

Christianity AQA SPEC A Knowledge Organiser — PRACTICES



Worship and festivals

Worship is a key part of Christianity. Christians use worship to praise God, thank God for everything that they have been given, ask God for forgiveness for their sins, and generally to communicate and try to understand what God wants them to do. Many use this as a chance to bond with other Christians and feel the 'Holy Spirit' which they may experience when singing, praying or being around other worshippers in church.

Liturgical worship

Liturgical worship is worship that follows a set order. It is a formal ritual that involves Holy Communion (also known as the **Eucharist**), in which worshippers eat a small symbolic piece of bread and drink a small symbolic sip of wine as a way of commemorating and celebrating Jesus' life and sacrifice on the Cross. Liturgical worship is observed by Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians.

Non-liturgical worship

Non-liturgical worship is worship that doesn't have a fixed form and doesn't usually involve **Holy Communion**. The structure will often involve readings from the Bible and a sermon from the person who is leading the worship, as well as music and prayers. In non-liturgical worship, some or all of the service may not be scripted. Non-liturgical worship is often practiced by Quakers, Pentecostals, Evangelicals and Baptists.

Informal worship

Informal worship is the name given to worship in which small groups of worshippers meet in a house or other typically non-religious setting in order to praise God. They will read from the Bible and perhaps have other readings and songs. There doesn't need to be an official leader in this kind of worship, and the order of service may be very loose, if it exists at all. Some say that the earliest groups of Christians would have worshipped in this non-prescriptive way and therefore it is the closest to the original disciples' way of Christianity.

Private worship

Private worship is the name given to a worshipper's individual worship of God. This is often done in the individual's house, or in the houses of other worshippers. Private worship will often focus around prayer and Bible reading, as well as meditation and hymns. Worshippers may study the Bible, often reading the interpretation of Bible scholars, and praying to God to be granted understanding of how the particular passage relates to their lives. **The Psalms** are often used in prayer and private worship. Some denominations use aids to help them pray; for example, Roman Catholics use rosary beads to help them count their prayers.

The significance of prayer

Prayer is a vital element of Christianity; it is thought of as a means of communicating with God and deepening one's own faith. Prayer can be formal or informal; it can be silent or said out loud; it can be pre-planned or spontaneous. There are various purposes of prayer, including: praising God, confession of sins, giving thanks to God, and asking God for something. There are set prayers within Christianity. These are prayers whose words are already written out, and which are used regularly by more than one person. The most common set prayer in Christianity is the Lord's Prayer, which is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. The Lord's Prayer, which begins 'Our Father, who art in Heaven', gives a model to Christians for how to pray: it involves adoration of God, confession of sins, and petition, which means asking God for something. In the Lord's Prayer, Christians are asking God for their food ('give us this day our daily bread'), and for forgiveness and the strength live according to God's law ('forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil').

Pilgrimages and Celebrations

Although pilgrimage isn't given as much significance in Christianity as it is in Islam, pilgrimage is still important to many Christians. Places of spiritual significance for Christians include Bethlehem, where they believe Jesus was born, and Nazareth, which is described in the Bible as the place where Jesus spent his childhood. Christians sometimes choose to travel to these places in order to feel closer to Jesus; for some Christians, the chance to pray in the **Church of the Annunciation** (located on the spot where it's believed the Angel Gabriel gave Mary the news that she would give birth to Jesus) is an important chance to show their devotion to God.

Two contrasting examples of Christian pilgrimage are **Lourdes** and **Iona**. Lourdes is a site located near the Pyrenees mountain range in France. It's believed that the Virgin Mary appeared many times to a young woman called Bernadette Soubiros at Lourdes in the 19th century. The Virgin Mary told Bernadette to drink water from the muddy stream at her feet, which became clear the next day. The Virgin Mary also told Bernadette to have a chapel built at the spot where the vision had appeared. Millions of pilgrims, especially Roman Catholics, visit this chapel every year. It's believed that the spring water of Lourdes can cleanse pilgrims of sin and even cure illnesses in some cases (the International Medical Committee of Lourdes has recorded 69 'miracle cures' since it was established in 1947).

Iona is an island off the west coast of Scotland. Saint Columba established a monastic community on Iona in 563 AD; the work he did there went on to establish Christianity throughout Scotland and eventually Europe. The monastery that Saint Columba built on Iona became an important site of pilgrimage, as did the abbey built on Iona in the thirteenth century. Today, the Iona Community, a group of Christians from various denominations, conducts services and leads tours for pilgrims visiting the island. The importance of Iona is more focused on Columba's great success in spreading Christianity, rather than the celebration of miracles as at Lourdes. Both sites are very significant to those who believe.

Another site of great importance to some Christians, especially Roman Catholics, is **Rome**. This is where Saint Peter, appointed by Jesus as the head of his disciples, went after Jesus' death and eventually became Bishop. Today, the Vatican is the home of the Pope, who is believed by many Roman Catholics to be the direct successor of Peter, and God's representative on Earth.

Celebrations

Christmas and Easter are both very important celebrations in the Christian calendar. Christmas is celebrated by Christians in order to commemorate the birth of Jesus, who they believe is the Son of God and saviour of humankind. The word 'Christmas' comes from the Mass of Christ, which is a Eucharist or Holy Communion service, held at midnight, commemorating the sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross. It's celebrated by many Christians on December 25th, or on January 7th by Orthodox Christians. **Christmas** is a highly significant festival for Christians, but many non-Christians enjoy celebrating Christmas as a secular occasion, on which to exchange presents and spend time with loved ones. Indeed, many popular Christmas celebrations actually come from pagan traditions and have nothing to do with Christianity, for example Father Christmas and his reindeer. In modern times, Christians and non-Christians alike have criticised the secular celebration of Christmas for being far too focused on the commercial side (i.e. people spend way too much money on presents and other things at Christmas). This is seen as very far away from the 'true' meaning of Christmas, which is about love and Jesus Christ.

Easter is usually described as the most significant festival for Christians. This is the commemoration of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was crucified on the day known as Good Friday, and his body was left in a sealed tomb. Three days later, on the Sunday, a group of women visited the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus with spices, only to find that the tomb was empty. "As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:5-6).

Christians have celebrated Easter and the 40 days leading up to Easter Sunday, known as Lent, ever since. During the period of Lent, many Christians give up certain luxuries in honour of Christ's journey into the desert, where he fasted for 40 days. Easter Sunday is a day of great celebration for Christians, as it is a symbol of their faith that Jesus was raised from the dead to be the saviour of humankind. As with Christmas, there are many pagan influences on the way Easter is celebrated in Britain today, including the Easter Bunny and Easter Eggs, which don't have any reference to the Christian story of Easter.

Topic	RAG RATE	RETEST 1	RETEST 2	RETEST 3	Comments
Worship and Festivals					
Pilgrimages + Celebrations					
Role of Church					
Work of Church					

The role of the church in the local and worldwide community

The Church has historically played a key role in the local community in Great Britain. Churches used to be the focal point of people's lives; the seven sacraments used to be key parts of a person's life, from baptism at birth to the last rites and anointing the body at death. The Church used to be responsible for the education of children, looking after the sick, giving money to the poor, and even making laws (Bishops had seats in the House of Lords - and some still do).

Today, while lots of aspects of Great Britain's culture are still highly influenced by Christian practices and traditions, the Church doesn't play the same key role for everybody as it once did. However, churches are still important for many people, and many churches do a lot of work in their local community, not just with their congregations, but with anybody in need. For example, at least 63% of the UK's food banks are run by a Christian organisation; food banks have become an increasingly important service for feeding poor people as unemployment has grown. As well as being central to the feeding of poor people, churches serve their community in other ways. For example, an organisation called 'Street Pastors' trains and sends volunteers to patrol the streets in towns and cities in order to listen to and help people who may be living rough on the streets.

For many churches, the outreach work that they do in helping the poor is a form of **evangelism**. The term 'evangelism' means the spreading of the Gospel or word of Jesus Christ. For many Christians and churches, an effective way of letting people know about Jesus is to do good works. However, many churches and Christians also use other means of engaging with people and persuading them to accept Christianity. Many Christian organisations take part in what is known as 'mission work', which means sending out groups of people to spread the word of the Bible. This can be to places far across the globe, as well as within the local community. Evangelism has always been important to churches, but church attendance seems to be falling. In the UK, church membership has decreased from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.4 million in 2010, or from about 30% of the population to 10.3% of the population. If this trend carries on, church membership will fall to 8.4% of the population by 2025.

The importance of the worldwide Church

The worldwide Church can be described as the global community of people who identify as Christians, regardless of nationality, race, age, culture or location. For Christians, the Church on Earth is an agent of reconciliation through which Christians believe humanity will be redeemed and brought under the rule of Christ. Roman Catholics believe that the Pope has authority over the Church on Earth. As God's representative on Earth, they believe that the Pope is the universal pastor and overall head of the Church in legal, practical and official matters. The Christian Church has a long history of persecution. Within the first few centuries of Christianity, Christians were persecuted by Romans (even fed to lions), as well as Jews. Many Christian missionaries have been persecuted and martyred for their attempts to spread their faith; for example, 11 Christian missionaries were crucified and beheaded in Syria in 2015.

In countries where Christianity is not the dominant religion, Christians still face persecution today, with North Korea being named as the most dangerous place to be a Christian in 2017. Christians have also been guilty of persecuting each other (for example, during the Protestant Reformation, when 2000 French Protestants were murdered in just one day). **The Bible contains some comment on suffering persecution: ""If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Peter 4:16).**

The sacraments

A sacrament is a specific rite or practice which Jesus gave to Christians as a symbol of God's grace. Different denominations of Christianity recognise different sacraments. The Catholic Church recognises seven sacraments: **baptism; confession; the Eucharist (Holy Communion); confirmation; marriage; holy orders; anointing of the sick**. **Anglican and Methodist Christians usually recognise two sacraments: the Eucharist and baptism**. The sacrament of baptism is significant for all Christians; Jesus himself was baptised by John the Baptist. Baptism, sometimes called Christening, involves the candidate being either immersed in water or having water poured on them. It is a ceremony which symbolises the cleansing of a candidate's original sin and their initiation into life as a believer and child of God. Many denominations of Christianity regard baptism as necessary to be saved.

Some faith traditions practice 'believer's baptism'. This is the religious practice of only baptising people who have already declared their faith in Jesus Christ, as opposed to young children, who don't have the capability to understand what faith means, or to declare it. However, most denominations do baptise children and infants. The sacrament of Holy Communion, also called the Eucharist, is also very significant for Christians. It is based on the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper (the celebration of Passover and final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples before the crucifixion). According to:

Matthew 26:26-28, 'While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

The Eucharist is important for Christians because it is a commemoration or way of remembering the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. It's a way not only of deepening an individual's faith in Jesus and God, but also a way of developing the relationships and connections between different people of the same faith community. However, there are some key differences between denominations when it comes to the Eucharist. Some Protestants use grape juice or water instead of wine and more importantly, Protestants see the act as symbolic - they don't actually believe in literal **transubstantiation** (the idea that the bread and wine actually transform into the blood and body of Christ) - this is a key Catholic belief. Some denominations, e.g. Baptists, will only allow adults who have been baptised to receive the Eucharist, whereas other denominations will allow all Christians, including children, to receive the sacrament. Other denominations, e.g. Quakers, don't use the Eucharist at all as they see it as restrictive. Some denominations, e.g. Mormons, observe the Eucharist every Sunday; however, Jehovah's Witnesses observe the Eucharist once a year on the occasion of **Passover** (and even then, only members of the 144,000 'anointed class' can have it). Roman Catholics believe that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, even though they still appear as bread and wine. They believe in the literal presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, whereas many other denominations believe in the spiritual but not literal presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. So, you can see that something which is supposed to unite Christians still has quite a lot of diversity when it comes to the methods, practices and people who take part.

The work of the Church World Wide

The Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD) is an organisation consisting of over 160 Catholic agencies across the world. It is an international aid agency, working to help reduce poverty in developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. For example, CAFOD has instituted an Urban Programme in Sao Paulo, Brazil, which has trained people to help themselves out of poverty through better access to land, water, sanitation, electricity and other essential resources. It has also recently campaigned for, and helped to achieve, more clean water in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Christian Aid is a UK Christian charity which formed in 1945 to help refugees after the Second World War. Working in over 60 countries, Christian Aid helps people to fight discrimination and poverty whilst empowering people to develop their businesses and guard against the effects of climate change. Christian Aid supports refugees by sending food parcels and other essential supplies to refugee camps. Through Christian Aid Week, it organises the largest door-to-door collection in the UK.

Tearfund is a Christian organisation working in over 50 of the world's poorest countries. A lot of Tearfund's work involves responding to disasters like earthquakes, floods, and other catastrophes. Tearfund are also committed to relieving poverty through development work and advocacy and have changed 300 policies and laws. Tearfund have also been active in caring for people affected by conflicts in areas such as Syria, Afghanistan, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo, providing basic supplies like food and shelter, but also helping to reconstruct buildings.