

The church building and its furnishings

It is important for children to be aware of places of worship in their locality. Exploring the parish church is a helpful starting point in enabling children to find out what Christians value, and gives a point of comparison with a different Christian building, or with a place of worship of another faith.

Although buildings vary, the significant points are similar, and it is more important to think about why things have been made in this way than to learn names. The priest or vicar is a wonderful resource. Many churches already have a church trail, but you will need to adapt it for this age group.

The church as sacred space

The structure of the traditional parish church reflects the purposes for which each different part was constructed and used; it is a mixture of the practical (e.g. the bells calling people to worship) and the spiritual (e.g. the building faces east to face the rising sun ~ a symbol of the resurrection of Christ.)

This unit uses different spaces within the church for different elements of worship, and explores the differences between 'special' and 'sacred'. Children are encouraged to ask questions about what is done in each part of the church and why. They have opportunity to take part in an act of collective worship and to use the different spaces within the church.

KS1

WHERE?

Where do Christians meet? What are their important centres? What is special about them? What key features would you expect to see in each building? Is it important to have a special place?

The pilgrimage centre

Most religions have centres of pilgrimage which are seen as especially sacred, perhaps because of their link with the founder of the faith or some of the heroes of the faith. In our diocese the obvious centre of this kind is Ely Cathedral and, in Norfolk, the Shrine at Walsingham. Pilgrimage is a journey not only of the body but also of the spirit. It is accompanied by spiritual disciplines and a sense of seeking out God in his special place.

Every church is in its own right a place for the worship of God, and each has its own unique features. This topic allows pupils to look at the church with new eyes as a potential pilgrimage centre, and to ask not what makes it the same as other churches, but what makes it special.

KS2

Is a building necessary?

The answer to the question "is a church building necessary?" is in fact "no"! One can worship God anywhere, and the fact that there are so many styles of Christian centres of worship, from plain Quaker meeting hall to ornate Orthodox church demonstrates that all churches do not necessarily have to be to a particular design. Nevertheless, within the denominations religious buildings usually have very specific architecture which arises out of the beliefs and needs of the community which will use it.

This is a Design and Technology approach to looking at the church building, in which the pupil architects must find out what Christians and the local community need from their church building and redesign it accordingly.

