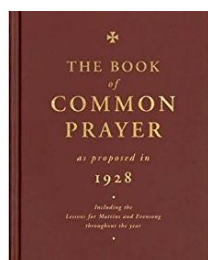


GCSE Religious Studies



Paper 1: The study of religions: Christian Practices



3.1.2 Christianity

Students should be aware that Christianity is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity specified below and their basis in Christian sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Christianity in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of different Christian perspectives in their answers including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. They must study the specific differences identified below.

3.1.2.2 Practices

Worship and festivals

- Different forms of worship and their significance:
 - liturgical, non-liturgical and informal, including the use of the Bible
 - private worship.
- Prayer and its significance, including the Lord's Prayer, set prayers and informal prayer.
- The role and meaning of the sacraments:
 - the meaning of sacrament
 - the sacrament of baptism and its significance for Christians; infant and believers' baptism; different beliefs about infant baptism
 - the sacrament of Holy Communion/Eucharist and its significance for Christians, including different ways in which it is celebrated and different interpretations of its meaning.
- The role and importance of pilgrimage and celebrations including:
 - two contrasting examples of Christian pilgrimage: Lourdes and Iona
 - the celebrations of Christmas and Easter, including their importance for Christians in Great Britain today.

The role of the church in the local and worldwide community

- The role of the Church in the local community, including food banks and street pastors.
- The place of mission, evangelism and Church growth.
- The importance of the worldwide Church including:
 - working for reconciliation
 - how Christian churches respond to persecution
 - the work of **one** of the following: Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, Tearfund.



<u>Key Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Agape	A word used in the Bible to describe selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love.
Baptism	The ritual through which people become members of the Church.
Believers' baptism	Initiation into the Church by immersion in water of people old enough to choose the Christian life for themselves.
Christmas	The day commemorating the Incarnation; also, the season of 12 days ending with Epiphany
Church	1. The people of God; the Body of Christ (all Christians) 2. A building in which Christians worship
Easter	The religious season celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus.
Epiphany	Festival commemorating the visit of the Magi to Jesus.
Evangelism	Spreading the Christian gospel.
Festival	A day or period of religious celebration.
Holy Communion (Eucharist)	A service of thanksgiving commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus using bread and wine.
Infant baptism	The ritual through which young children become members of the Church, promises are made on behalf of the child by adults.
Informal prayer	Prayer that is made up by an individual using their own words.
Informal worship	A type of non-liturgical worship, sometimes 'spontaneous' or 'charismatic' in nature.
Liturgical worship	A church service that follows a set structure or ritual.
the Lord's Prayer	The prayer Jesus taught to his disciples.
Mission	The calling of a religious organisation or individual to go out into the world and spread their faith.
Missionary	A person who goes on a religious mission, especially to promote Christianity through preaching and/or charity work.
Nonconformist	An English Protestant who does not conform to the doctrines or practices of the established Church of England.
Non-liturgical worship	A service that does not follow a set structure or ritual.
Persecution	Hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of gender, race, religion etc.
Pilgrimage	A journey by a believer to a holy site for religious reasons.
Prayer	Communicating with God.
Private worship	When a believer praises or honours God on their own.
Protestant	A branch of Christianity encompassing all those Christians who are not Catholic or Orthodox.
Reconciliation	A sacrament in the Catholic Church; restoring a relationship after it has broken down.
Sacraments	The rites and rituals through which a Christian demonstrates an ' outward sign of inward grace '.
Set prayers	Prayers that have been written down for others to say e.g. the Lord's Prayer.
Worship	Acts of religious praise, honour or devotion.

Worship



Worship is the way in which Christians show their deep love and respect for God. The word 'worship' relates to the word 'worth' and means to recognise someone's importance and value.

Worship allows Christians to praise and thank God for his blessings, forgiveness of sin or to seek God's help for themselves or others who may be suffering. Worship helps deepen a Christian's relationship with God and gives them comfort and strength to live a more truly Christian life.

Liturgical Worship

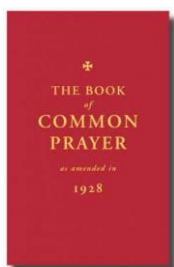
Liturgical services follow the same set pattern each time. A priest leads the congregation in formal prayers that have set readings/responses. Bible passages are read out and a sermon may be delivered based on them. During the service, there will often be music, hymns sung by the congregation and/or choir.

Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches usually practise liturgical worship. For these denominations, they believe that liturgical worship offers the following advantages:

- The Bible readings follow the Christian calendar and therefore teaches Christian history and faith across the Old and New Testament.
- It also means that Christians across the world are worshipping and engaging with God in the same way at the same time.
- There is a worldwide set order of service that is familiar to all, even visitors.
- The rituals have been passed down through generations, giving a sense of tradition.



Examples of Liturgical Worship



Within the Church of England, the **liturgy** is set out in the Book of Common Prayer. The book is a permanent feature of the Church of England's worship and is a key source for its doctrine. It contains prayers, order of services and ceremonies.



Non-liturgical and informal worship

In non-liturgical worship there does not need to be a set order or ritual. In Nonconformist churches, such as Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed churches, there may still be a basic structure, but this is not set and will vary week by week.

Nonconformist churches often base their services on the Bible and therefore the order and structure of the service may vary each week depending on the theme.

Informal worship involves people's spontaneous prayers or sharing of thoughts/revelation from God.

Quaker Worship



Pentecostal worship



Non-liturgical worship is important to many Christians because:

- It is in the style of the worship practised by many early Christians would meet to hear Jesus in the joy of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost.
- Faith can be expressed your own personal ways.
- Personal experiences and revelations from God can be shared.
- It gives the lay-people the opportunity to take an active part in church services.

Private Worship

Private worship allows individuals to spend time with God. It may involve prayer, meditation, studying the Bible, or using aids to worship such as an icon or a rosary.

Prayer

Prayer is communicating with God, whether in silence or aloud, with others or alone, using set prayers or informal prayer. Some Christians will say set prayers at particular times, for instance, before a meal (see right).

Other Christians may pray spontaneously for their meal using their own words in an informal prayer.



Christianity has no set way to pray and it will depend on the person's preference or the denomination that they belong to:

- In Orthodox services people stand to pray.
- Nonconformists often sit.
- Anglicans will often kneel.
- More charismatic churches will often have people who raise their hands in prayer.
- Catholics will often use an aid called a rosary to aid in prayer. The beads help Catholics to keep count of their prayers as they go through their set prayers.



There are many different kinds of prayer, including:

- **adoration** - praising God for his greatness and admitting dependence on him
- **confession** - owning up to sin and asking for God's mercy and forgiveness
- **thanksgiving** - thanking God for his many blessings, e.g. health or children
- **petition** - asking God for something, e.g. healing, courage or wisdom
- **intercession** - asking God to help others who need it, e.g. the sick, poor, those suffering in war

Christians believe that God will answer prayer but not always in the way that the person would like. A clear example of this is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Prayer can help someone accept God's will even if it means suffering. Sometimes Christians prefer to find their own way of expressing their needs to God by using informal prayer; they may feel they can open their hearts to God more easily by using their own words.



Prayer and private worship helps Christians build up discipline which gives them strength to cope in times of trouble. It can also encourage a routine that allows time for reflection in a busy day. Through prayer and meditation Christians find peace and a sense of communion with God in their everyday life as followers of Jesus.



When Jesus was asked by his disciples how to pray, he answered with the Lord's Prayer (see left). This, therefore is a very important prayer for Christians because it is how God himself taught them to pray.

The Lord's Prayer gives individual Christians a pattern for how to pray as it combines praise to God and asking for one's own needs. When used as a private prayer, a Christian is reminded that they must forgive others in order to be forgiven.

This prayer will often be used by the congregation in worship and will often be said at baptisms, weddings, funerals and almost always at Holy Communion.

The prayer is so well known and so often used that it can bring a sense of unity and spiritual purpose among Christians.

At the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns people about what they need to guard against when they pray:

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."



The Sacraments

Sacraments are holy rituals that outwardly express an inner, spiritual experience. They make the free gift of God's love (**grace**) visible for believers. The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God.

According to the Catholic Church, the sacraments are required of Christians because they impart grace, but, in addition, the very act of celebrating them disposes the faithful most effectively to receive this grace in a fruitful manner, to worship God rightly, and to practice charity.

Catholic and Orthodox Christians accept seven sacraments that they believe to have been initiated by Jesus:



Although Protestant churches may see these things as important and good things to do, they are not necessarily considered sacraments. For example, the Church of England recognises baptism and Holy Communion as sacraments, whereas Quakers do not use any sacraments.

Baptism



For many Churches, baptism is the initiation rite by which people become members of the Christian Church. In baptism, the person is formally acknowledged as a child of God and receives God's saving grace.

Baptism is important to Christians because it is following both in the example and the instruction of Jesus. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus is baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. The Gospel narrative describes God approving of this by the Holy Spirit descending *"like a dove"* and a voice from heaven announcing: *"This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

Following his baptism, Jesus commissions Christians to:

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Believers' Baptism

Many Christians such as Baptists and Pentecostals believe that infants are too young to understand the meaning of baptism and therefore people should wait until they are old enough to come to their own decision about their faith.

Believers' baptism involves full immersion in a pool, replicating the cleansing of sin through the water and the rising up to new life with Christ.

The ritual will vary but will usually involve the person being baptised making public declarations of their faith and desire to leave their old life behind and live a Christian life. The person will often give testimony about their 'journey' to faith and/or read a Bible passage that is particularly meaningful to them.



The minister goes into the pool with the person and baptises them “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” and helps to fully immerse the person under the water and then bring them back up.

Infant Baptism

Among others, infant baptism is practised by Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Methodist Churches. It is also sometimes referred to as Christening because it is the welcoming of an infant into the Christian faith.

Traditionally, the reason given for baptising young children has been that, even if they are too young to have sinned, everyone is descended from the first humans, Adam and Eve, and therefore born with inherited **original sin** (see page 22 of Christian Beliefs and Teachings booklet). Baptism therefore is needed to wash away this **original sin** and the condemnation that comes with it.

Nowadays, infant baptism is often used as an opportunity for parents to thank God for the baby and celebrate the birth with family and friends. At an infant baptism, parents will make a public commitment raise their child in the Christian faith and the congregation promise to support the parents and child in this.



The ritual will vary from Church to Church, but the presiding priest or minister will usually say: “I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” and pour blessed water over the head of the child. Besides water, other symbols are sometimes used such as making the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child, anointing with oil, dressing the child in white, and presenting the child with their first Bible.

Holy Communion / The Eucharist

Holy Communion, also known as the Eucharist, is the sacrament that uses bread and wine to celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection from death.

This ritual commemorates Jesus' Last Supper in which he foresees his own death and explains to his disciples how this will act as a sacrifice for the sin of the world (see page 16 of Christian Beliefs and Teachings booklet):



“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is 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.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

Holy Communion is a very important ritual for most Christians and is at the centre of their worship. The Eucharist:

- Gives Christians the opportunity to join in the sacrifice of Jesus and experience God’s grace.
- Brings the community of believers together in unity, strengthening their commitment to faith.
- Calls Christians to put the love they have experienced from God into practice by loving others.
- Reminds Christians that while they break bread together, there are many who are starving and who need their help. An offering is often taken from the congregation to help in this regard.



Transubstantiation

The word “transubstantiation” derives from the Latin: *trans* (across), and *substantia* (substance).

The term is employed by **Roman Catholic** and **Orthodox** Christians to denote the idea that during the ceremony of the Mass, the bread and wine are changed in **substance** into the flesh and blood of Christ, even though the elements appear to remain the same.

Consubstantiation

Consubstantiation is the view held by most **Protestant** denominations that the bread and wine of Communion are spiritually or metaphorically the flesh and blood of Jesus, yet the bread and wine are still actually only bread and wine.

The prefix *con-* means “with” and says that the bread does not become the body of Jesus but is eaten in remembrance of him.

Celebrating Communion

Orthodox Mass

- There will be a **liturgical** service involving hymns, prayers, a reading from the Bible and possibly a sermon.
- The priest will come through the **Royal Doors of the Iconostasis** to chant the Gospel and then select one loaf of bread baked by the congregation to be blessed.
- The bread is divided into four: three parts are consecrated and the fourth is broken into little pieces.
- This all takes place behind the **iconostasis** which represents the divide between heaven and earth.
- The priest then comes through the Royal Doors to distribute the consecrated bread and wine to the congregation who come forward for communion.
- Prayers of thanksgiving are said after communion.
- As people leave, the priest gives them pieces of the consecrated bread to take home as a sign of being part of the Christian community.



Catholic Mass

- Mass begins with a greeting from the priest, prayers of penance and praise (the 'Gloria').
- **Liturgy of the Word:** there will be a service involving readings from the Bible and prayers for the Church, the world, the local community, the sick and the dead. On Sundays this is preceded by the Creed.
- Offerings of bread and wine are brought to the altar where they are prayed over and consecrated by the priest (see right) using the words of Jesus from the Last Supper. This is when the **transubstantiation** occurs.
- The congregation join together in reciting the Lord's Prayer.
- The priest and the congregation 'share the peace' with one another.
- The congregation come forward to partake of communion.
- The priest blesses the people and tells them, "*Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives.*"



The communion service in the Church of England is largely the same as the Catholic Mass except that the peace is shared before the blessing of the bread and wine instead.


Holy Communion in Nonconformist churches

The way in which communion is practised in Nonconformist churches will vary, even within the same church as they do not follow a set liturgy. These types of churches will likely contain some of the following elements:

- Begins with sung worship and a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.
- Bible readings and a sermon to follow.
- Prayers for the world and the needs of particular people.
- A priest reminding the congregation of Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper. A prayer may be said over the bread and wine.
- There will likely be an 'open table' where anyone who wishes to take communion can receive the bread and the wine.



- In some places the bread and wine may be broken beforehand. In others, people will break a piece off for themselves and pass it on to another member of the congregation.
- The wine is sometimes non-alcoholic and will be distributed in a similar way to the bread, either sharing a cup with others or given out in small cups.
- There will likely be a prayer of thanksgiving, blessing and an encouragement to go out and serve God.

 <u>Similarities</u>	<u>Differences</u>

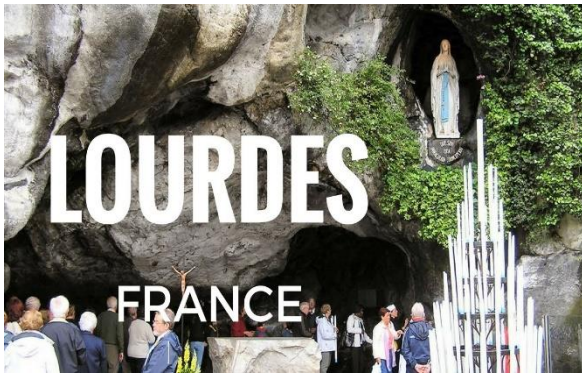
Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is a journey made for religious reasons, alone or with other Christians, to a sacred place. Pilgrimages give many opportunities for prayer and worship and is itself an act of worship as believers show devotion to God by choosing to go.

Pilgrims may visit the Holy Land, particularly Jerusalem because it is where Jesus lived, died and was resurrected. They may visit shrines connected with famous saints, or some prefer to go to remote places to pray and reflect on their lives.

Christians go on pilgrimage to:

- Grow closer to God and strengthen their faith.
 - Express sorrow for sin and be forgiven.
 - Reflect on their lives, particularly when facing a crisis or big decision.
 - Pray for something special or thank God for a blessing.
 - Receive advice from priests or monks.
 - Seek a cure for an illness.
 - Experience a holy place.
 - Help other pilgrims who are disabled or ill.
 - Meet others who share their faith.
 - Renew their faith.
-



In 1858 a young girl names Bernadette had visions of the Virgin Mary in a cave at Lourdes in south-west France. Bernadette describes praying the **rosary** with Mary and the Mary told her to dig for a spring of water. This spring has been said to have healing qualities and the Catholic Church recognises 67 miracles that have occurred here although over 6,000 cures are said to have taken place. Today, thousands of pilgrims visit Lourdes every year.

Iona

Off the west coast of Scotland is a place of pilgrimage dedicated to the Virgin Mary on the island of Iona. In the 6th Century, St. Columba, an Irish missionary who brought Christianity to Scotland, established a small monastic community there.

Iona is remote and windswept so, for many pilgrims, it feels like 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. There is time for silence, reflection, reading the Bible and enjoying the natural beauty.



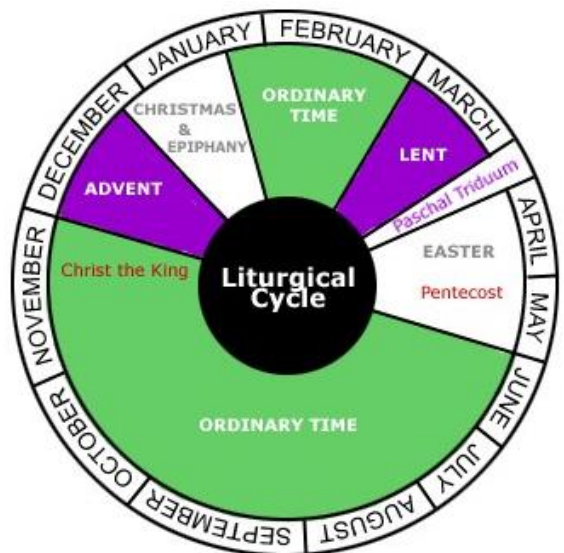
Festivals

Festivals have an important role in helping Christians remember the major events in their religion and plan their worship.

The Christian calendar has two main seasons:

- Advent, Christmas and Epiphany
- and
- Lent, Easter and Pentecost.

By living through the events of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Christians remember the central teaching of their faith – that God gave his only Son to save them.



Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holy day that marks the Incarnation: the birth of Jesus, the son of God. The Gospels do not mention the date of Jesus' birth. It was not until the 4th century AD that Pope Julius I set 25th December as the date for Christmas. This was an attempt to 'Christianise' the Pagan celebrations that already took place at this time of year. The celebrations last 12 days ending with the feast of the Epiphany.

- Trees and homes are decorated with lights and nativity scenes. The lights represent Jesus as the light coming into the world of darkness and the nativity scenes show the birth of Jesus into poverty.
- Many churches have carol services with readings from the Bible and children will act out nativity plays. These show God's promise of a saviour and the events of Jesus' birth.
- In Catholic churches, Midnight Mass (Eucharist) will be held on Christmas Eve to remind Christians of the ultimate purpose of Jesus coming to Earth.
- Christians send Christmas cards and exchange gifts which recall the wise men's gifts to Jesus. This commemorates the giving of gifts to Jesus by the Magi.
- Christmas is seen as a time of 'peace and goodwill' when Christians give to charity as God gave the gift of Jesus, his Son.

Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate Christmas because they believe the festival to be rooted in pagan customs and rites. As well as this, they believe that Jesus commanded us to commemorate his death, not his birth.



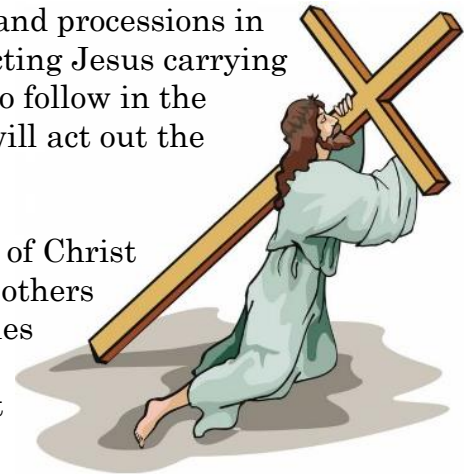


Easter is the most important Christian festival. It celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus. During the week leading up to Easter (Holy Week) Christians remember the events that led to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Good Friday

Jesus was crucified on 'Good Friday'. Special services are held and processions in the streets are led by a person carrying a wooden cross, re-enacting Jesus carrying his cross to Golgotha where he was crucified. In Jerusalem, who follow in the footsteps of Jesus along the *via dolorosa*. Often, a participant will act out the role of Jesus carrying the cross through the streets.

In the Philippines, some devout Catholics imitate the suffering of Christ and have real nails hammered into their palms and feet, while others drag heavy crosses or crawl on bloodied hands and knees in cities and towns across the country on Good Friday. Others, dressed as Roman centurions, aid the voluntary crucifixions, which last a few minutes before the faithful are taken down.



Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday, churches are filled with flowers and special hymns are sung celebrating the Resurrection.

Orthodox Christians walk around the church at midnight on Saturday and then enter the darkened church with lighted candles or lamps. This symbolises entering the empty tomb.

As part of a liturgical Easter service, the priest announces, 'Christ is risen' and the congregation answers 'He is risen indeed'.



Catholics and Anglicans also have a Saturday night vigil that begins in darkness, includes the lighting of a large **Paschal candle** to symbolise the risen Christ, and ends with Holy Communion.

Many churches organise open-air sunrise services and share breakfast together, usually eating eggs, a symbol of new life. This is also the origin of the practice of giving chocolate eggs.



The Role of the Church in the Local Community

Although the word 'church' has come to be used to describe a building in which Christians worship, this is not the original biblical meaning of the word. The word 'church' comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* which is defined as an assembly, or gathering, of Christians. The New Testament is clear in using the word 'Church' to refer to all followers of Jesus.

Christians are engaged with outreach to the local community. For example, the church building may be used to host mothers' and toddlers' groups or youth clubs as well as projects set up to evangelise such as Alpha (see page 18 for more information).



The Trussell Trust **food banks** provide emergency food, help and support to people in crisis in the UK. Non-perishable food is donated to the food banks by churches, supermarkets, school, businesses and individuals and is sorted by volunteers.



"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink."

Matthew 25:35-36 (Parable of the Sheep and the Goats)



Christians Against Poverty was set up by John Kirkby. He believed God was calling him to sacrifice his career in finance and use his knowledge of the industry to help the poor. CAP specialises in debt counselling for people in financial difficulty. It also provides Job Clubs for those seeking employment and Release Groups for people looking to overcome addictions and dependencies.




"For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'"

Deuteronomy 15:11

Christian groups such as Street Angels and Street Pastors have been set up to try to help deal with some of the problems people may face within society. These groups try to care for people in ways including responding to drunkenness, anti-social behaviour and crime. Their aim is not to actively preach but to provide a positive service to their local areas and demonstrate the Christian life in their actions.



As well as dealing with problems in the street, particularly for people on a night out, their work will also include listening to people's problems, giving guidance regarding agencies which might be able to help and discouraging anti-social behaviour.

 *"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead"* **James 2:17**



**Parish Nursing
Ministries UK**

Parish Nursing Ministries UK is a Christian charity which supports whole person healthcare through the local church. The project provides registered nurses to promote well-

being in body, mind and spirit. Their work includes diagnosing early signs of health problems, training and coordinating volunteers to help alleviate loneliness or provide support during times in crisis. They encourage healthy living through exercise and a healthy diet and provide education and health advice.



"I have come in order that you may have life; life in all its fullness."
John 10:10



Mission and Evangelism

The Church has a **mission** to spread the good news (gospel) of Jesus to non-believers across the world. Matthew's Gospel ends with Jesus giving what is known as the **Great Commission**:

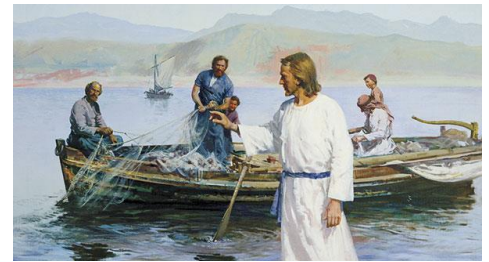


“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

These were some of the last words Jesus gave to his disciples and mirrors what he says when he first calls them to discipleship. When Jesus calls four fishermen to be his disciples, he says:

“Come, follow me [...] and I will make you fishers of men”

Matthew 4:19



This emphasises how important evangelism is: Christians are not only called to know Jesus in their lives but also to make him known to others. Christians believe that through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they are able to spread the Gospel and help people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

This may be through spreading the word to people they meet in everyday life, through organised events, preaching, inviting people to church, or becoming a **missionary**.



The Alpha Course was set up by Christians to introduce people to the fundamentals of Christianity with the aim of bringing them to faith.

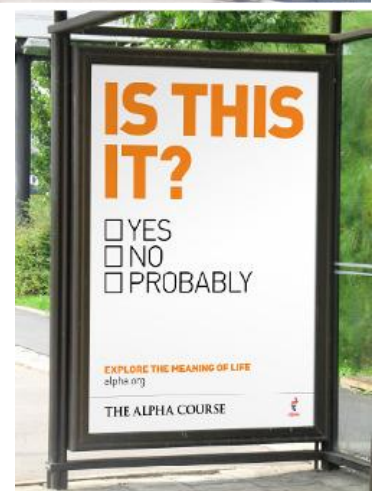
Christians have taken opportunities to advertise the course in various ways including signs on buses, bus stops and billboards.



The organisers of the Alpha course describe it as:

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is run all around the globe, and everyone's welcome. It runs in cafés, churches, universities, homes—you name it. No two Alphas look the same, but generally they have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation.

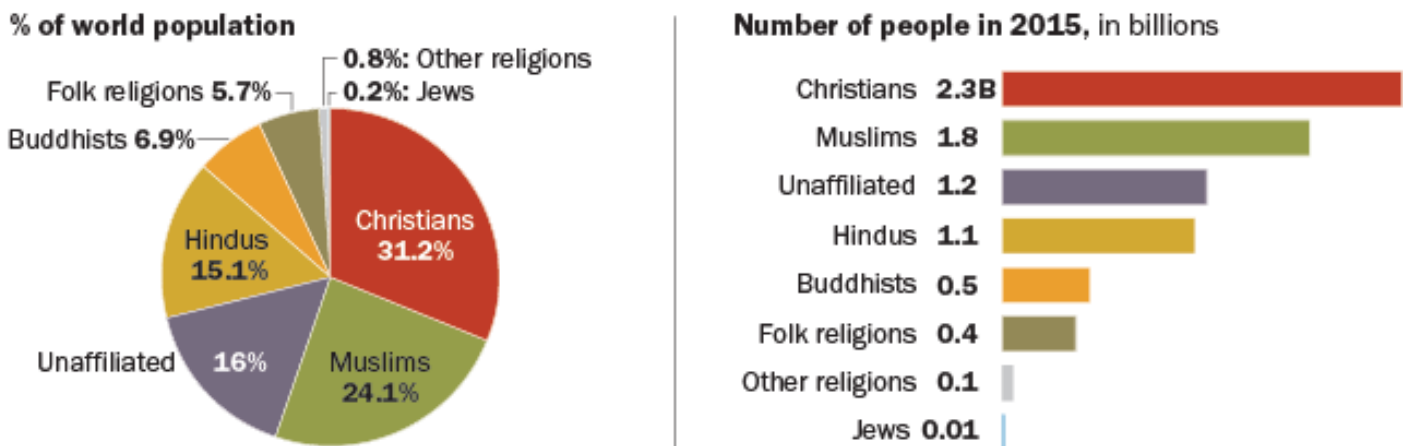
The Church's mission does not end with people deciding to become Christians but also involves continuing support for converts known as discipleship. This might involve Bible study groups, prayer meetings and sharing testimonies with one another.



Church Growth

Roughly a third of the world's population identify as Christians, making Christianity the biggest religion in the world.

Christians are the largest religious group in 2015



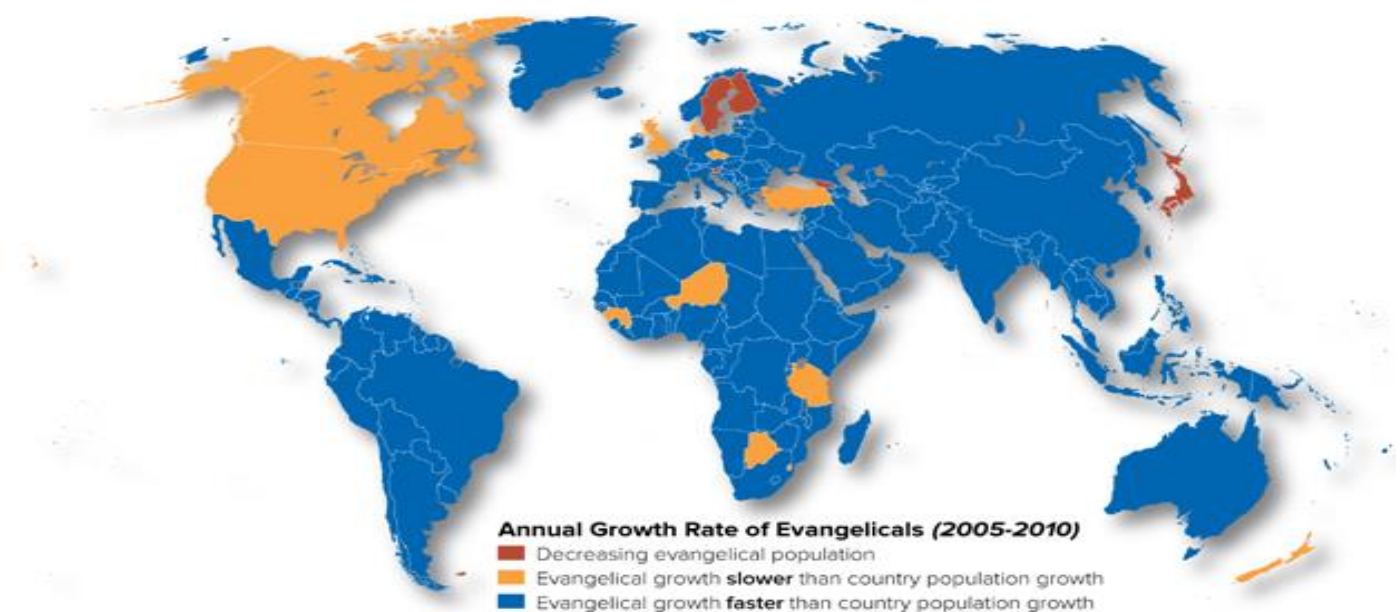
Source: Pew Research Center demographic projections. See Methodology for details.
"The Changing Global Religious Landscape"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The church is also continuing to grow. Despite opposition from the communist government, it is estimated there will very soon be more Christians in China than in any other country in the world. In 1900 there were no protestant churches in South Korea, now the capital city alone (Seoul) has 7,000 churches, including some that have nearly a million members.

Christianity is also on the rapid rise in Africa with churches increasing by an estimated 34,000 people per day. Worldwide, it is thought that 80,000 people become Christians, and over 500 new churches are formed each day.

GROWTH RATE OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY



Other relevant statistics:
World population annual growth rate: 1.2%
World evangelical annual growth rate: 2.6%

Data from Operation World DVD-ROM 2010
Cartography by GMI
For more maps and additional GMI products, visit www.gmi.org



The Worldwide Church

Reconciliation

The primary **mission** of the worldwide Church is to proclaim that Jesus came so that the relationship between God and people can be restored (see page 16 of the Christian Beliefs and Teachings booklet).

Reconciliation is a sacrament in the Catholic Church and considered a virtue by Christians across the world. Jesus taught that, before you even go to pray, you should:



“First go and be reconciled to your brother or sister that has something against you”.



The worldwide Church has a role to play in restoring people’s relationships with God and one another. This has been evident in Northern Ireland where there has been conflict between Catholic and Protestant Christians. Despite religion being a big part of the conflict, Christians have also played a huge role in the peace process. The Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP) was set up to discuss initiatives to develop peace, understanding and reconciliation between the Catholics and Protestants.




The Community of the Cross of Nails is a worldwide network of over 200 churches, charities, peace-building centres, and educational and training organisations, inspired by the Coventry story of destruction during WW2, rebuilding and renewal, and active in reconciliation.

Persecution

Despite the work of Christians to bring reconciliation and peace, the International Society for Human Rights estimates that 80% of all religious discrimination in the world today is directed at Christians.

Persecution ranges from forcing Christians to pay extra tax, not allowing them certain jobs, not allowing them to practise their religion (e.g. attend church), and ultimately even murder.



The Bible predicts that Christians will face persecution and that, actually, it is an important opportunity to develop and strengthen their faith: 

“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted.” 2 Timothy 3:12

Jesus taught: *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” John 15:18-19*

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4

Jesus taught: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:10-12*

The second-century Church Father Tertullian wrote that: *“the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”*



In his letter to the Corinthians (in the Bible), St. Paul likens members of the Church to different parts of the body and says: *“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it.”* The Church therefore campaigns on behalf of persecuted Christians and supports them. For example, Christians smuggled Bibles into the Soviet Union to help strengthen the Christians who were being persecuted there.



The Barnabas fund sends financial support to projects that help Christians who are suffering from discrimination, oppression and persecution because of their faith. These projects aim to strengthen Christian individuals, churches and their communities by providing material and spiritual support. One of their aims also to raise awareness of the plight of those who are being persecuted.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is a Christian human rights organisation that campaigns for religious freedom for all. It uses four main strategies:

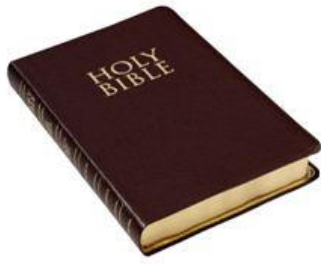


**CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY
WORLDWIDE**
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

- Documenting and raising awareness of religious persecution.
- Attempting to influence governments whose policies or actions affect the oppressed.
- Offering training in the basics of international human rights' law.
- Helping the oppressed to speak up for themselves more effectively.

Response to world poverty

Concern and help for the poor is a regular theme in Christianity:



“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” 1 John 3:17-18

Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me.”

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Matthew 25:31-46



Fill in the work of these two organisations and why they do this work:



*Following Jesus where
the need is greatest*

Possible exam questions



Question 1: (1 mark)

- 1) Which is the sacrament that commemorates Jesus' last supper?
- 1) Which festival celebrates the Incarnation?

Question 2: (2 marks)

- 2) Give two examples of the work of the Church in the local community.
- 2) Give two ways in which Christian churches respond to persecution.
- 2) Give two features of liturgical worship.

Question 3: (4 marks)

- 3) Explain two contrasting ways in which the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is celebrated in Christianity.
- 3) Explain two contrasting examples of Christian pilgrimage.
- 3) Explain two contrasting ways in which Christians might practise worship.

Question 4: 5 marks

You must refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer.

- 4) Explain two ways in which Christian street pastors carry out their Christian duty.
- 4) Explain two ways in which a worldwide Christian relief organisation carries out its mission overseas.
- 4) Explain two ways in which Christians might respond to persecution.

Question 5: (12 marks)

Evaluate the statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Christian teaching
- give developed arguments to support this statement
- give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

- 5) 'The best way for Christians to reach an understanding of God is by practising prayer.'
- 5) 'Private worship has more meaning for a Christian than public worship.'
- 5) 'Festivals are just an excuse for a party'

