

Revision Guide: Christianity Practices.

Worship: acts of religious praise, honour and devotion. Way in which Christians show their love, reverence and respect for God. Recognises God's worth.

Why worship? Worship allows Christians to praise and thank God for his blessings, ask for forgiveness of sin, seek God's help for themselves or for others who are suffering. Helps deepen a Christian's relationship with God. Gives comfort and strength. God wants people to worship Him as it brings connection with God to a community and/or an individual. Gain a deeper understanding of their faith in God. It purifies and makes spiritually fit.

Where? Christians can worship in a Church, at home or anywhere.

Worship can involve: prayer, meditation, Bible readings, singing hymns, preaching, sharing food, pilgrimage, celebrating festivals or using religious art, music or drama. Can worship anytime but Christians' weekly public worship is on a Sunday – the day of Jesus' resurrection.

Scripture: *'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up'* James 4:10 (Expressing love and thanks for God for the crucifixion and resurrection could be an example)

'But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth'. John 4:23 (Could be used to support informal worship such as informal prayer as a person is praying from the heart)

'Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."' Galatians 4:6 (Expresses their love for God as Father)

The use of the Bible in worship: All worship will always have a focus on the Bible. Bible is inspired by God or the WORD OF GOD. It has central place and importance in any act of worship. In some Churches - particularly in Liturgical worship there may be a procession of the Bible into the Church where it is placed on the Alter or Lectern. Many Hymns and songs are based on passages in the Bible e.g. the Lord's My Shepherd is based on Psalm 25. In most if not all services portions of the Bible are read aloud and sermons are often based on a Bible passage.

Why is worship important to Christians? (Whatever its form)

External expression of faith, brings a sense of togetherness as a community, feel closer to God, peaceful – allowing for prayer and meditation. Praise God as the eternal Being and source of everything that exists – 'Alleluia' which means praise the Lord. Expresses thanksgiving for the death and resurrection of Jesus by which they believe they are saved. Expresses their love for their loving Father God.

Worship is not just about public or private services but about the whole of a Christian's life. Private worship helps them build discipline which gives strength in times of trouble, it encourages a routine which 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.

Prayer: is communicating with God in silence or aloud, with others alongside, using set formal prayers or informal prayer. **It is both talking to and listening to God.** Some Christians say a set prayer (formal) before eating to thank God for providing for them. This is a 'grace' *'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) Others might pray spontaneously for their meal using their own words, (informal prayer)

Prayer just about asking God for things and expecting them. **It is about listening and being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and doing what God wants them to do.**

There are several types of prayer.

- Praise is the basis for prayer. The whole of life should be an act of thanksgiving to God.
- Confession – saying sorry.
- Saying thank you to God.
- Praying for others and their needs.
- Praying for yourself and your own needs.

Many people pray in a humble position e.g. kneeling down, sometimes with hands pressed together. In Orthodox services people stand to pray, Nonconformists such as Methodists often sit, Anglicans may kneel and other Christians raise their hands to invite the Holy Spirit into their lives. Catholics may use a rosary.

Form of worship.	Definition	Explanation	Examples	Why is it important?	Why do some Christian's prefer it?
Liturgical worship (Liturgy = set pattern/ order)	A church service that follows a set structure or ritual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same set pattern and structure. Priest/minister leads. Formal prayers - set responses. Bible passages set out. May be a sermon. Often be music e.g. hymns sung. Follows text of a prayer book. 	Celebration of the Eucharist on Catholic or Anglican churches. Can be for a sick person in their home. Papal (Catholic) open-air Mass.	<p>Receive forgiveness through priest. Bible readings follow Church calendar. World-wide set order of service. Ritual passed down - tradition. Receive the living presence of Jesus in Holy Communion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarity helps them feel secure and can join in with ease. Know what to expect even in a Church they haven't been to before. Like the dignity of the service and think that there is variety within the set structure.
Non-liturgical worship	A service that does not follow a set text or ritual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May choose an order to fit theme. Emphasis - word of God - Bible. Service often focused on Bible readings - sermon based on them. Order might change or number of hymns/songs or types of prayer. Service leader has free choice within a loose structure. 	Services for Baptist or other non-conformist Churches such as Methodists.	<p>Faith is expressed in a variety of ways. E.g. Holy Communion - expressed in different ways. Christians can share personal interpretations of the Bible. People can take an active part in worship by praying aloud or speaking without formal training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liturgical worship stifles genuine worship. May choose a relevant theme for the community or for events. Bible readings chosen on theme of the sermon. Prayer-respond to the needs of community. Often in own words (extemporary prayer).
Informal worship	A type of non-liturgical worship 'spontaneous' in nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May include spontaneous prayers or sharing of thoughts. Quaker worship – no leader and no set structure at all. Sit in chairs in a circle around a table with a Bible and the book of Quaker writings. 	Quaker worship is mainly silent and people speak when they feel God's spirit moving to offer thoughts prayers or a reading from the Bible.	<p>People take an active part in the service i.e. praying out loud. Feel that it is easier to experience God's Holy Spirit in informal worship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worship comes from the heart. Everyone can take part. Demonstrates equality of believers.
Informal worship: Charismatic worship	Spirit inspired worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pentecostal Church is 'charismatic' – led by the Spirit and may involve dancing, clapping, calling out and speaking in tongues. (Speaking praise in words that are not the person's native language) – a heavenly language – express the person's devotion to God. 	Pentecostal worship – Charismatic – may involve dancing, clapping, calling out etc. Evangelical Churches are often charismatic in style.	<p>Follows that of the early Christians who met to hear about Jesus in the joy of the Spirit after Pentecost. People take an active part in the service i.e. praying out loud. Service may have an emotional impact, and personal revelation from God. Experience the Holy Spirit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believe this worship comes from the heart. Relaxed and so people are not worried about the order and when they should join in. Reflects people's joy.
Private worship	When a believer praises or honours God on his or her own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spend time with God, either alone or with close friends or family. Meditation – is thoughtfulness – on a religious truth. E.g. lighted candle - meditate on Jesus being the light of the world or Bible passage. In a Church a Christian (often Catholic) may meditate on the Stations of the Cross. 	May involve: prayer, meditation, studying a Bible passage or using a rosary (Catholic) e.g. Those travelling i.e. on a train may use the time for silent worship	<p>Can take place anywhere as they want. Can be liturgical - e.g. Roman Catholic - The Rosary – is a string of beads with a crucifix attached. The Rosary – run hands through beads and say certain set prayers – the Lord's prayer, the Hail Mary etc. It may be non-liturgical - Bible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps the person feel closer to God. Gives time alone with God and with their own thoughts. Time to be with God. Say things from the heart. Builds a relationship with God. Allows worship to be exactly as the person wants it to be.

Jesus spoke about prayer in parables. E.g. the persistent widow – where a corrupt judge gives in because she has been so persistent. It teaches to keep praying even if they don't see God answer straight away. Jesus was highlighting that all-loving God would definitely respond to the needs of those praying. Jesus taught not to show off when they pray with others but pray with humility and honesty.

Set Prayers: *These are part of liturgical worship and have set responses and patterns.* Many Christians use them for private prayer. Many were written by deeply spiritual people and some come straight from the Bible e.g. **'the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ...'** That is often said in both public and private worship and is taken from 2 Corinthians 13:14.

The most famous set prayer is perhaps **the Lord's Prayer 'Our Father in Heaven'**. Perhaps the simplest of all set prayers is the **Jesus prayer** which *says 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

The Lord's Prayer Jesus taught this prayer when asked by his disciples **'Master how should we pray?'** (so important) It contains some of the key aspects of prayer: praise, confession, prayer for others and prayer for oneself. **'Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name, your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is 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.'**

- It gives a pattern to prayer. Reminds must forgive others and relationships with others must be right first before coming to God. Reminds that God is the Father of the whole community.
- Often used in worship – prayers out loud by all members of the congregation. Often used at Holy Communion, baptisms, marriages and funerals. Many non-believers might have learnt it at school or in families as children and so can feel its impact at such services.
- Brings a sense of unity and spiritual purpose in society at important times, e.g. when recited at commemoration services at a tragic event. It can be used in private or public worship, out loud or silently.

Informal prayer: In public worship, this takes the form of **extemporary prayer**. **Most Christians use their own words** at least some of their time in private prayers. Informal prayers may be preferred as come more directly from the heart – meeting their particular concerns. E.g. of informal prayer - **arrow prayer**. Very short prayers addressed to God Spontaneously in response to a particular situation. i.e. 'Help me God' or 'Thank you God'.

Impact: Christians believe that God answers prayer but not always in the way the person would like (Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:32) Prayer can help someone cope with suffering.

The Sacraments: **'the external and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'**. Can experience with senses (see/taste/smell/touch/hear) but there is a deeper reality to it. They **involve symbolic actions, words and physical elements** such as water in baptism and bread and wine in the Eucharist or Holy Communion.

Impact: Many Christians believe that these rituals help to strengthen their relationship with God and make Him part of their life. They affirm that all are part of the Body of Christ, the Church, with all its responsibilities and so are important to the Christian community.

Protestant traditions usually only acknowledge two sacraments Baptism and the Eucharist (Communion – bread and wine). They are known as the Gospel sacraments - authorised by Jesus referred to in the New Testament.

Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians and some Anglicans recognise 7 sacraments. They believe they are implied in the ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and the practice of the Early Church.

These are (along with the outward symbolism and inward or spiritual grace):

- **Baptism** - water and Trinitarian formula – receive the Holy Spirit. Removal of original sin and entry into the Kingdom of God / the Church.
- **Confirmation** (chrismation in the Orthodox Church) - Laying on of hands by Bishop – Strengthening or seeking the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the person. Becoming an adult member of the Church.
- **Eucharist** – Bread and wine - Spiritual feeding with the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
- **Reconciliation** (confession) – words of absolution or forgiveness – the forgiveness of sins.
- **Healing** – anointing and the laying on of hands – spiritual and at times physical healing. Prepares for death.
- **Marriage** – rings - the endless love between a couple. (not for all)
- **Ordination** (becoming a priest) – the laying on of hands by the Bishop – The special gifts of the Holy Spirit need by a deacon or priest. (not for all – only those who are to become a priest)

Catholics believe God gives particular gifts and powers through the sacraments. For many are of central importance. Most of the sacraments are for all.

Impact: Roman Catholics refer to the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist as the three rights of initiation. Rites of passage and gifts of grace. Grow closer in love to God through them and are as essential to their spiritual lives as oxygen is to physical life. E.g. Baptism marks start of the Christian life, gives strength needed. The Eucharist (only sacrament intended to be received frequently) - unites them with the risen Christ. Reconciliation - realise what they have done wrong, show penitence and then receive forgiveness.

Quakers and members of the Salvation Army reject all sacraments. Claim there is no reference to most of the seven in the Bible. They also think that Jesus did not intend either baptism or his words and actions over the bread and wine at the Last Supper to become rituals for his followers to follow. Believe that God speaks directly to the believer's heart - no need of any form of 'go-between'. Symbols and ritual are a distraction from true faith.

Baptism: ritual to become members of the Church. Use of water - symbol of washing away sin. Formally acknowledged as a child of God & receives God's saving grace; sins are forgiven – enter a new life with Jesus Christ. John (John the Baptist) was baptising people in the river Jordan for the 'forgiveness of sins'. This prepared for the coming of the Messiah (Jesus). Jesus was baptised by John. 2 things show God's approval of his son's mission. ***'As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*** Matthew 3:16-17. Jesus' baptism set an e.g. for his followers to copy in order to receive the Holy Spirit and begin a new life in the Christian community. Jesus gave a clear teaching to his followers before the ascension after the resurrection

Scripture: ***"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*** (Matthew 28 :19-20)

Believers Baptism: initiation into the Church by immersion in water, of people old enough to understand the ceremony and willing to live a Christian life.

- It involves full immersion into a pool, symbolising the cleansing from sin and the rising up to a 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. The candidate declares the repentance of sin and their intention to follow a Christ-centred life, avoiding evil. Passages from the Bible are read and people give a testimony of how they came to faith in Jesus as their personal saviour. The minister will stand in the pool and say 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' as they baptise them.

Why believers baptism rather than infant baptism?

- Some Christians such as Baptists and Pentecostals (both non-conformists) believe that a baby is too young to understand baptism. People should understand & make their own decision about faith and own promises.
- Baptism does not save a person – conversion does.
- Jesus was an adult - ***'As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water.'*** (Matthew)
- God's love is not dependent on human actions.
- How can a child even have sins to remove?

Infant Baptism: ritual through which babies and young children become members of the Church, promises are taken on their behalf by adults; infant is freed from sin and introduced to the loving support of the Christian Community.

- 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'*** whilst pouring blessed water over the head of the baby. Make the sign of the cross on the baby's forehead. Promises made on behalf of the child by parents/Godparents to reject evil and turn to Christ. Often a candle is lit and given to the parents – it is lit from the Paschal candle (a large candle blessed and lit every year at Easter.) Holy oils may be used – put on the child's forehead to symbolise strength (to fight evil) and salvation. The congregation welcomes them. Everyone is tainted by original sin – descendent of Adam.

Why Infant baptism?

- Everyone has a tendency to sin and needs saving. For Catholics baptism removes original sin.
- Child is welcomed into the Church as soon as possible. Brings child into the Christian faith.
- Thank God for their baby and celebrate with friends and family.
- Brings gifts of the Holy Spirit to help child grow up strong in God's love.
- In the early church whole households were baptised ***'then immediately he and all his household were baptised.'*** (Acts 16:33).

- Child can receive the other sacraments.
- Brings comfort to a family if child is ill and dies that they will be with God.

Infant Baptism	Believers Baptism
Parents/God parents make promises to turn from evil and bring the child up in the faith	Old enough to make promises themselves. Public declaration of a personal faith
Gets rid of original sin. Water used to make the sign of the cross on the infants forehead.	Conversion saves a person not baptism. Full emersion. Put under the water to die to their old life and rise to a new life in Christ.

Eucharist: From a Greek word meaning ‘**thanksgiving**’ a service of thanksgiving in which bread and wine is used to celebrate the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus. Thanksgiving for all that God has done for the world.

The Eucharist is celebrated by almost all Christian denominations – but not by Quakers and the Salvation Army.

The Eucharist is also called The Lord’s Supper, the breaking of Bread, the Liturgy or Divine Liturgy, Holy Communion or Mass.

Holy Communion: (Eucharist) A service of thanksgiving where the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus are celebrated using bread and wine. **For many the most important act of worship** – it recalls the last supper of Jesus. Thanks God for his great love in sending Jesus to save people from sin and enable them to go to heaven. An act of fellowship with other Christians and communion with God. By remembering Jesus’ sacrifice and sharing bread and wine, they are brought closer to each other as a community and to God. **‘Holy’ - service is sacred, ‘Communion’ means ‘fellowship’** reminds - joined in fellowship with Christ and with one another.

The Last Supper: Jesus’ last meal was with his disciples on the night before he died. Probably the Passover meal. Paul in the letter to the Corinthians explains ***Jesus ‘took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me’ In the same way after supper he took the cup saying “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me”***

Jesus linked the bread and wine to his imminent death – it was a sign of the new covenant (relationship) established by his death on the cross between God and all believers.

Since the start of the Church in obeying Jesus’ command most Christians have celebrated the Eucharist wherever they are and sometimes in secret. **The central features are all the same: connection with the Last Supper, giving thanks for the bread and wine (consecration) and using Jesus’ words at the Last Supper.** The consecrated Bread and Wine are then shared among the congregation. The structure of the services and interpretation of its meaning differ considerably between the Christian denominations. Non-conformists use a non-alcoholic juice.

For Catholics: The sacrifice of Jesus is made present once again during this ritual and made real for believers. Holy Communion is a sacrament (ritual through which the believer **receives a special gift of grace**). They believe that the **bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus**- This is called **transubstantiation** – it is a divine mystery but Catholics believe Jesus is fully present in the bread and wine, they therefore become present in a mystical way at the death and resurrection of Jesus which saves them. (Some Anglicans believe this too). The Mass – comes from the Latin words used at the end of the service ‘ite missa est’ Go you are sent out. It is a reminder of Christian mission.

The Catholic Mass:

The Mass includes confessing sins and forgiveness is given. Liturgy of the Word. On Sunday there are 3 reading from the Bible (Old Testament, Paul’s letters and the Gospel), a psalm and a homily. On Sundays this is preceded by the **Nicene Creed which is recited. Liturgy of the Eucharist.** Offerings of bread and wine are brought to the altar. **The priest says the Eucharistic Prayer using the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: ‘He gave you thanks, he broke it [the bread], gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you in remembrance of me’ He prays over the wine using similar words. This is known as Consecration.** The people say the Lord’s Prayer. The Priest and congregation give a sign of peace to each other. **Members of the congregation come forward to receive communion. The people stand before the priest to receive the bread, which is placed on the tongue or in their hands.** The Priest blesses the people and tells them e.g. ‘Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives.’

Church of England Holy Communion - Almost identical to the Catholic service. Sign of the Peace is shared at a different point in the service. Also the bread is placed on crossed hands rather than on the tongue. Some Anglicans share the Catholic view that the bread and wine are transformed into Jesus' body and blood (transubstantiation) but many believe that Jesus is present in a spiritual way and only while it is being eaten. Main emphasis is on this community meal being shared equally with all.

For other Protestants: Protestants do not believe in transubstantiation. It reminds them of Jesus' words and actions at the LAST SUPPER. The bread and wine are symbols of Jesus' sacrifice and help them reflect on the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection for their lives today. See the ceremony as an expression of faith and obedience. Communion services are much simpler. **The bread and wine is on a table rather than an altar.** In a Catholic Church a person should have been baptised but in a non-conformist Church you may only need to be a member or anyone may be welcome. **This is called an Open Table.** It can be a monthly service rather than daily or weekly as in the Roman Catholic Church. A minister will read the Gospel story of the Last Supper, or St Paul's version from Corinthians. The bread and wine – **often non-alcoholic juice** – are shared with those who want to join in. Others are simply blessed. **The 'wine' is often given in individual glasses rather than a single chalice.** Depending on the Church hymns may be sung. A prayer will be said as well as the Lord's prayer which is said by all.

Catholic Church	Non-Conformist
Bread and wine is consecrated by the priest - Transubstantiation – consecration on the altar. Become the body and blood of Jesus.	Bread and wine on a Table – reminds of the last supper but are symbols only of Jesus' sacrifice
Receive Communion from the priest. Wafers are used – placed in mouth and a chalice – alcoholic wine	Different ways of serving communion – often bread cut into small pieces – put in hands - can be small cups of juice.
Have to be baptised into the Catholic church and confirmed to have communion – one of the 7 sacraments	Open table – anyone who wants it can receive communion – do not have to be a member and can be a child.
All say the Lord's prayer – prayer Jesus taught. Often Nicene creed said which reminds of key Christian beliefs.	
Bread and wine taken – remind of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the last supper.	
The service contains hymns and prayers.	

Impact: For many Christians Holy Communion is at the centre of worship and therefore their lives. Receive God's grace through it – joining in the great sacrifice of Jesus. For Catholics it is not merely remembering a past event, it becomes reality for them. Brings the community of believers together in unity – strengthens their commitment to their faith. Gives encouragement and support if a person is going through a difficult time. Holy Communion calls Christians to put the love they have experienced from God into practice by loving others. (Sharing of the peace symbolises this) Encourages them to work for justice and equality for all, as they break bread it reminds them there are many in the world who are starving, and all can come in the community as all are equal. Many Churches collect money during the service to support the poor in developing countries, the elderly, prisoners and the homeless. Christians believe that the Eucharist is food for the soul that gives strength to live their everyday lives to God's glory. Some denominations celebrate it less often because they think it is so important that they want to avoid the danger of losing its significance by overuse. Some worshippers say it is a taste of heaven, uniting the worshipper with Christ.

Pilgrimage:

What is a pilgrimage? It is a journey by a believer to a holy site/sacred place for religious reasons; pilgrimage is itself an act of worship and devotion. It could be alone or with other Christians. It is a physical journey but also a spiritual journey towards God. Gives opportunity to pray and worship. It is not compulsory but it can help people to understand their faith and give a renewed enthusiasm for living as a Christian. They may feel God has spoken to them about a problem or they may feel cleansed from sin. It is a time for spiritual growth.

Places of Pilgrimage: Christians may visit the Holy Land (Israel) 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.

Importance of pilgrimage: * Grow close to God and strengthen faith. * Take time out from often very busy and pressured lives and return refreshed and with a new vitality to cope with the demands of life. * Opportunity for spiritual growth. Have time to pray and meditate. * Inspiration to lead lives that more closely reflect the values of the Gospel i.e. visiting the Holy Land and places associated with Jesus. * Express sorrow for sin and ask for forgiveness. * Reflect on their life – particularly big decisions. * Pray for something special * Thank God for a blessing. * Seek a

miracle to heal them from an illness or help other pilgrims who are ill or have a disability. **Experience** a holy place
*Meet others who share their faith from different backgrounds and cultures. Gain new insights.

Lourdes: (France) In South- west France – place of pilgrimage dedicated to Mary the mother of Jesus. In 1858 a young girl called Bernadette had visions of Mary in a grotto (cave) near the River Gave. Bernadette spoke of praying the rosary with Mary who looked lovingly on her. Mary told Bernadette to dig for a spring of water which was discovered to have healing properties. Her friend bathed her dislocated arm in the water and it was healed. Bernadette claimed she had 18 visions of the Virgin Mary over 6 months. At first the authorities doubted Bernadette’s claims, however the priest was convinced. Bernadette has claimed that the woman she saw said she was the ‘Immaculate Conception’, there was no way she could have known this phrase as she was illiterate. From 1858 – 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.

‘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 the Virgin Mary.

Why visit Lourdes: Now thousands of pilgrims visit Lourdes to pray at the grotto where Mary appeared, to recite the rosary together, say Mass, touch the walls of the cave and to bathe in the water where it is claimed that 67 miracles have taken place and over 6000 other cures (all tested before a committee to see if it can be classed as a miracle – remember Revelation work). Water is often taken home. Many of the sick or those with a disability are accompanied by able-bodied helpers. In the UK, Roman Catholic Churches organise pilgrimages for the 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. Every Easter - pilgrimage for 1,000 children who are sick or have special needs.

Iona: (Scotland) the ‘cradle of Christianity in Scotland’, is a small island off the West coast. In the 6th century – 563 CE AD St Columba, an Irish missionary who brought Christianity to Scotland established a small monastic community there. The Gaelic rulers of Ireland gave him Iona to build a monastery and spread the Christian message. Iona fell into disuse, but in 1938 George Macleod had the monastery rebuilt and set up the foundation of the ecumenical Iona Community which is open to all Christian groups. It is not now the home of the ecumenical (different Christian denominations together) Iona Community and a place of Christian pilgrimage dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Their way of life was founded in the Bible – daily prayer, Bible reading, stewardship of time and money, regular meeting with other members and the active promotion of justice, peace and the environment. It has a global membership.

Why visit Iona? Some people describe Iona as a ‘thin place’, where the veil between the physical and spiritual world is thin. It is a place where nature reveals God’s infinite power and presence. The Iona community hold daily services in the abbey church, lead a seven mile hike to the island’s holy and historic spots, and conduct workshops on Christian themes. Pilgrims are asked to help out with daily chores and meals. There is time for silence for reflection or meditation, for reading the Bible, prayer and enjoying the area’s natural beauty. Iona has a very long history making pilgrims want to visit. Individuals or groups often go home renewed in their faith to live and work in the modern world. People go to live in the community, pray and meditate not for miracles.

Impact: May bring physical healing. Pilgrims not experiencing physical healing still feel as though they have been healed spiritually. Pilgrims also describe feeling peace of mind. Many feel renewed in their faith to live and work in the modern world

Arguments against pilgrimage:

Money could be better spent on helping others – some cannot afford to go. Could show poor stewardship as the money could be put to better use. Renewal or spiritual ‘high’ could wear off when a pilgrim gets home and returns to daily life. Spiritual development can be gained at home through prayer, worship and reflection. Prayers and healings can happen anywhere as God hears all prayers. Reading about Jesus and about the great Christians of the past gives the same insights as pilgrimage.

Festivals

Festival: a day or period of celebration for religious reasons.

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: the day commemorating the Incarnation, the birth of Jesus (25 Dec in most churches); also, the season of 12 days ending with the Epiphany (when Christians remember the visit of the wise men) ***'For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'.* Isaiah 9: 6**

Christmas commemorates the Incarnation of Jesus – belief that God became human in Jesus. In Britain this is celebrated on the 25th December and lasts 12 days ending with the feast of the Epiphany. (In the Eastern Church it is celebrated on the 6th Jan) This is not the date when Jesus was born - Luke's birth stories seem to indicate it was spring from the details relating to the Shepherds. For the first two centuries of the Church, it would seem Christmas was not celebrated. Possible reasons for the choice of date – 25th of Dec was a pagan celebration and in fixing Christmas Day on this date Christians might have been trying to replace paganism with Christianity. There was a tradition that Jesus' conception and death occurred on the same date. Based on Passover dating, some Christians fixed the crucifixion on 25th March this became the date commemorating the annunciation (When Mary was told she would have a child) and so Jesus' birth occurred 9 months later.

There are 2 accounts of the birth of Jesus – (Luke and Matthew) the one in Luke is perhaps better known and many of the forms of celebration are based on it.

According to Luke Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to be registered for a census by the Romans, but there was no place for them to stay so they had to stay where the animals were stabled and that was where Mary gave birth to Jesus. She swaddled him and laid him for warmth and safety in the manger. They were visited by Shepherds who had been told by a flock of angels of the Messiah's birth.

Many Christians believe the account in Luke happened, other Christians think it was a story that developed in the early years of the Church - all Christians agree that it stresses the humility of the incarnation. Jesus was born in to a poor, peasant family and was visited by men whose work made them outcasts in many Jewish eyes. Matthew's gospel also mentions wise men who gave gifts to Jesus but this does not detract from the poverty of Jesus' birth.

How is it celebrated?

- The four weeks of advent – services with a focus on 4 of the key figures i.e. Mary
- Trees and homes are decorated with lights and nativity scenes. Lights represent Jesus as the light coming into the world of darkness and nativity scenes show the baby Jesus being born in poverty.
- Many churches have carol services with readings from the Bible showing God's promise of a saviour and events of Jesus' birth.
- Children act out nativity plays
- A Christingle service is held – Children make the Christingle out of an orange and it has symbols that represent key Christian beliefs.
- Midnight Mass (Communion) takes place on Christmas Eve.
- Christians send Christmas cards with religious scenes or wording and exchange gifts which recall the wise men's gifts to Jesus.
- Many Christians give to charity as God gave the gift of Jesus his Son.
- There is a special service on Christmas day in many churches.
- A traditional family Christmas dinner is served and some families invite someone who is alone.
- Some churches set up shelters, host meals, distribute gift parcels to the most needy such as the homeless.

'Father, you make this holy night radiant with the splendour of Jesus Christ out light. We welcome him as Lord, the true light of the world. Bring us to eternal joy in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever'.
Opening prayer of the Catholic Midnight Mass at Christmas.

The Importance of Christmas for Christians To thank God for, and celebrate with joy, the incarnation. Time for giving to and receiving from loved ones, so is a symbol of love shared. Time to remember those who, like Jesus and

his family, live in difficult circumstances. They should give generously to charities that support those in need. It highlights Christmas and its meaning to non-Christians.

Easter: the religious season celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead; it starts on Easter Day and finishes with the feast of Pentecost. Easter remembers the death and resurrection of Jesus. ***“Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ‘He is not here, but He has risen.’ Luke 24: 5-6***

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday and ends with Easter Sunday. Each day remembers the events that led to Jesus’ death and then resurrection. The stories of this week make up a large amount of each of the 4 Gospels and so reflects the importance of these events for Christians.

Easter Day comes at the end of the long period of Lent and Holy Week. Many Christians will have fasted during this time – remembering the time Jesus spent in the wilderness being tempted by the Devil.

Key events in Holy Week

1. Palm Sunday – Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on a donkey (humbly). Palm branches - put down to ride over.
2. Maundy Thursday – The Last Supper with his disciples and Jesus’ arrest. Shared the Passover meal with his disciples including Bread and Wine (remembered at Communion). Jesus prayed in the Garden concluding not my will but yours. Jesus was arrested after Judas betrayed him with a kiss and put on trial with the Sanhedrin.
3. Good Friday – Jesus’ crucifixion and death. Jesus had to die for the atonement of the sins of humanity and original sin. It is called ‘Good Friday’ because Christians believe that Jesus died for the good of mankind. At his death he commended his soul to God and said the criminal beside him would go to Paradise. The curtain in the temple was torn in two, this separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple and symbolised that everyone has access to God. The body was laid in the tomb as Sabbath was starting.
4. Easter Sunday – the resurrection. The women went to anoint Jesus’ body for burial but found the stone rolled away, the grave clothes and the tomb empty. The disciples were in hiding and were fearful of being arrested. Losing Jesus had challenged their faith. When the women found the tomb empty a young man told them Christ was risen. Christians believe Jesus had resurrected from the dead and that he achieved victory over death.

Celebration of Easter

- Special church services run throughout the week remembering ‘the greatest sacrifice ever made’.
- Christians see palm crosses are given out on **Palm Sunday** – they are kept until Lent the following year when on Ash Wednesday (first day of Lent) the old palm crosses are symbolically burned.
- On **Maundy Thursday** Christians attend church to celebrate the Last Supper. The Queen gives out Maundy money (Silver coins) to selected older people (she is Head of the Church).
- Church services take place for each of the special days – including Easter vigils.
- On **Good Friday** many churches are cleared of all colourful and celebratory items. Everything is plain and simple. In many towns groups of Christians will meet and walk through the streets following a heavy wooden cross they then erect it in the town square as a reminder to everyone of what this festival is about. Christians often eat fish on this day rather than red meat- which would reflect the blood that Jesus shed.
- **Easter Vigil** – In Roman Catholic and many Anglican churches, the Easter Vigil is held on Easter Eve. Converts are baptised and admitted to the Eucharist, It has a set Liturgy and starts in darkness and the Paschal candle (symbolises the risen Christ) is lit and ends with Communion.
- Service on **Easter Sunday** – often a congregational meal before or after to emphasise the joy of the community. In Rome on Easter Day the Pope celebrates Mass in St Peter’s Square.
- Churches are filled with flowers.
- Many churches organise – open air sunrise services and share breakfast together – usually eating eggs, a symbol of new life. Special Easter prayers are said and Easter hymns are sung.
- Believers send Easter cards with pictures associated with the resurrection and quotes from the Bible.
- Giving of Easter eggs – (either Chocolate or hard boiled) used in the early church to symbolise the resurrection of Christ and spiritual regeneration. Today they are a sign of new life and when they are broken open - represent the opening of Jesus’ tomb and opening up for humanity the possibility of eternal life.

Importance of Easter: ***“Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ‘He is not here, but He has risen. (Luke 24: 5-6) He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. ...***

(1John2:2) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ... (1Cor 15:21)

Christians move from - great sadness to great joy knowing what God has done for them (reconciliation and atonement) Christians believe that God reunited himself with humanity by the actions of Jesus - new covenant. New start for all and that it demonstrates the key beliefs of forgiveness and love. His resurrection from the dead proved Jesus to be the Son of God. Jesus' predictions of his death and resurrection came true, so it means the rest of his teachings can be trusted. There is no need to fear death. Victory of good over evil, hope over despair and life over death. However hard life might be, there is assurance that God's love will triumph.

The role of the Church in local community:

The Church in the Bible comes from the Greek word 'ekklesia', which is defined as a gathering of Christian people. Its root meaning is not that of a building but of Christian people. The New Testament explains that Church is a group of believers under the leadership of Jesus. 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.'*** (Eph 1:22-23)

The church provides a location where Christians from the local community can meet, worship, pray, obtain spiritual guidance and socialise. Events on weekdays as well as worship on a Sunday (holy day). Some activities for Christians – bible study, prayer meeting and others for the community e.g. mum's and toddler group or a youth club.

Christians have always been involved in working to make communities better places to live, they work in support groups for the young and old, support charities that help the needy, welcome immigrants. **Throughout its history is has been a major source of social services** like schooling and medical care, been an inspiration for art and culture and has campaigned for justice. E.g. it was a London church - Samaritans phone service for those feeling suicidal.

Jesus spent much of his time helping those who were looked down on by others or who were needy and were outcasts. He said ***'it is not the well that need a doctor but the sick'***. When Jesus and his disciples crossed Lake Galilee for some peace and quiet, a crowd there already waiting, but instead of sending them away or going somewhere else, he went on to teach and feed them, this is interpreted that Christians should not turn their backs, **Scripture:** The parable of the sheep and goats teaches that if people fail to help those around them it is if they have failed to help Jesus himself. ***'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat' (Matthew 25:35)*** 1John says ***'If anyone has material possessions and ignores his brother in need, how can he love God?'*** Christians should not ignore the needs of society because showing Agape love. The needs of local communities vary and they should try and meet them. ***'Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead'*** James 2:17

Foodbanks At foodbanks people volunteer to collect and distribute food. 2004 saw the launch of the UK-wide network with a vision to end poverty and hunger, show compassion and give practical help. Many food banks are centred in churches or church halls. People in need are identified by police, schools or social services and given vouchers to exchange for food parcels. E.g. **The Trussell Trust**- founded in 1997 – provides emergency food and help for people in crisis in the UK. Non-perishable food is donated by churches, supermarkets, schools, businesses etc. and sorted by volunteers. Care professionals give out the vouchers and they exchange their voucher for 3 days of nutritionally balanced food. Are 420 **Trussell Trust food banks** in the UK and in a year - provide for nearly 1,000, 000. **Street Pastors** Christians who go out on city streets at night to **care for the practical and spiritual needs of young people who might be affected by excessive drinking, drug use, fighting etc.** regardless of the young people's behaviour. They provide a reassuring presence in the community. Following training of several months before being given the role, they ask for God's blessing on this difficult type of ministry. **They try to listen to people's problems,** give guidance regarding agencies which might be able to help and discourage anti-social behaviour. **They might help someone who has drunk too much to get home by organising a taxi or providing flip flops for ladies who are struggling to walk home in their party shoes or call an ambulance if a person is unwell.** They are backed up by partners (Prayer Pastors) who pray for the Street Pastors and the work they are doing. Over 270 towns now have street pastors, with around 14,000 trained personnel. Their governing body is the Ascension Trust, which works with local councils, the police and other official bodies. The work is based outside pubs/clubs/shops where there might be anticipated issues.

The place of Mission and Evangelism

Mission: The Church not only provides a place to worship and learn about God, it also has a mission to spread the good news to non-believers that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and came into the world to be its saviour.

Matthew's Gospel ends with what is known as the Great Commission

Scripture: *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19 -20)* These – among the last words of Jesus to his disciples – sum up the mission of the Church: called to know Jesus in their lives but also to make Him known to others. When Jesus called the first disciples he said to them *'Come follow me.....and I will send you out to fish for people' (Matthew 4:19)* At Pentecost when the disciples received the Holy Spirit then days after Jesus ascended to heaven, this gave them the gifts to carry out the Great Commission. Christians have the responsibility, according to the Great Commission to tell others of their faith. This may be spreading the word to people they meet in everyday life or, for some, through organised events or preaching. Others may feel called to go to other countries to become missionaries, which involves evangelism and in many cases humanitarian work among the poor and disadvantaged. Their main aim is to persuade people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and to extend the Church to every nation. The Acts of the Apostles (book in the New Testament of the Bible) explains how the early Christian Church grew in this way.

Evangelism: spreading the Christian Gospel by public preaching or personal witness.

Evangelical: spreading the word by way of preaching the Gospel of Christ.

Mission: 'a sending' being sent to do something. 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.

Serving in Mission: SIM - SIM has a worldwide scope to follow Jesus' instruction to send people out on mission. Members work chiefly in areas where it appears Christianity is under attack – for example, in Nigeria where Christians are often the target for terrorist groups – such as the Boko Haram terrorist group. Churches had been destroyed, vicars killed and people left traumatised by what they have suffered, SIM supports the rebuilding of these communities. SIM is enabling 12 pastors to return to their work there. SIM Nigeria is also sending 4 specially trained pastors to run trauma healing workshops and to organise the building of temporary structures for worship.

Fresh Expressions: This organisation offers 'different churches', set up in pubs, cafes, schools and even skate parks or beaches. These gatherings take the Christian faith to people who would never think about going to church. They are all planted to suit the needs of that group and help them become and develop as Christians.

Alpha: Started at Holy Trinity Church in Brompton, London, the aim was to help church members understand the basics of Christian faith but it soon became an introduction for those interested in Christianity. It is an evangelistic course that offers 'an opportunity to explore the meaning of life' through a series of talks and discussion groups. The original course was revised by Nicky Gumbel from the same church and it is used by many of the major Christian denominations worldwide. Millions of people have taken part in this course (could be held at a church, home, workplace, prison etc.) and other courses have followed from it i.e. pre-marriage and marriage courses for adults and study programmes for young people.

Church growth

Christianity has always been a missionary religion, spreading all over the world. African Christian membership is on the rise but in Europe it is decline. In recent years there has been a renewed focus on preaching to make the Gospel relevant in a modern world. Many churches are trying to find fresh approaches to worship while maintaining their key beliefs. Estimates of the number of Christians worldwide vary from 1.5 billion to 2.5 billion. **Up to a third of the world's population claim some sort of Christian faith** (this includes those who designate themselves a Christian in a census). **The Church has grown rapidly from the time of Christ and is still doing in South America, Africa and Asia.** This is not the case in the USA and Europe or in the Middle East where Christians have suffered much persecution. In 2010 there were nearly 1.1 billion Catholics, which is a big increase in the last hundred years (1910 – 291 million). Despite opposition from the Communist government, it is estimated that in China there will soon be more Christians than in any other country of the world. **In 1900 there were no Protestant Churches in South Korea – in the capital city Seoul alone has 7000 churches and the Yoido Full Gospel Church reporting that it has a million members.** It is

estimated that churches in Africa are increasing by an average of 34,000 people per day. World-wide something like 80,000 people become Christians each day, and over 500 new churches are formed.

Discipleship:

Convert- someone who has decided to become committed to a religion and change his/her religious faith.

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

The importance of the world wide church:

World Poverty

Poverty – the absence of the basic needs of life – food, water, shelter, healthcare, education and employment.

LEDCs – less economically developed country ***Less economically developed countries (LEDCs) are the poorest countries of the world. Many are found in Asia and Africa. Religious voluntary aid agencies such as Christian Aid help people in LEDCs because of the extreme poverty which so many people live.***

*Many have debts to richer countries they cannot repay so money gathered by the country goes to pay debt. * Some countries are victims of unfair trade deals, and exploited by richer countries. *Suffer from conflict which destroys infrastructure and facilities. *Healthcare and education are limited so people really struggle to make more of their lives or even survive. *Corrupt leaders. *Need the most help and often have few natural resources.

Christians have links with many countries and are moved with compassion at media coverage. Many see helping as putting beliefs into action, copying Jesus' example and his teachings. Jesus told a rich man to sell everything and give to the poor (Mark 10:21) Christians believe that they should present Jesus to the world by helping.

Scripture: following the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. ***'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink'*** (Matthew 25:35) and the ***Parable of the Good Samaritan*** which taught to help those in need regardless of who they were. ***'Love your neighbour'*** ***The Parable of the Rich man and Lazarus*** teaches that we should not ignore the needs of the poor.

3 main different types of aid to LEDCs

Emergency aid – immediate response to a disaster. Food and clean water to prevent hunger, dehydration and water-born diseases. Medical kits are needed to deal with injuries and outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, tents and blankets or temporary shelters and teams of specialists like doctors and engineers may be needed.

Short-term aid – this takes over as the emergency teams start to leave and the process of rebuilding begins. Families are helped to be reunited, homes are rebuilt as well as schools. If children are orphans they especially need supporting and need to be back at school.(few weeks or months).

Long-term aid (development) - tackling the root cause of the problem and enabling communities to become self-sufficient. Educational programs, well-digging and the training of medical and health workers for e.g. (At least a year)

Christian Aid **Christian Aid, Tearfund and CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development)** are part of the **Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)** which respond to crises such as natural disasters or the mass displacement of people in a civil war that creates refugees.

Work in the UK to make it possible to give the aid:

Campaigning – putting pressure on those in positions of power e.g. peaceful protest or lobbying – help the government push internationally for justice for LEDCs e.g. Trade justice, Fairtrade foundation, Stop Climate Chaos.

Increasing public awareness – using the media, often helped by celebrities and also through school resources.

Fund-raising – to pay for the work in LEDCs. E.g. Christian Aid week – an envelope is put through all letterboxes in the UK by volunteers who also collect them,

Christian Aid is the official relief and development agency for 41 church denominations in Britain and Ireland. They have a vision to end all poverty – ***'We believe in life before death'***. Set up at the end of WWII in response to the terrible refugee crisis in Europe, its work then extended world-wide. It gives emergency aid but is increasingly **involved in long-term sustainable development and campaigning for justice.** In promoting long term aid, Christian Aid used the proverb: 'Give a man a fish and you will feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a

lifetime.' It assesses projects in a country, then supplies experts and materials for the projects to be completed. It has around 700 local partner organisations in 50 countries.

From 2012 it has focused on global justice - empowering those who are currently exploited and disadvantaged to help end poverty. It works through partner organisations who are local, the poor are supported without discrimination- no matter their race or religion. Christian Aid also encourages its supporters to **support Fairtrade** so that farmers and producers are paid fair prices for their goods so that they are better able to look after their families. Money comes from governments and institutions, volunteers and also Christian Aid week.

Myanmar (Burma) – vulnerable to a wide range of natural disasters because of its geographic location, a situation made worse by those in power. Malaria - kills 7% of children under 5. Christian Aid is training healthcare workers using a diagnostic kit to detect the early signs - can be treated sooner. They distribute insecticide-treated mosquito nets, train villagers in basic healthcare and hygiene and encourage them to seek medical care when they are sick.

Persecution

Persecution: Hostility and ill-treatment, usually because of prejudice.

Persecution can be brief or long term; it can be by one person or many; it can be a government, or against the law in a country; it can be recently begun or historic in nature and spanning many years; it can be mild or life-threatening. The International Society for Human Rights, claims that 80% of all acts of religious discrimination in the world are directed at Christians (in almost 75% of the world's nations). The persecution ranges from forcing them to pay a tax, not allowing them to have good jobs or build churches, to attacks on their homes, churches and family and even murder. Many thousands of Christians are killed each year because of their faith. In 2015 it was reported that the most serious persecution was taking place in countries such as North Korea, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan.

The Church has faced persecution as far back as Jesus himself. The Romans and the Jews persecuted him and his disciples. Many early Christians suffered death as a result of spreading the Christian message. The First Letter of Peter was written to Christians who were suffering persecution for their faith – they were told to see it as a form of purification and to trust God in their time of trial. For nearly 300 years after Jesus' death it was illegal to be a Christian, carrying a likely death sentence as punishment. The Apostle Paul warned

Scripture: *'everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted'* (2 Timothy 3:12)

Jesus told his followers *'You will be hated by everyone on account of My name'*, (Matthew 10:22) *'blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'* (Matthew 5:10) Not all persecution has a totally negative effect – it may also help develop faith and strengthen the conviction of believers. When their beliefs are challenged they have to decide whether to be fully committed to the faith, it may bring the Church together in the country where it is being persecuted. Christians believe that those who suffer for their faith share in a unique way with Jesus.

Christian reaction to persecution:

Christian reaction to persecution has been to trust God in times of need. Bible teachings include; *'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away'* Matthew 24:35 and, *'For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'* (Jeremiah 29:11). Christians therefore should react with forgiveness and love rather than hate, and for those not suffering persecution to support the persecuted (irrespective of faith or no faith). This is still the case in the world today. *'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'* (Romans 12:21) and *'turn to them the other cheek'* (Matthew 5:39). Martin Luther King responded with love and forgiveness when he faced persecution. St Paul likens the Church to different parts of the body so *'if one part suffers, every part suffers with it'* (1 Cor 12:16). So the Church campaigns on behalf of persecuted Christians and supports them where possible with practical help such as food, medical supplies, trauma counselling and providing Bibles. As well as giving money to charities such as Open Doors, they also pray for persecuted Christians believing that God will hear and answer their prayers for protection, an end to persecution and for the Church to grow.

There have been individuals and organisations involved in support for the persecuted.

Brother Andrew – smuggled Bibles and other Christian literature into Communist countries, despite risk of arrest, assault and imprisonment. It is estimated that he has helped Christians in 125 countries.

Open Doors – fights for justice and freedom, raises awareness of persecution issues, trains people to work with those affected by persecution and offers practical help to rebuild communities. Theological training is given to help

people become pastors and they are also trained to help people traumatised by persecution. There are also literacy and vocational training programmes. Raise awareness in the UK who support by praying, fundraising and volunteering. Practical support is given to those who have fled violence e.g. 3 million Nigerians have fled the territory invaded by Boko Haram - Open Doors has helped to rebuild lives, providing food, medical kits, training and helping people to find work. Campaigns and fights for justice and religious freedom in the UK and internationally. Delivers Bibles for distribution to Christians who often have to practise their faith and meet in secret.

Reconciliation:

Reconciliation: Coming back together after a falling out, so that no grudge is held. Restoring of harmony after relationships have broken down.

Reconciliation is one of the 7 sacraments in the Catholic Church – sacrament of Penance and Resurrection – reconciled to God and also reconciled to each other.

Reconciliation means bringing people together to be friendly again. When Jesus reconciled the world through his death, it was the ultimate sacrifice. Christians should be able to reconcile with each other after dispute, whether as families, communities or nations.

The primary mission of the world-wide Church is to proclaim that Jesus came so that the relationship between God and people can be restored (reconciled). 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 Jesus came to change this

Scripture: ***'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)

Christians believe that Jesus saved human kind through GRACE – Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for 'God's enemies' – humankind- to be forgiven and become his friends.

Christians believe people need to be reconciled to God but also to each other and they have a duty to help with reconciliation. Scripture: ***'All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation'*** 2: Cor 5:18-19) Matthew 5:23-24 teaches that before worshipping God people should be reconciled to each other.

In the world there is a lot of disharmony and hatred resulting in violence and bloodshed. In Northern Ireland there has even been conflict between Catholics and Protestants.

Corrymeela in Ireland began in 1965 by Ray Davey, a former chaplain to witness and was profoundly affected by the bombing of the city of Dresden during WWII. It seeks to promote harmony and reconciliation its work continued throughout the troubles in Northern Ireland and continues still. It is a movement but also a centre. 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. People talk and listen to each other and explore ways of moving from violence and distrust to working together. It runs various programmes such as working with families that need help to work through difficult times, working with schools to encourage positive citizenship as well as work involving Palestinian and Israeli students. Every day starts with prayer.

Community of the Cross of Nails – In 1940 during WWII 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. It works with partners in many countries with the aim of bringing peace and harmony. The cross was made from two charred beams from the Cathedral which had fallen in the shape of the cross when it was bombed. Every weekday at noon the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation is prayed.

Desmond Tutu: Retired South African Archbishop has spent his whole life trying to reconcile the black and white communities there after years of discrimination. He has also worked with the Israeli and Palestinian communities. During Apartheid he used his position as Bishop of Cape Town to speak out against apartheid and to campaign for social justice but only using peaceful methods. He chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the end of Apartheid where the perpetrators of the most horrific acts of violence and their victims came face to face so that the perpetrators could ask for forgiveness.