

# Christianity: Practices

What do I need to know?

## 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.

### Private Worship

Private worship involves a Christian worshipping God on their own. Private worship can happen anywhere a believer decides that they want to offer praise to God or ask for guidance from God.

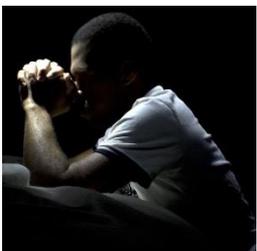
Examples include:

Saying a quiet prayer of thanks before a meal;

Praying to God at the start of a day to ask for strength and guidance;

Praying to God at the end of the day to thank him for blessings and ask him to protect loved ones;

Reflecting upon the greatness of God when looking at something wondrous in nature.



## Is it better to pray alone or with others?

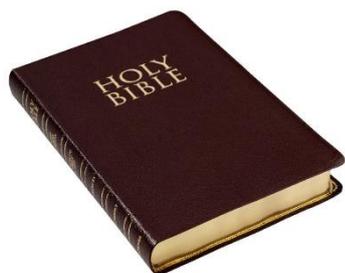
Better to pray alone	Better to pray in a group
<i>"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."</i> (Matthew 6:6) Jesus said God will reward those who pray alone.	In the Last Supper, Jesus told his followers to break bread together and pray to remember him.
Praying alone allows for development of a personal relationship with God.	Coming together in prayer as a church allows Christians to be guided by the priest and other Christians on how to behave and how to be good.
Praying alone means that there are no distractions from other people so we can focus entirely on God.	If Christians are praying together as a group, they may feel that God is more likely to hear their prayers. It also strengthens the Christian community, bringing them closer to each other and closer to God.

## Liturgical worship

This type of worship is part of the traditions of Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and the Church of England. In liturgical worship, services have a very structured format and follow an order of service which the priest and the congregation follow. This order of service involves Bible readings led by members of the congregation, a Gospel reading and a sermon given by the priest, plus set prayers and Holy Communion (bread and alcoholic wine are blessed by the priest to remember Jesus' Last Supper and given out to the congregation). Many members of the congregation will know the words to say in their services off-by-heart as they are always the same. Although members of the congregation give Bible readings and may act as celebrants, giving out the bread and the wine, the priest is very much in charge of the service and the congregation follow his/her lead.

Roman Catholic services have two parts:

1. Liturgy of the word - focused on the Bible
2. Liturgy of the Eucharist - the bread and the wine



# Non-liturgical worship

This type of worship occurs in some Christian churches, such as Quaker and Baptist churches. Worship does not have a set structure and can be spontaneous. Non-liturgical worship usually centres around Bible readings, sermons, prayers and music, but Holy Communion does not always take place. Sometimes services are structured, but often they are spontaneous, with members of the congregation saying prayers and beginning songs when they feel inspired to do so by the Holy Spirit. In Quaker services, there is no leader, anyone can attend and everyone can contribute. Members of the congregation sit in a circle showing that everyone is equal and everyone is connected together in their love of, and worship for, God. If Holy Communion does feature in the service, the bread and wine is on a table in the room for members of the congregation to pass round to each other and share. The bread and wine is not formally blessed and the wine is non-alcoholic. Much of the service is silent as worshippers reflect upon God and his love.

## Prayers of thanksgiving:

Prayers to God to thank him for good things in life

## Prayers of adoration:

To show that they love God and want to praise him

Why do Christians pray?

## Prayers of intercession:

Prayers on behalf of someone else, asking for God to help them.

## Prayers of Confession:

Confessing to mistakes and asking for forgiveness

## Formal set prayers

Some Christian prayers are formal set prayers with set words which are said out loud, often during church services. Examples include the Christian creeds, the Lord's Prayer and grace before meals.

## Informal private prayers

Christians are given the chance to pray silently during church services. They also pray privately throughout their lives to ask for God's love and support and also for forgiveness.

# The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done in earth,  
As it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
The power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever.  
Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13

## The Sacraments

- A sacrament is a Christian rite of passage. Examples include baptism and marriage.
- Sacraments are seen as **an outward sign of inward grace** - they reveal to us the fact that Jesus is working within us.
- Jesus' grace is within us and we cannot see it - Jesus himself is now in heaven with God.
- The ceremonies which accompany the sacraments help us to see and understand that Jesus is within us and we contain his grace.
- Sacraments are important in the Roman Catholic tradition and the Church of England, Orthodox Church and Methodist Churches also believe in the sacraments
- However, the Quaker Church is non-sacramental as they believe that we should see Jesus working within our whole lives and changing us in a positive way every day, not just during 7 rites.



## The Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism removes the guilt and effects of Original Sin and welcomes a new person into the Church. Some Christians believe that a person cannot enter heaven after death unless they have been baptised because Jesus said: *"Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."* (John 3: 5). However, other Christians argue that God saves all good people whether they have been baptised or not.

Important symbols of baptism:

Water - this symbolises the washing away of Original Sin, allowing a person entry into heaven

A candle - this is a symbol that Jesus, the Light of the World, is now with the person who has been baptised

Promises - these are made by the parents and godparents. They promise to support the person who has been baptised by helping them to live a Christian life.

Some Christians are baptised as babies (infant baptism) - this is the norm in the Roman Catholic Church and Church of England. However, others are baptised as adults; the Baptist Church is an example of a church which practices Believers' Baptism (adult baptism).

### Which is best?

Infant baptism is best	Adult baptism is best
A baby must be cleansed of the Original Sin so that they can go to heaven to be with God if they die.	Jesus himself was baptised as an adult. This is clearly the right way to be baptised.
A baby should be welcomed into the church so that they can grow up in a Christian way of life and be supported by all members of the Christian church	You should wait until you are old enough to promise to love God and be a good Christian yourself.
Infant baptism is a lovely way for Christians to come together to thank God for the gift of new life.	God would never deny a good person entry into heaven. There is no rush to get baptised - you should wait until you are ready.

## The Sacrament of Eucharist

This is the sacrament Christians make many times - it is the bread and the wine taken to remember Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples

On the day of his arrest, Jesus was celebrating Passover (a Jewish festival) with the disciples when he gave them bread and wine to represent his body which would be broken for them and his blood which would be spilt for them.

He told them that they must share bread and wine together in the future to remember him and his sacrifice for them.

The Eucharist service is very important to all Christians and many believe that as it is a sacrament, the Eucharist service provides them with the grace, or saving power, of God. However, the different churches have slightly different ideas about the Eucharist.

Roman Catholic Christians believe that the bread and the wine physically change during the blessing in church to become the body and blood of Jesus. This idea is called transubstantiation. Church of England Christians also believe that there is a change in the bread and the wine when it is blessed by the priest. However, Baptist Christians believe that the Eucharist service is just an act of remembrance. There is no change at all in the bread and the wine, they are just taken to remember Jesus; great sacrifice. This idea is known as memorialism. Baptist Christians do not believe in the sacraments as they believe that the grace of Jesus is with us all the time, not just in special services.

## Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a journey to a place of religious significance. Important places of Christian pilgrimage include:

- Lourdes in France
- Iona in Scotland

Some Christians feel that pilgrimage is extremely important as it helps them to feel close to key figures from their religion and also close to God. However, others feel that pilgrimage is not very important as God is everywhere and it is not necessary to travel anywhere to feel close to him. They may feel that the money believers spend journeying to places of pilgrimage would be better spent on the poor.

# Lourdes



Lourdes in France is a place of pilgrimage for Christians, Roman Catholic Christians in particular. This site is significant as it is the place where St Bernadette, had visions of the Virgin Mary when she was 14 years old. In particular, it is known as a place of miraculous healing.

Bernadette was born in 1844. One day Bernadette is said to have seen Mary, the mother of Jesus, dressed in white with a blue sash and a yellow rose on each foot. Bernadette is said to have witnessed the same vision many times. During one vision, the figure of Mary asked Bernadette to drink at the spring beneath her feet. The story of Bernadette and her visions spread quickly round the French village and people followed Bernadette in drinking from the water and bathing in it, believing it to have healing properties.

Bernadette was told to have a chapel built in the exact spot where the vision had taken place. After some initial scepticism, Bernadette was believed by the church and a church was built. Due to the popularity of the site, this small church was replaced by a larger church, the **Basilica of the Rosary** (Basilica = a large and important church).

A large number of Christian pilgrims now visit and pray in the **Basilica** and worship at the grotto where the visions of Mary are said to have taken place. On average, 5 million pilgrims attend Lourdes each year. Lourdes is a very popular place of Christian pilgrimage and people travel there from far away in the hope that they will be healed by the cleansing waters of the spring. The Roman Catholic Church has recognised 69 cases of miraculous healing at the site. People who are too ill to walk are taken to Lourdes in special ambulances and have helpers with them

# Iona



Iona is a tiny and beautiful island off the West coast of Scotland. In 563AD, St Columbia, an Irish monk, established a monastic settlement on the island and helped to spread Christianity to Scotland and the North of England.

Pilgrims visit the island of Iona for quiet prayer and contemplation - there are usually no more than 100 people on the island at one time, meaning that it is easy for pilgrims to find alone time during their visit. In addition to prayer, visitors also spend time studying the Bible and remembering past saints who lived on the island, including St Columbia and St Odran (a companion of St Columbia). It is known as a place of quiet learning where Christians can reflect upon the Bible and their faith and gain insight into God.

In 1203, an Abbey was built on the site of the original Columbian monastery. Today, daily services take place at the Abbey and everyone is welcome to worship here. Many people visit Iona and the Abbey year after year as pilgrims. In years gone by, pilgrims would have had a difficult journey to Iona on small boats sailing on rough seas and then walking along unsteady paths. Today, however, the journey is much easier, with a regular ferry service running to the island and a bus service transporting pilgrims to the Abbey. However, there is still the sense of making a special journey to a place of religious significance.

The reasons for a pilgrimage to Iona vary from person-to-person. Reasons might include wanting to feel a closer connection to God, wanting to learn more about their faith in, and relationship to, God or a desire to retreat from the hustle and bustle of life in order to have the space to reflect upon their religion. Christians of all different Christian denominations visit Iona, including Roman Catholics, members of the Church of England and Quaker Christians.

# Christmas



Christmas is a very important Christian festival which remembers the birth of Jesus. Christians celebrate by attending church for key services and getting involved in charity events to support others. There are lots of events occurring in the church over Christmas, including:

# Nativity service

Children are often involved in nativity plays and people who don't normally go to church will often attend to see young family members in their plays. Children dress up as characters from the story, such as Mary, Joseph and the Innkeeper, and re-enact the story. Christmas carols and prayers of thanks to God are part of the nativity service. Nativity services are happy and upbeat as children and their families remember the gift that God gave to the world in the form of Jesus.

# Christingle

Christingle services happen in schools and churches across the country during the run up to Christmas (Advent). Children participate in the service and family member soften attend. Children make Christingles from oranges - they put a candle in the middle to symbolise Jesus as the light of the world, a red ribbon around the orange to represent Jesus' blood spilt for the whole world and sweets are stuck on with cocktail sticks to represent God's creation and the four seasons.

# Midnight Mass

Midnight Mass is a Christmas service that takes place at night on Christmas Eve as Christmas Eve turns to Christmas Day. It is particularly popular in the Roman Catholic Christian tradition, although it also occurs in churches belonging to different Christian denominations. The service is happy and upbeat with the singing of joyous carols celebrating the birth of Christ. People who do not normally attend church very often may go to the service to welcome Christmas and see the final candle of the advent wreath being lit.

# Carol Service

Carol services take place in Christian churches throughout Advent (the run up to Christmas). Often, people who do not normally attend church will go to a carol service to see family members involved in the service or to feel part of Christmas and the Christian community. Carol services are happy and upbeat and involve the loud singing of carols which celebrate the birth of Jesus and the gift of salvation his birth represents to the world. A collection of money to help the less fortunate may be taken at the carol service as Christmas is a time to help the poor and needy.



## Easter

Easter is another very important Christian festival. It remembers Jesus' death and resurrection, showing that he died for us because he loves us and rose again because he is God and is omnipotent. Many Christians feel that Easter is much more important than Christmas.

Important events during the festival of Easter:

Lent is the 40 day period leading up to Easter which begins on Ash Wednesday. Christians may give something up over Lent to show the importance of the time and the solemnness of the period. They will also go to church more over Lent.

- **Holy Week** occurs on the week of Easter. Christians attend church as much as possible this week, many performing the 'Stations of the Cross' which are prayers and reflections to remember different parts of the story of Jesus' crucifixion.
- Holy Week begins with **Palm Sunday** which remembers Jesus' riding into Jerusalem to big crowds welcoming him fondly. Children may make palm crosses to remember the palm leaves Jesus was wafted with by the crowd.
- **Maundy Thursday** is the day which remembers Jesus' arrest after the Last Supper with his disciples. Christians will go to the church to take the Eucharist to remember the Last Supper. Many churches take down their decorations during this solemn time.
- **Good Friday** is a sad day which remembers Jesus' crucifixion and death. Christians go to church to remember Jesus and his act of self-sacrifice.
- **Easter Day** occurs on the Sunday after Good Friday. Christians attend church and are joyful as they remember Jesus' resurrection and the hope that they too will live on after death. The church decorations go back up and the mood is a happy one.

# Christianity and the local community

Christians help people in their communities because Jesus told them to:

- "My command is this: love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12)
- "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." (Luke 25:45)

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus inspire Christians to sacrifice their time, money and energy for others as Jesus made such a sacrifice for them in giving his life so that they could have eternal life with God in heaven after death.



For example, Christians may support their local **food bank** by donating food or donating their time as volunteers. Food banks are set up by Christian groups who want to help to provide food for families who are struggling to buy food and make ends meet. Jesus told Christians that feeding those who are hungry is like feeding Jesus himself and will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven.

They may also decide to become **street pastors**. Street pastors are volunteers who work in town and city centres in the evenings helping those who have had too much to drink by making sure they get home safely and getting them medical attention if they need it. They also hand out flip flips to help ladies who have sore feet to walk home safely and lollipops to give people some sugar to help make them more alert and less sick after drinking too much alcohol.



# Evangelism and church growth

Evangelism	Mission
Spreading the word of Jesus through either public preaching or personal witness - being a good role model by helping those in need in the world (living a life that fulfils the teachings of Jesus).	When religious believers feel that they have been called by God to go out into the world to spread his word and help others. Missions usually take place overseas.

Christians are sometimes involved in mission and evangelism as they try to make sure that as many people as possible hear the message of Jesus and have the chance to believe in him. They sometimes do this by going out and preaching and talking to people, but it can also involve living a good life in order to show people what it means to be a Christian.

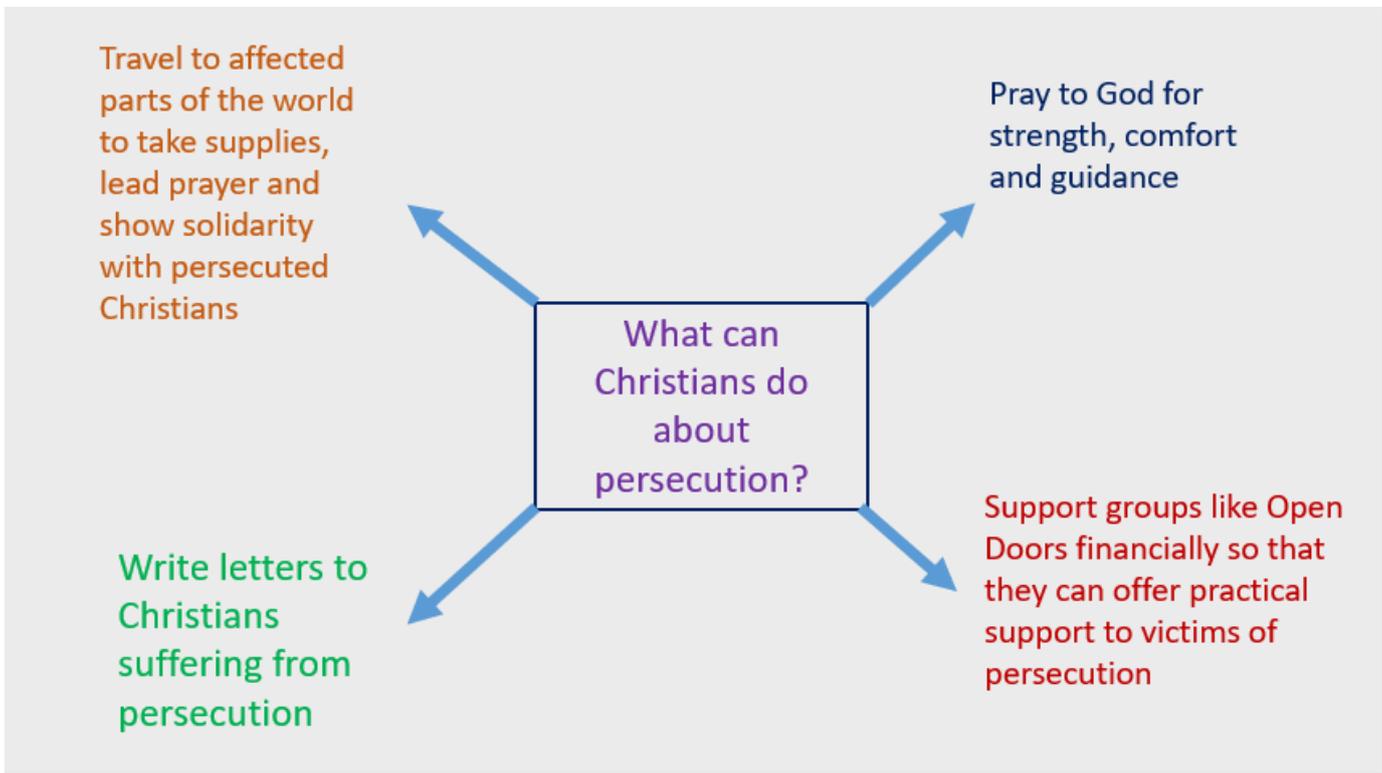
Examples of mission and evangelism include:

- The Alpha Course - this takes place in some churches and provides a way for people to learn more about Jesus and the church. It is advertised on church buildings and everyone is welcome to join to find out more. Christians hope that if people attend the course they will be inspired to join the church and live a better life.
- Church Army - this is a group who go out to spread the word of Jesus through good actions such as helping the homeless. They hope that by living good and inspiring lives they will lead others to Christianity.
- Fresh Expressions - this is a Christian group who try to provide relevant worship experiences for young people today. For example, they have set up places for worship in skate parks and on beaches.

## Persecution

Persecution is treating someone badly/hurting them because of their religious belief, skin colour etc. Unfortunately, Christians have been victims of persecution in the past and continue to be so today, particularly in the Middle East. Christians who are persecuted remember that Jesus himself was killed for his beliefs and he taught them that those who are persecuted will receive eternal life in heaven - this provides them with some comfort:

*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 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: 11-12)



**Open Doors** is an organisation which was started by **Brother Andrew**, who smuggled Bibles into Soviet Russia in the 1950s (when it was illegal to be a Christian in Russia)

Open Doors now works to monitor Christian persecution in the world and has created a 'world watchlist' of Christian persecution. They organise volunteers, group prayers, raise money and provide practical support for Christians suffering from persecution.

## Reconciliation

Reconciliation	Reconciliation in Christianity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A situation in which two people or groups of people become friendly again after they have argued.</li> <li>The process of making two opposite beliefs, ideas, or situations agree.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jesus died on the cross to allow God and humans to be reconciled.</li> <li>Jesus told us to love one another and to forgive 'not 7 times but 77 times.' He wanted everyone to get on.</li> <li>The Bible says "You are all one in Christ Jesus" - everyone is equal.</li> </ul>

# Reconciliation: Corrymeela

The Corrymeela Trust was founded in 1965 by Christians in Northern Ireland who wanted to do something about the divisions between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians within their society. Both Roman Catholics and Protestants belong to the Trust, and they aim to bring about **reconciliation** between the two groups of Christians. The Corrymeela Trust's Centre is in Ballycastle and is a place where people from the different Christian traditions can meet and talk without fear. 'Corrymeela' means 'hill of harmony.'



## What do they do?

- The Trust works with schools from different areas of Northern Ireland. They try to encourage pupils from Catholic and Protestant **schools** to talk together, laying the foundations for a peaceful future in Northern Ireland.
- They work with **young people**. There are '**seed groups**' of about 20 young people from different Christian traditions who meet every weekend for 6 months. The Trust hopes that this will promote **reconciliation** between young Catholics and Protestants as **real friendships** are formed.
- They counsel those who have lost loved ones due to violence in Northern Ireland. They set up "Tree Tops" to help children who have faced **bereavement**.

# Community of the Cross of Nails



The Community of the Cross of Nails began at Coventry Cathedral. Coventry was badly bombed in WW2 and the Cathedral was ruined. Two roof beams came to lie in the shape of a cross by the ruined altar and three Medieval roof nails had also formed a cross - the original cross of nails which is now displayed in the cathedral.

The cross of nails became a symbol of reconciliation and friendship. The Community of the Cross of Nails was formed in 1974 when links were set up between Coventry Cathedral and churches in Germany and throughout the world.

Coventry's new Cathedral was built in 1962 next to the ruins of the old Cathedral as a symbol of hope, reconciliation and forgiveness coming out of despair and destruction. The community work with people who are living in countries affected by war, to offer support and help. They also work to help to bring about peace in war-torn countries, believing that they must put as much effort into bringing about peace and helping others as those who work to cause war and hurt others.