

This unit introduces pupils to the idea that Christianity, like many religions, marks important life events and moments of faith with special ceremonies and celebrations. Through exploring Baptism, Holy Communion, Marriage, and children's own special times, pupils will learn that these events are not only personal milestones but also events within a community that connect believers to God and to one another.

The unit builds on prior learning from Key Stage 1, where pupils encountered churches as special places and festivals such as Christmas and Easter. Now in Year 3, children will deepen their understanding of how symbols, promises, and traditions help Christians express their beliefs and values. The unit also encourages comparison with other religions and with pupils' own experiences, helping them to see both the uniqueness of Christian practices and the shared human need to celebrate, belong, and remember.

Throughout the unit, there are rich opportunities for oracy development (through talk tasks, reflection, and plenaries) and for personal response (by linking Christian practices to children's own lives and experiences). Teachers should be sensitive to the diversity of pupils' backgrounds, ensuring that all children feel included whether or not they have personal experience of religious ceremonies.

Lesson Sequence

Lesson 1: The focus for this lesson is on what makes a time "special" and why people celebrate. Special times are events that are important and meaningful, often marked with celebrations, traditions, and symbols. For Christians, special times include ceremonies like Baptism, Holy Communion, and Marriage, as well as festivals like Christmas and Easter. Children should connect this to their own experiences of birthdays, holidays, or cultural festivals. This lesson sets the foundation for understanding that special times often involve community, memory, and belonging.

Lesson 2: Baptism is a ceremony of welcome into the Christian community. During infant baptism, parents/godparents make promises; water is sprinkled or poured. Adults can also have baptism, known as a believer's baptism. In some denominations, full immersion occurs when someone is old enough to choose. In others water will be poured. Within Baptism there are symbols used: water (cleansing/new life), candle (light of Christ), sign of the cross (belonging to Jesus). Other religions also have ceremonies to welcome children (e.g., Aqiqah in Islam, Namkaran in Hinduism).

Lesson 3: In this lesson, children are introduced to Holy Communion, also known as the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. Teachers will explain that this is one of the most important services for many Christians because it remembers the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples before his death. At that meal, Jesus broke bread and shared wine, telling his friends that the bread was like his body and the wine was like his blood, given for them. Christians continue this practice today as a way of remembering Jesus' love and sacrifice, feeling close to God, and being united with the church family. Children will learn about the key symbols: the bread, which represents Jesus' body; the wine (or grape juice), which represents his blood; and the table or altar, which is the place of gathering and sharing. Teachers may also highlight that different Christian traditions understand Communion in slightly different ways, but all see it as a moment of remembrance and belonging. To help children connect, comparisons can be made with other religions

where food is shared to build community and remember God's goodness, such as the Jewish Sabbath meal or the Sikh langar. Pupils are encouraged to talk about why sharing food is such a powerful way of remembering and celebrating, and to reflect on their own experiences of special meals.

Lesson 4: This lesson focuses on Christian marriage as a special time when two people make promises of love and commitment before God and their community. Teachers will explain that a Christian wedding usually takes place in a church and is led by a vicar or priest. The couple exchange vows – promises to love and support one another – and give each other rings, which are circles with no end, symbolising unending love. The minister then gives a blessing, asking for God's help in keeping these promises. Children are shown that marriage is not only about the couple but also about the wider community, as family, friends, and the church gather to witness and celebrate. Symbols such as the rings, the white dress, flowers, and the church setting are explored for their meaning. Teachers may also draw comparisons with marriage in other religions, such as the fire in Hindu weddings, the Nikah contract in Islam, or the Sikh tradition of walking around the Guru Granth Sahib. These examples help children see that while the details differ, marriage across faiths is marked by promises, symbols, and community support. Pupils are invited to think about why promises are important and how symbols help people remember them.

Lesson 5: The fifth lesson in the unit turns the focus to the children's own lives, helping them make connections between what they have learned about Christian special times and their personal experiences. Teachers begin by revisiting the idea of a "special time" – an event or moment that is important and meaningful. Pupils are reminded that Christians mark special times with ceremonies, promises, and symbols, but that everyone has special times that matter to them, whether or not they are religious.

Children can be shown examples such as birthdays, first days at school, sports achievements, cultural festivals, or family holidays. Pupils then reflect on their own special times, thinking about who was there, how they celebrated, and what symbols or traditions were part of the event. The main task invites children to create a timeline of their own special times, marking key events such as birth, starting school, birthdays, or family celebrations, and illustrating them with drawings or symbols. This helps them see how their own lives are shaped by meaningful moments, just as Christian lives are shaped by religious ceremonies. Teachers should be sensitive towards any children who may not have had positive early experiences and if necessary can focus on school special times rather than children's own.

Lesson 6: This lesson is an opportunity to assess children's understanding of Christians special times including baptism, communion and marriage. Teachers should consider the best way for children to show what they know and design the assessment accordingly.

Key concepts: Celebrations, traditions, community.

Key terms: Baptism, communion, marriage.