



Why are churches important to Christians and in local communities?

Prior knowledge

In order to access the learning in this unit, pupils should have learnt about:

- basic concepts in Christianity, including beliefs about God/Trinity and celebrations such as Christmas and Easter

Assessment for 7–9s

The statements below suggest expected outcomes from this unit for 9-year-olds. Adapt them for the age of pupils you are teaching. These link to the outcomes for this series of books shown on the webpages. You may need to adapt them slightly for the syllabus or guidelines you follow.

Expected outcomes

- Explain what is meant by ‘church’ and know the different uses of the word ‘church’ as a place of Christian worship, and ‘Church’ (with a capital ‘C’) meaning the worldwide community of Christians.
- Understand that there are many different types and styles of church and be able to explain some of the reasons why this is the case.
- Give examples of ways in which churches are important in Christian life and practice, and as parts of their local communities.
- Consider and weigh up ideas about whether churches are important, considering factors such as falling church attendance, new types of churches, and alternatives to churches, such as Quaker meeting halls or worshipping online.

This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 2-01c, 2-03a, 2-03b and 2-03c.

Welsh RVE sub-lenses for this unit can be found at www.natre.org.uk/exploring-religion-and-worldviews

Background knowledge for the teacher

- Christianity is a very diverse religion with many denominations, and this diversity is reflected in the many different types and styles of churches in the UK.
- Churches play an important role in the lives of their congregation, providing a place to gather for worship, prayer and celebration, and for people to meet and socialise with one another.
- Many churches reach out beyond their congregation to play an active role in the wider community in which they are located, often being involved in charity work and youth groups, for example.
- Anglican and Catholic churches are often referred to as ‘parish’ churches. ‘Parish’ refers to the particular geographical area where the church acts as a religious centre.

This unit is designed to explore the importance of churches in their local communities, not only for their Christian congregations but more widely too. Charlie’s local church tour shows that in a city suburb, there are many types of churches that are important to people for a range of reasons. We zoom in on one of them, St Teilo’s Catholic Church, to find out how it is reaching out to the local community and helping anyone, not just Catholics in the area. Christine the Catholic and Nathan the Baptist discuss their different churches and how features of them express their different Christian beliefs.

For those using RE Today units of work and syllabuses, this article could be used as part of a sequence of learning in U2.8 ‘What difference does it make to believe in Ahimsa (harmlessness), Grace, and Ummah (community)?’ and L2.11 ‘How and why do people mark the significant events of life?’



Essential knowledge

By the end of this unit pupils should know:

- what is meant by ‘church’ as a place of Christian gathering and worship, and ‘Church’ with a capital ‘C’ to mean the global community of Christians
- churches are many and varied because Christianity is a diverse religion and churches are designed to reflect different Christian beliefs and different ways of worshipping
- churches are key places for many Christians, and play important roles in their local communities
- not all Christians think that churches are important, and there are some alternatives to churches – some people may even argue that churches are no longer important in today’s world



Key vocabulary

church, Church (with a capital ‘C’), congregation, celebration, worship, Mass, Eucharist, baptism, marriage, wedding, community, charity, parish, parishioner



Next steps

- Find out some statistics on churches, and discuss whether churches are still important today.
- Find out about alternatives to traditional church buildings.



Classroom ready resources

Go to www.natre.org.uk/exploring-religion-and-worldviews to access the resources below:

- BBC clips on Christian worship for Key Stage 2
- Real People, Real Faith videos and PDFs including ‘What symbols are important to you?’
- information about St Teilo’s Catholic Church in Cardiff
- extra clips for teacher subject knowledge
- online resources 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 for step 5

Members are able to download extra resources to support this unit:

- a copy of the unit
- a PowerPoint presentation to use with your class
- *Big Questions Big Answers: Investigating Worship* book sections

Resource 4.1

Charlie's local church tour



Whitchurch Methodist Church

My church is so friendly and welcoming. The café is great as it brings lots of local people together and helps raise money to keep the church going. I look forward to coming here every Sunday to worship and study the Bible, and I see my friends too.

Janine, age 12



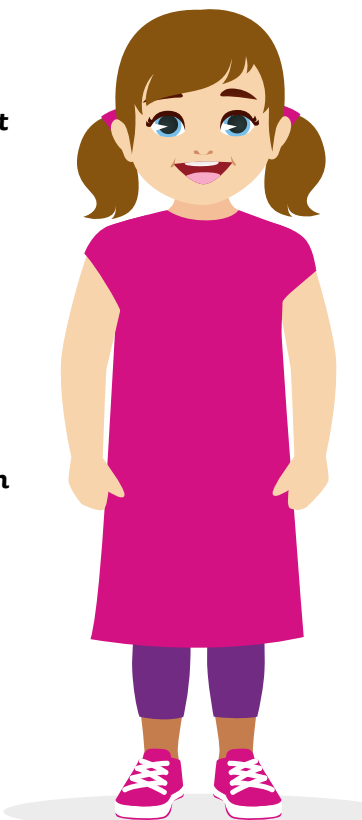
Bethel Baptist Church

St Mary's Parish Church
(Anglican, Church in Wales)

Hi, I'm Charlie from Cardiff. I'm 9. There are lots of churches where I live but I hadn't really noticed until we had an RE lesson about how Christians worship. My Christian friends were talking about the different churches they go to, so I went exploring with my dad to find out about them.

I found out:

- there are seven church buildings in Whitchurch (the area of Cardiff I live in).
- Really, there are eight churches because one of them is two churches in one; two different types of Christians use the same building. A church is about the people, not just the building!
- Churches can look very different from one another – sometimes this is because different types of Christians have different ways of worshipping God.
- Churches are important for lots of different reasons.



Here is a map of the churches near me and some of the things people said about their churches.



Tabernacle Presbyterian Church sharing the church with the Welsh Evangelical Church. You could say this is 2 churches in 1!



St Teilo's Catholic Church

St Teilo's is such a special place! I met my wife here and we got married here too. Our baby, Josh, is going to be baptised here soon as well.
Joe, age 32



St Thomas's Church
(Anglican, Church in Wales)

Sundays are special to me as that's when I get to go to church. I love the singing and learning about Jesus. I feel all new and ready for a hard week at school after church.
Ellery, age 9



Charlie's house

I love coming to church on Sunday mornings with my grandad and my mum. There is always something going on and sometimes grandad gets to play his guitar. Lots of celebrations and fun and we do quite a lot of charity projects, too. My mum also goes to Zumba class in the church hall every week too.
Rhys, age 10

Welcome to
Whitchurch

Our church looks much grander from the outside. Inside it's quite plain because we don't want to be distracted from focusing on the Bible when we worship. I'm really proud of everything our church does to support food banks and other charities too. The church is a big part of the community. I really look forward to the Christmas craft fayres and other community events.
Audrey, age 68

This church is a place of worship and prayer for two local Christian communities. Although we worship in different ways – and even in different languages (one in Welsh and the other in English) – and have some different beliefs, we are all one in Jesus Christ. Fewer people go to church these days, meaning sharing our church is a good idea.
John, age 39



Ararat Baptist Church



Step 1

Churches in the local community

Give each pupil a sheet of paper. Tell them that you are going to say a word and then ask them to draw what comes into their head on the paper. They can write words and numbers, too, if they would like to. Be clear that you want them to do this by themselves. 'Church' is the word for them to respond to.

Give them some time to discuss their ideas, in groups. Assign one person in each group to write down the three most important words or phrases from their exchange of ideas.

Discuss them as a class. Record what the class has learnt about the idea of 'Church'.



ASK QUESTIONS

Step 2

Charlie's local church tour

Give out a copy of Resource 4.1 on pp. 16–17. This is a map of churches in a city suburb (Whitchurch in Cardiff), with some quotes from local people who attend each church, saying why they think it is an important place for them.

Firstly, ask pupils to look carefully at the pictures and the names of the churches.

- What do they notice?
- How do they compare with their own ideas from the drawing activity?

Ask them to suggest some reasons why the churches are different. What do they know about the names, such as 'Catholic' and 'Baptist'? This should help them to think about how Christianity is diverse with lots of different branches. You may wish to ask pupils to imagine what the churches might look like inside.

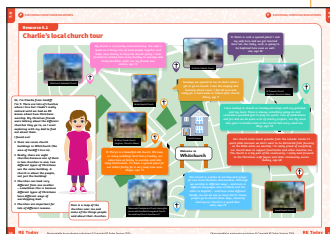
Look at the speech bubbles. What are people saying about their churches? How do these statements compare with ideas pupils expressed in Step 1? Are there any surprising statements?



LOOKING AT DATA



OBSERVATION



Step 3

Local church tour challenge

Help pupils to investigate what churches there are in your local area. Ideally organise a class trip, perhaps a walking tour of the area to visit some of the churches and speak to their leaders or members of their congregations. If this is not possible, try asking local priests/vicars/pastors to visit and/or talk about their churches. If these options are not possible, use Google Maps and online resources to create a tour map, like Charlie's, of the churches in your own area.

Create a large display of findings to exhibit in the classroom. In Charlie's local area there were no disused churches or churches that now had other uses (none had been converted into shops, cafés, homes or places of worship for faiths other than Christianity, for example). Will you include these? Also, there were no places of worship for other faiths in Charlie's area. What about your local area?

Compare your pupils' church tour map to Charlie's. Ask:

- What can you conclude?
- How different or similar are the two areas?

Ask pupils to write down the three main things they learnt from exploring churches in the local area.



LOOKING AT DATA



LOOKING AT INTERVIEWS

Step 4

Zooming in on St Teilo's: a church with a plan



EXPLORING CASE STUDIES



ASK QUESTIONS

Read Resource 4.2 on pp. 19–20, Gill Kane's account of how her Catholic church in Cardiff has a plan to reach out to the local community. Ask pupils to discuss answers to the following questions:

- What are the two meanings of the word 'church' that Gill talks about?
- What does she mean by 'building up the Body of Christ'?
- Can you list seven things that happen in St Teilo's Church?
- Which of these things do you think is just for parishioners (the Catholics who go to the church)?
- Do you think it is important for a church to reach out beyond the people who go there to worship? Why, or why not?



Step 5

Comparing churches



EXPLORING CASE STUDIES



LOOKING AT INTERVIEWS

Read Online Resource 4.3.

This is a conversation between two different types of Christians. Christine is a Catholic Christian and Nathan is a Baptist Christian. They are curious about what each other's church is like. Their chat reveals that they have some quite different beliefs, which are reflected in the churches they go to. Ask pupils, in pairs or individually, to complete the Venn diagram activity on Online Resource 4.4.

Encourage them to find out more about Catholic and Baptist churches so that they can add even more to their Venn diagrams. Watch clips such as those suggested on p. 15 to help pupils understand the wide variety of churches and how different beliefs and practices are expressed by features of these churches.

If you have time, perhaps pupils in groups can make 3D models of churches. Challenge each group to research a particular denomination of church. Get them to imagine they are a team of architects who have been commissioned to design a church for this denomination in the local area.

Use Online Resource 4.5 to enable pupils to record, organise and reflect on their main point of learning: five things they have learnt, four key words (encourage them to add pictures/symbols to dual-code), three of their own ideas/opinions, two things they would still like to find out and, finally, one thing they have really enjoyed in this learning journey.



Resource 4.2

Zooming in on St Teilo's: a church with a plan

Gill Kane is an active member of St Teilo's Catholic Church in Cardiff. She tells us about St Teilo's plan to reach out to as many people in the community as possible.

Canon John Griffiths is our parish priest at St Teilo's and we have a sister church nearby called Our Lady of Lourdes, so we usually call our church St Teilo's with Our Lady of Lourdes, but I will call it St Teilo's for short here. Together, our churches have started an ambitious plan. Our plan is about 'building up the Body of Christ'.

I'll try to explain what we mean by this. There are two meanings of 'church'. A church is a building, a place where we go to worship God, and for us Catholics 'Church', with a capital 'C', means the worldwide community of Catholic Christians, united in their faith. The Church is a community of believers we sometimes call the Body of Christ. This is because all Catholic people united in faith in Jesus Christ are like parts of the same body. We try as hard as we can to live

by Jesus' teachings and actions, and to follow the teachings of the Catholic Church. The more we can do this, the more we build up the Body of Christ. This is what our plan is all about!

Canon John sees 'the plan' as a 'pilgrimage of the people of God' – a sort of holy journey that we are on. Everyone in our Church community is thinking hard and finding ways that St Teilo's can play a positive role as part of the local community and the wider world, as well as being a place of worship, prayer and celebration for our parishioners. Of course, celebrating Mass, baptisms, weddings and funerals are very important indeed, but it's also important to think about how St Teilo's can help anyone in need, as well as the people who share our

Catholic faith. Jesus taught that we should love our neighbour, and that's what we try to do as a church.



Canon John celebrating Mass at Christmas time



Canon John baptising a baby



Canon John Griffiths, Parish Priest at St Teilo's and Our Lady of Lourdes in Cardiff



Resource 4.2

Pope Francis called upon all Catholics to consider the needs of everyone in the territory of the parish, not just parishioners. The plan we are putting in place at St Teilo's creatively does just that. Here are some examples.



Reaching Out Initiative Steering Group. Left to right: Angela Jones, Chris Llewellyn-Jones and Gill Kane

Through our Reaching Out Initiative, each week we deliver food bank items to families and individuals within the parish boundaries and beyond. We also have a food pantry in St David's Sixth Form College and a breakfast pantry in a high school. To ensure the help reaches the right people, the Reaching Out Initiative has partnered with several schools and a college in Cardiff, and we are exploring more partnerships. Our Knit and Natter with a Cuppa group was busy knitting blankets and rugs to be distributed to those in need last winter – these were greatly appreciated to help people keep warm at a time when the cost of heating homes was higher than ever.

Canon Griffiths said:

Both food and blankets are an attempt to support our community over the coming months of economic gloom when people will be faced with the “heat or eat” dilemma.’

The Reaching Out Initiative is really ‘owned’ by our parishioners. So many are volunteers, and we also have a wonderful army of those who pray that the Holy Spirit will guide and bless us.

Knitting and nattering with a cuppa



Food bags, ready for delivery

We recently did a collection at two of our Masses for Mary's Meals, a charity that helps feed children in some of the poorest countries in the world. This was the message received from the lady who came to the parish to make the appeal:

My sincere and heartfelt thanks for your warm welcome, kind words and amazing generosity to Mary's Meals two weekends ago. The sum total of your donations amounted to £1,264.81, enough to give 12,648 hungry children a free school meal, or to feed 66 children for a whole school year. You are a wonderful community; may God bless you all.'

Ann White, Mary's Meals



Blankets ready for delivery

