. It records the teachings of the Buddha and was written by his followers after his death. The Pali Canon does not contain the word of God. Instead it contains teachings of the Buddha, instructions on how to live a good life, Buddhist principles, and instructions for how to reach Nirvana. There are many other Buddhist books of scripture (canons) that were written by Buddhist scholars and monks over time. Many of these books are very esoteric and difficult to understand. Monks study for many years to understand them. Other scriptures contain prayers, chants and instructions that are easier for ordinary people to understand.

Below are some phrases from the Dhammapada, or the Treasury of Truth. This is a sutra, or book, from the Pali Canon, which consists of 423 verses spoken by the Buddha on about 300 different occasions in the course of his teaching. The sayings illustrate the moral and philosophical teachings of the Buddha.

Overcome the angry by non-anger; overcome the wicked by goodness; overcome the miser by generosity; overcome the liar by truth.
Speak the truth; yield not to anger; when asked, give even if you only have a little.
Let a man guard himself against irritability in speech; let him be controlled in speech. Abandoning verbal misconduct let him practise good conduct in speech.
Let a man guard himself against irritability in thought; let him be controlled in mind. Abandoning mental misconduct let him practise good conduct in thought.
He, who by good deeds covers the evil he has done, illuminates this world like the moon freed from clouds.
To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to cleanse one's mind – this is the teaching of the Buddha.

Islam

Muslims have the holy Qur'an, which is a collection of Mohammed's teachings that were written down after his death. During his life, Mohammed had his followers memorise the Qur'an as he taught them. Muslims believe that these teachings were sent to Mohammed from God, so the Qur'an is considered the word of God. The Qur'an consists of 114 verses, called surahs, of varying length. They are arranged generally in order of length, from longest to shortest (except for the first verse), and not in chronological order. Today, memorising the entire Qur'an is considered a great deed and anyone who does it is given the title of hafez.

Muslims also have many books of hadiths (traditions). These are things that Mohammed's followers wrote down about Mohammed's actions and sayings that were not directly from God. The hadiths are used to answer questions that are not answered in the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an does not say what to eat at the end of a fast. But the hadiths say that Mohammed used to eat some dates and water, so many Muslims follow this tradition.

Surah 1

**In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds;
Most Gracious, Most Merciful;
Master of the Day of Judgment.
Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.
Show us the straight way,
The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those
whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.**

An excerpt from Surah 23:3

**Verily your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth
in six days, and is firmly established on the throne of authority,
regulating and governing all things. No one can plead with Him
except after His leave has been obtained. This is Allah your Lord;
Him therefore serve ye: will ye not receive admonition?**

Hindu scripture

There are a large number of Hindu holy scriptures. They were written by many different people over a long period of time. Some of these set out how to worship the different gods and goddesses; others discuss philosophy and the nature of God. Many Hindu holy books give guidelines on how to live a good life. Some Hindu holy books, such as the Ramayana, may tell stories about gods and people and are used as both entertainment and instruction on how to live a good life. Many Hindu holy books are very esoteric and difficult for even Hindus to understand. That is why books like the Ramayana were written, to make Hindu ideas accessible to everyone.

From the Aitareya Upanishad

O Almighty Lord! My speech is well established in my mind. My mind is well established in my speech. O Lord, please give me the power to understand and preach the Vedas. May I never forget Your teachings. Only by knowing You are with me am I able to maintain my days and nights. I shall always only follow You. May You protect me. My dear Lord, please protect me and my teacher. O my dear Lord, please protect me and all those around me!

Before creation of the universe everything was within the Supreme God, Brahman, everything was contained within Him, nothing was at that time separate. The individual souls and even the energy of the world was still within Him. So that Lord then willed all the worlds into being.

Sikh scripture

The Sikh holy book is called the Guru Granth Sahib. It contains hymns and poems in praise of God. Many different writers contributed to the Guru Granth Sahib, including some non-Sikhs. Sikhs believe that God inspired all of the writers. The poems and songs do not contain instructions on what to believe or how to worship. Instead, Sikhs believe that listening to the poems and songs will bring them closer to God. There is also a Sikh code of conduct, called the Reht Maryada. This is not a holy book, but it sets out guidelines for how to behave and how to worship.

From the Adi Granth, from a poem by Guru Arjan

God's word goes to the people, blessing them
And bestowing immortality on them.
My house is full of the light
Of the song of life today!
This is the staff on which
The old and the miserable, the strayed and rich shall lean
In their distress, and obtain solace,
People of God! Come, assemble, live in this light
Dissolve this song into your soul.
Rejoice and partake of this immortal feast.

Christian scripture

New Testament

The Sermon on the Mount, from Matthew 5

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.
His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



Unit 6: The saints

Saints are primarily worshipped in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. Protestant churches do worship saints, but they worship fewer than in the Roman Catholic Church.

Many of the saints are people who have died for their beliefs. For example, St Stephen was the first person to be killed for believing in Jesus. Other saints are those who helped others in amazing ways. All the saints are considered to be people whom God works through in some way.

The saints each have their own feast day. Since there are thousands of saints, Christians do not celebrate every saints' day. Instead, many Churches have an All Saints' Day, when they celebrate all the saints with a special worship service. Many people may feel a closeness to one particular saint, and so they may also celebrate that saint's feast day.

Saints are associated with particular causes. For example, Saint Leonard of Noblac is the patron saint of locksmiths and prisoners of war. So, prisoners of war may pray to St Leonard to intercede with God and help them to be set free. St Vitus (d. 303) is the patron saints of actors and epileptics; St Bernadine of Sienna (d. 1444) is the patron saint of advertisers. People may also pray to saints to intercede with God to relieve them of a particular ailment, or for help with a particular cause. For example, people pray to Saint Agatha to help prevent natural disasters.

Saints are also associated with miracles, both during their lifetime and after their death. Shrines built to house the bones (relics) of saints may become sites of pilgrimage. Some people believe that praying in the presence of the bones of a saint will help the prayer to come true.

Each saint is also associated with a particular symbol or image, and a particular prayer. The saints are beatified (the process by which one becomes a saint) by a commission in Rome. There are certain criteria that must be fulfilled before a person can be made a saint, and a person can only be made a saint after their death.

In England, the best known saint is Saint George, the patron saint of England. Saint George was a soldier from Palestine who was killed for his faith around 304. He was a very popular saint in ancient Turkey. His worship spread to England and Europe after the first crusade, when the crusaders adopted him as their patron saint (possibly because of his heroic image and his life as a soldier). He is also very popular in the Eastern Orthodox churches (especially

the Greek Orthodox church). In the 15th century his feast day was as popular and important as Christmas. Many of his areas of patronage have to do with his life as a knight on horseback. The shrine built for his relics at Lydda, Palestine was a popular point of pilgrimage for many centuries.

Several stories have been attached to Saint George, the best known of which is the Golden Legend. In it, a dragon lived in a lake near Silena, Libya. Whole armies had gone up against this fierce creature, and had gone down in painful defeat. The monster ate two sheep each day; when mutton was scarce, lots were drawn in local villages, and maidens were substituted for sheep. Into this country came Saint George. Hearing the story on a day when a princess was to be eaten, he crossed himself, rode to battle against the serpent, and killed it with a single blow with his lance. George then gave a magnificent sermon and converted the locals to Christianity. The king gave George a large reward, which he then distributed to the poor and rode away.

St George is also the patron saint of lepers, farmers, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Istanbul, Palestine, Venice, Lithuania, Malta and Moscow (among many others).

You may like the children to research the life of a saint and present what they have learned to the class. Detailed information on all the saints can be found on **www.catholic-forum.com/saints**.

The idea of people who have a special relationship to God, or who God works through is also common in Islam. In fact, some Christians and Jews are also admired as saints in Islam (note: Muslims do not worship saints, but admire and revere them as people who were close to God). The Sikhs also revere a great many people who fought and died for the Sikh belief, or who died helping others. These martyrs are honoured with shrines and worship services.



Unit 7: The invisible world of God

The concepts of heaven and hell need to be covered in a sensitive manner because there is a wide variety of belief about these topics in Christianity. Some churches teach that heaven and hell are real places, created by God, and that only ‘good’ people can go to heaven, while ‘bad’ people suffer in hell. But many churches teach that paradise is not a place, it is a state of being where a soul lives with God forever while hell is not a place with boiling oil and fire, but simply a place where you can never see or be with God.

The idea of heaven and hell is common in many religions. The Muslims and Jewish religions have very similar concepts of heaven and hell as places where you can be with God, or be denied the presence of God.

Buddhists do not believe in God, but the goal of Buddhism is to reach a kind of paradise – a place where there are no more worries and where we do not have the problems of a physical body (such as hunger, pain, sadness, etc.). This is Nirvana, or being enlightened. It is not a physical place, but a state of being. Some schools of Buddhism also have a concept of hell. Again, this is not thought of as a real place, but a state of being, where a person cannot reach Nirvana. Buddhists believe that if we do not achieve Nirvana, we are reborn and have to live in the world of pain and suffering again and again.

Hindus also have the concept of reincarnation. Hindus believe that if they live a good life then they can join with God when they die and be free of the worries and pain of the world. However, if they are not ready for this, then when they die they are reborn to live again and to suffer. Similarly, both Hindus and Buddhists believe that if we do bad in this world, then we will be reborn into a less pleasant life, whereas if we do good, then our next life will be better.

Sikhs also believe in reincarnation. In Sikhism, if a person lives a good life, devoted to God and to Sikh ideals, then they will live forever in the presence of God. However, if they are not ready for this, or if they have done bad things, then they will be reborn to live again until they can achieve the union with God.

You can see that most of the religions we study believe in the idea of escaping the physical world, with its pain and suffering, and joining with God.

Unit 8: Confirming your faith

There are different practices of confirmation in Christianity. Here we discuss baptism and confirmation (which is common in Roman Catholicism), but being born again is another one. This is common in Evangelical churches, where people believe that it is not enough to attend church and be baptised as a child, but that people who believe strongly enough can feel the spirit of God come into them during worship. This is also called 'being born again'.

Confirmation occurs in many religions, where it may also be a part of a coming of age ceremony. For example, in Judaism, a person confirms their faith and becomes a full member of the synagogue (usually at the age of 13). This ceremony is called Bar Mitzvah (for boys) or Bat Mitzvah (for girls). After this, the person can be called up to read from the Torah during worship.

Sikhs also go through a baptism ceremony, usually when they are young adults. In this ceremony they confirm their faith and promise to wear the 5Ks and to never cut their hair. They are also given new surnames (in the UK some Sikhs use the baptismal surname Singh as a middle name, but many use it as a surname).

Many Buddhists confirm their faith as children or young adults by living for a short time as a monk or nun, in a monastery. See *Buddhist faith and practice* on this CD for more information.



Unit 9: The heart of worship

In the photos on pages 22–23 of the student book, you can see that there are different types of bread that are used during the communion ceremony. There is no special bread that must be used. Most Catholic churches use a specially prepared, thin wafer called communion wafer. But other churches use ordinary bread that has been blessed to make it holy.

Roman Catholicism believes that the bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus (this is called transubstantiation). However, this belief was only begun in the 13th century. Before this, the bread and wine were simply symbols that stood for Jesus. In many Protestant churches today, this is still the belief. Some Protestant churches do not believe in transubstantiation, but feel that the body and blood of Jesus are spiritually present in the bread and wine. Other Protestant churches see the bread and wine as symbols of Jesus and as a way to remember Jesus' sacrifice.



In Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches, the ceremony takes place on and at the altar. The altar stands for the tomb that Jesus was buried in and so the ceremony is also a reminder of the resurrection of Jesus.

Christian tradition requires that the wine be true wine made from grapes, and that the bread be made from wheat. Western and Armenian Churches, use unleavened bread, in imitation of the matzo of a Passover Seder (the Last Supper). The bread is usually round in shape and is often referred to in the West as the “host” (from Latin “hostia”, meaning “victim”). In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, red wine and small round loaves of leavened wheat bread are used; these are blessed before the Divine Liturgy in a separate ceremony.

Vessels used during the ceremony may include: a chalice for the wine, a dish for the main host or hosts, and a dish for smaller hosts, all placed on a white cloth spread on the altar to prevent particles of consecrated hosts from being scattered.

The bread and wine are brought to the altar, often in a formal procession. After various prayers, depending on the particular tradition, there is usually a prayer asking that the bread and wine be changed into the body and blood of Jesus.

The common practice is either to dip the host in the consecrated wine before placing it in the mouth, or for the communicant to drink directly from the chalice, the lip of which is wiped with a cloth after each person receives.

Protestant clergy sometimes offer bread from a basket or distribute individual cups and bread (sometimes prepackaged) for the congregation to consume simultaneously. Bread and a common cup may also be passed among the congregation, with each eating or drinking as they receive it.

Food is also an important part of worship in other religions. In Judaism, a family meal, eaten at home, is an important part of Shabbat (Sabbath) worship; and a communal meal is at the heart of the Passover holiday. Before eating, prayers are said that thank God for the food and ask God to bless the food.

In Sikhism, a communal meal is also a part of every worship service, and most Sikh gurdwaras have kitchens where worshippers can eat together. Hindu worship often includes leaving food in front of the statues of the gods and goddesses. After prayers are said, worshippers share the food. Hindus believe that the gods and goddesses bless this food when it is offered, and by eating the food, they are sharing the blessings of the gods and goddesses. This is similar to the Christian belief.

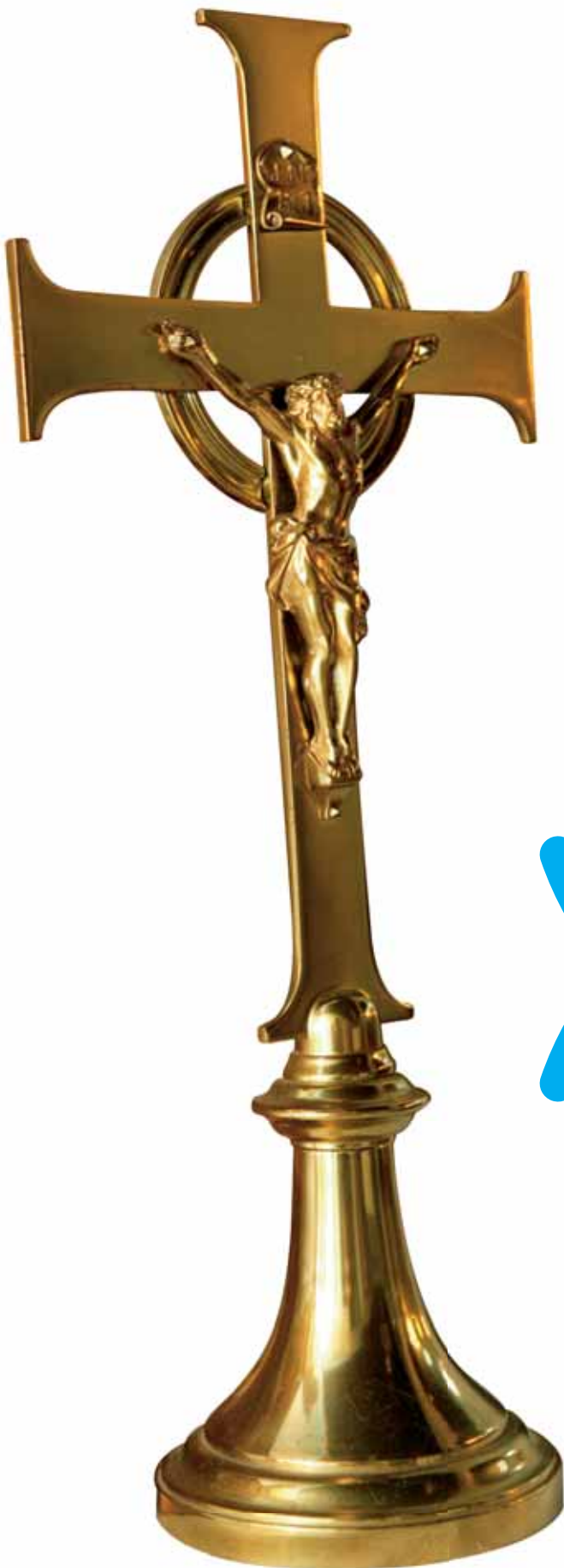
Unit 10: Using Christian symbols

You may like to begin this section by asking children to describe some symbols used in everyday life. Some common symbols might include smileys in text messages, plus and minus signs in maths, school ties and football strips.

Most religions use symbols. These serve many purposes. Some symbols help to teach people about the religion and its beliefs; other symbols serve as an outwards sign that a person belongs to a particular faith; and some symbols are worn as a sign of faith. Christianity uses a huge number of symbols. Some of these are from the early days of Christianity, when Christians had to worship in secret and used symbols to identify each other. Many Christian symbols stand for different beliefs or teachings. You can find a huge number of Christian symbols and what they stand for at:

<http://home.att.net/~wegast/symbols/symbols.htm>





Unit 11: The Christmas festival



The Christian year is divided into holy seasons. Each season may last several weeks and involve one or more holy days, or feasts. Although Christmas is today the most commonly known and practised Christian holy day, it was probably not celebrated at all for the first two hundred years of the Christian religion. Christmas is also called the nativity, which means simply 'birth'.

The word 'Christmas' is a contraction of 'Christ's Mass', derived from the Old English 'Cristes mæsse'. It is often abbreviated Xmas, possibly because the letter X resembles the Greek letter Chi, which is the first letter of 'Christ' as spelled in Greek (Christos).

Many scholars believe that Christmas originated in the 4th century as a Christian substitute for traditional Roman winter celebrations. The Roman festival of Saturnalia was the highpoint of the Roman year, celebrated for seven days beginning on December 17. It involved feasting and exchanging gifts, as well as granting slaves extra freedoms (a day off) and the postponing of all business and warfare. The Emperor Constantine, who converted to Christianity, banned the celebration of Saturnalia and set the date of Christmas as December 25th.

An enormous number of customs, with secular, religious, or national aspects surround Christmas, and vary from country to country. Most of the familiar traditional practices and symbols of Christmas, such as the Christmas tree, the Christmas ham, the Yule Log, holly, mistletoe, and the giving of presents, were adapted or appropriated by Christian missionaries

from the earlier pagan midwinter holiday of Yule. This celebration of the winter solstice was widespread and popular in northern Europe long before the arrival of Christianity. Pope Gregory I (c. 540–604) spread the idea of a Christmas holiday by allowing Christian missionaries to give them a Christian reinterpretation, while permitting most of the customs to continue with little or no modification. Places such as Cromwellian England and the early New England colonies, were among those where Christmas celebrations were suppressed. A few present day Christian churches, notably the Jehovah's Witnesses, some Puritan groups, and some ultraconservative fundamentalist denominations, still view Christmas as a pagan holiday not sanctioned by the Bible, and do not celebrate it.

Gift giving is a near-universal part of Christmas celebrations. The concept of a mythical figure who brings gifts to children derives from Saint Nicholas, a good-hearted bishop of 4th-century Asia Minor who was said to leave anonymous gifts for the poor. The name Santa Claus comes from the Dutch name for Saint Nicholas' feast day, Sinterclaus.

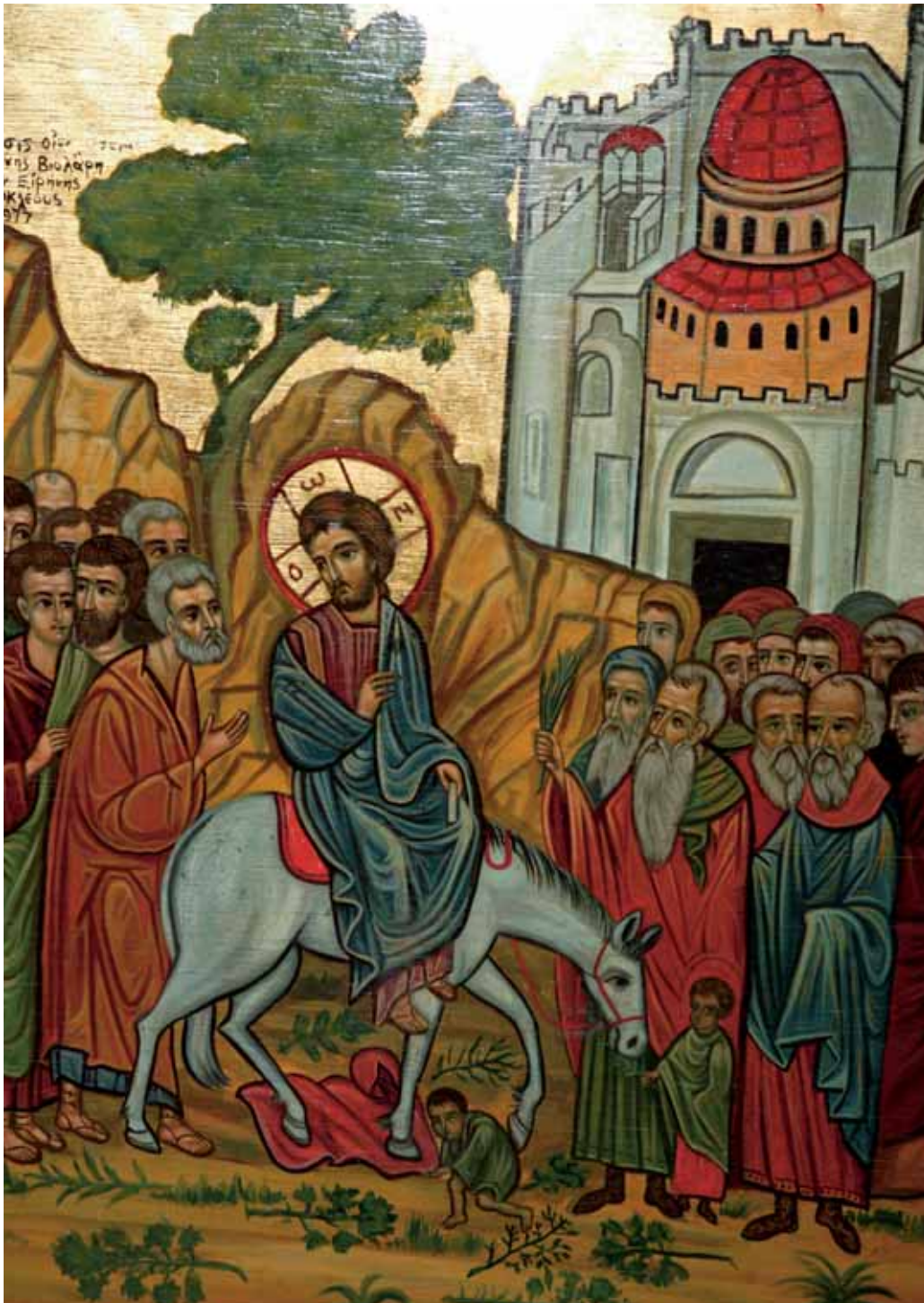
The Christmas season actually lasts 12 days and includes three feast days, or holy days. The first holy day is Christmas, which is the start of the 12 days of Christmas. December 26 is the feast of St Stephen – a traditional day for giving leftovers and alms to the poor (as described in the carol “Good King Wenceslas”). St Stephen was the first Christian martyr and one of the first deacons of the Christian church. In the UK, December 26 is called Boxing Day. This is the day when the alms boxes in the church were traditionally broken open and the money distributed to the poor.

The 12-day Christmas season ends with the feast day of Epiphany on January 6. In the Western church, Epiphany is traditionally celebrated as the time the Wise Men arrived to present gifts to the young Jesus. In some cultures, especially Hispanic and Latin American culture, January 6th is observed as Three Kings Day, or simply the Day of the Kings. Even though December 25th is celebrated as Christmas in these cultures, January 6th is often the day for giving gifts. In some places it is traditional to give Christmas gifts for each of the Twelve Days of Christmas. Since Eastern Orthodox traditions use a different religious calendar, they celebrate Christmas on January 7th and observe Epiphany on January 19th.

The Twelfth Night (as in Shakespeare's play) is January 5th, the last day of the Christmas Season before Epiphany (January 6th), and in Shakespeare's day this night often included feasting along with the removal of Christmas decorations.

Unit 12: The Easter festival

The Easter season is the holiest time of the Christian year. Easter itself celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. But the Easter season includes holy days that mark Jesus' death and the events leading up to Jesus' death. The Easter season is preceded by a period of penitence called Lent, which prepares worshippers for the resurrection.



Because the events of the first Easter occurred according to the Jewish calendar (the Last Supper was Passover, for example), and the Jewish calendar is lunar, the dates of Easter change every year. Easter is always the first Sunday after the Full Moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox on March 21.

The Vigil of Easter is celebrated between sunset Saturday and sunrise Easter Day. The idea behind the service is for faithful Christians to wait and watch, hopeful and confident that Christ will return at midnight. The service traditionally begins outside the church, where the minister and worshippers gather around a fire.

After readings and prayers, the Easter candle is lit from the fire using a taper, while a prayer is said. The lit candle is a symbol of Christ, who is said to have brought the light of God into the world. The candle is carried into the church, where most of the worshippers are waiting in darkness. This is a reminder of the darkness of Christ's tomb. After more prayers and readings the candles held by the congregation are lit from the Easter candle.

The readings at the service tell of the creation of humanity, how humanity fell from grace, and was repeatedly rescued by God. The readings remind people of God's promise to be with them always.

The holiday of Pentecost (called Whitsun in the UK) occurs on the seventh Sunday after Easter and ends the Easter season.

Pentecost is the Christian festival that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus at Easter, and ten days after the ascension. It is also known in English, especially in Britain, as Whitsun (Whitsunday), because of the white robes traditionally worn this day by those newly baptised on the previous Easter.

The name "Pentecost" comes from the Greek word *Pentékosté*, meaning "fiftieth", and originally referred to the Jewish harvest festival of Shavuot, celebrated after seven full weeks on the fiftieth day after Passover.

In the UK, Whitsun was traditionally celebrated with a Whitsun Ale. This is a type of festival, not a beer. Whitsun Ales are country fairs, with sports and competitions, Morris dancing displays, music and of course socialising, eating and drinking. Today this is less popular, but the May bank holiday is scheduled around the time of Whitsun.

