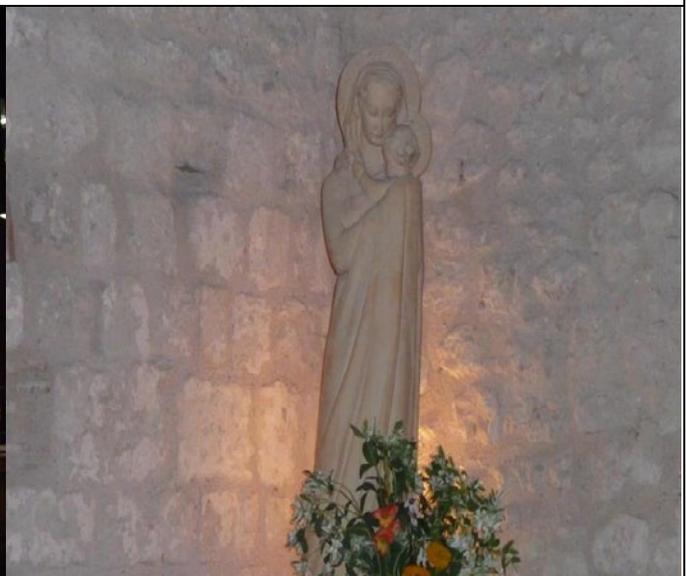




The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Northamptonshire

Non-Statutory Exemplification



Title: The Church Year: *Is Christmas a festival of light or love?*

Year Group: 3/4



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About this unit:

This unit encourages pupils to consider the meaning of Christmas for Christians. The focus is on the importance of Jesus to Christians and the symbolism of light in the celebration of his birth. Children will engage in activities that will allow them to begin to understand why Jesus is so special to Christians and just what Christians are celebrating at Christmas. Pupils are encouraged to consider what can be learned from the Christmas story, and how this story affects the beliefs of Christians, with examples and teaching and referring to pupils' own experiences, beliefs and values.

Where this unit fits in:

This unit will help teachers to implement the Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education by providing them with well worked examples of teaching and learning about the Church Year and the way that Christmas is celebrated. It will focus on the reasons behind the celebration by engaging with the concepts of participation, tradition and symbolism and looking at examples of how and why some Christian beliefs are expressed through art.

This unit contributes to the continuity and progression of pupils' learning by building upon prior learning about Christian beliefs and practices in Key Stage One. It is anticipated that pupils will be familiar with the story of Jesus' birth from the "People in Christianity" unit at Key Stage One and through assemblies and seasonal work in previous years.

Further units about the importance of Jesus to Christians are encountered during Key Stage Two.

Estimated teaching time for this unit: 8 hours. It is recognised that this unit may provide more teaching ideas than a class will cover in 8 hours. Teachers are invited to plan their own use of some of the learning ideas below, ensuring depth of learning rather than covering everything, and relating to other curriculum areas as appropriate to maximise learning opportunities and experiences.

Key Fields of Enquiry addressed in this unit:

AT 1: Learning about Religion and Belief

- Beliefs, Values and Teaching
- Ways of Expressing Meaning

AT 2: Learning from Religion and Belief

- *Questions of Meaning, Purpose and Truth*

The core RE concepts that the unit develops are:

Beliefs (Christians believe that the celebration of the life of Jesus is an important part of the religion);

Tradition (A cycle of celebration gives structure and purpose to life);

Participation (Taking part in festivals helps draw meaning from the events celebrated).

Attitudes Focus

This unit will help pupils to explore attitudes of:

- **Open mindedness** by beginning to use information and ideas from other people to answer big questions for themselves, and talking about the reasons people give for the beliefs;
- **Curiosity, appreciation and wonder** by asking about the 'why' of religion, and suggesting answers that refer to religious teachings and their own ideas.

The unit will provide these opportunities for pupils:

- To consider the concepts of celebration, tradition and symbolism;
- To consider a diverse range of views about questions of belief and how it is expressed through festivals;
- Pupils will be able to think about their own experiences and views in relation to questions of belief and the reasons for celebrations;
- Experiences and opportunities provided by this unit include creative art and thinking skills.

Background information for the teacher:

The Christian festival of Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God loved the world so much that he sent Jesus, his son, to live on earth in human form (God incarnate). In this way Christmas can be seen as a celebration of love – one of the reasons Christians exchange gifts at Christmas time is to symbolise God's gift of his son.

The act of God's love that begins with the Christmas story culminates with Jesus' death on the cross, commemorated at Easter. Christians believe that Jesus was sacrificed to show how much God loves them and to help mend the broken relationship between humanity and God.

Jesus' birth, known as the *nativity*, is described in the New Testament of the Bible. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke give different accounts; it is from them that the nativity story is pieced together. More information about the Nativity and the way Christians celebrate Christmas, in the past and today, can be found at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holydays/christmas_1.shtml

Vocabulary & Concepts	Resources
<p>In this unit, pupils will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:</p> <p>Christianity Advent Christmas God Halo Holy Spirit Incarnation Jesus Messiah Saviour Symbol</p> <p>Religious Studies Holy Belief Celebration Tradition Symbolism</p>	<p>Teachers might use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bibles • Candles in sand trays • Crosses • Crucifixes • Paintings/Pictures • “Jesus Through Art” – Margaret Cooling • Picturing Jesus packs – RE Today Services • Artefacts <p>Web</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) has two excellent web starting points for these issues: www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts enables pupils to view and judge numerous works of pupil art on key Biblical stories and spiritual ideas from young people • Try www.reonline.org.uk for a good general gateway to RE materials • www.request.co.uk • www.bbc.co.uk/education • www.christianityonline.com/ • www.wcc-coe.org/ • www.church-of-england.org/ • www.catholic.org/ <p>Books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Christian Church – Keystones” – Brown and Seaman (A+C Black ISBN 0-7136-4337-4) • “Where We Worship – Christian Church”- Angela Wood (Watts ISBN 0-7496-3152-x) • “I am an Anglican” – Killingray & Fairclough (Watts ISBN 0-86313-427-0) • “Growing up in Christianity” – Holm & Ridley (Longman ISBN 0-582-00283-4) • “My Life As A Christian” – Guy, Mizon & Morgan (Dref Wen ISBN 1-85596-284-5) • “Festivals of the Christian Year”- Lois Rock (Lion ISBN 0-7459-46364) • “Living Religions – Christianity Part 1”- Holmwood (Nelson Thornes ISBN 0-17-428051-3) • “Living Religions- Christianity Part 2” Richards (Nelson Thornes ISBN 0-17-428050-5) • “The Essential Christmas Book” – Alan MacDonald & Janet Stickley (Lion ISBN – 1-86430-528-X) • “Treasury of Christmas” – Robert Van de Weyer (Hunt & Thorpe ISBN – 1-85608-396-9) • “Stories about God” – edited by Joyce Mackley (RE Today Services ISBN – 1-904024-68-8) • “Special Times” – edited by Joyce Mackley (RE Today Services ISBN – 1-904024-52-1) • “Teaching About Jesus” – Antony Ewens & Mary Stone (RMEP ISBN 1-85175-223-4) • “Teaching About God” – Antony Ewens & Mary Stone (RMEP ISBN 1-85175-224-2) • “Jesus Through Art” – Margaret Cooling (RMEP ISBN 1-85175-119-X) • “High Days and Holidays” – David Self (Lion ISBN 9-780745-923352) • “Haffertee’s First Christmas” – Jane & John Perkins (Lion ISBN 0-7459-20705)

	<p>Film/ Video/ DVD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pathways of Belief – Christianity” – BBC • “Christianity Through The Eyes....” – RMEP • “What is it like...?” – Central TV <p>CD ROMs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Aspects of Religion” – Granada Learning • “Exploring World Religions” – Granada Learning • “Cracking Christmas” – Stapleford Centre
<p>Contributions to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for spiritual development come from considering questions that are hard to answer, relating to the Christmas story; • Opportunities for cultural development come from exploring artists’ representation of the Nativity. 	

EXPECTATIONS: At the end of this unit...		
<p>Pupils working at level 2 will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Christmas as a Christian festival and describe some of the ways that Christians might celebrate it (AT1); Retell stories associated with Christmas and identify some religious beliefs and teachings in them (AT1); Identify some religious practices that are characteristic of more than one religion (AT1); Suggest meaning in Christian symbols, language and stories (AT1); <i>Respond sensitively to the experiences and feelings of other, including those of Christians (AT2).</i> 	<p>Pupils working at level 3 will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to retell the events of the Christmas story (AT1); Describe special events that give structure to their own lives (AT1); Describe how Advent and Christmas, as well as other major festivals, give structure to the Church year (AT1); Describe some Christian beliefs and teachings and how features of these are exemplified in the way Christmas is celebrated (AT1); Make links between Christian symbols, language and stories and the beliefs/ideas that underlie them (AT1); <i>Compare their own experiences with those of others, including Christians (AT2);</i> <i>Make links between their values and commitments and their own attitudes or behaviour (AT2).</i> 	<p>Pupils working at level 4 will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify some experiences, for example Jesus' birth, which causes people to wonder and question, including questions which are difficult to answer (AT1); Describe key beliefs and teachings of Christianity connecting them accurately (AT1); Make some comparisons between Christmas and a major festival from another religion (AT1); Show understanding of what being a Christian involves in relation to events of the Church Year (AT1); Show how religious beliefs, ideas and feelings can be expressed in a variety of forms, giving meanings for some symbols, stories and language using technical terminology (AT1); <i>Ask questions and suggest answers from their own and others' experiences about the significant experiences of Christians (AT2).</i>
<p>ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS</p> <p><i>A formal assessment of each pupil is neither required nor desirable for every RE unit. Continuing use of Assessment for Learning methods is best.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers can assess this work by setting a learning task towards the end of the unit. The task aims to elicit engaged and reflective responses to the material studied throughout the unit, across the ability range.</i></p> <p>Drawing on the art they have looked at earlier in the unit, pupils design a stained glass window to show what they think is important about the Christmas story. They could then go on to create the image either using glass paints or with tissue paper and glue on acetate.</p> <p>The children could then write a short paragraph to explain why they have included certain things in their designs. (Lower attaining pupils could be provided with a writing frame or sentence starters.)</p> <p><i>Higher attaining pupils: To extend this work, ask pupils to explore a festival such as Divali or Hanukkah to investigate the symbolism of light in that festival, drawing comparisons with its symbolism to Christians at Christmas. They could also investigate the way Christmas is celebrated by different denominations of Christianity to see if the symbolism is similar.</i></p>		

UNIT TITLE: The Church Year: *Is Christmas a festival of light or love?*

Key Question: *What special events give structure to our lives?*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To recognise that events give structure to people's lives.</p> <p>To reflect upon events and celebrations which are important to us and consider how and why they make people feel as they do.</p>	<p>Give each pupil a blank calendar. Ask them to mark on the special times for them during the year. Talk / write about what makes them special and how they are celebrated. Which occur every year at the same time? Which do not? Which is their favourite time? Why? How does it make them feel?</p> <p>Look at the school year and mark on regular school events such as new terms, Sports Day, New School Year etc.</p> <p>Look at important annual national events, festivals and celebrations and mark them on calendars too.</p> <p>Discuss why we have such special events. How do we celebrate them? Why do we look forward to them? How do they make people feel? Identify the seasons the festivals / celebrations fall in.</p>	<p>I can describe events that give structure to my life and make links with the special events, festivals and celebrations of others. (AT1 L3)</p>	

Key Questions: *What is Advent? Why is it important to Christians?*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To identify the feelings associated with anticipation.</p> <p>To know that for Christians Advent is a time of waiting.</p> <p>To recognise some of the ways in which Christians mark Advent.</p>	<p>Discuss / make a list of things / times that the pupils feel are difficult to wait for. Talk about which events are more difficult to wait for than others. What do we do to make time go more quickly, e.g. count the days? What are our feelings when the time comes?</p> <p>Talk about Advent as a time of waiting for Christmas for Christians. Look at Advent Calendars and candles. Make own versions. Avoid commercial pictures for the calendar! Choose things based on the Christmas story and relating to the festival.</p> <p>Tell and discuss the story of Papa Panov. Look at what the local church does during Advent. Compare / contrast with a different Church. Focus on what Christians do at this time and why.</p>	<p><i>I can recognise times that I look forward to and the feelings involved. (AT2 L2)</i></p> <p>I can identify artefacts and symbols associated with Advent. (AT1 L2)</p> <p>I can describe some of the things that Christians do during Advent. (AT1 L3)</p>	<p><i>Children will need reminding of the Christmas Story to help them distinguish between things that relate to the Christian celebration and those that are more commercial and secular.</i></p> <p><i>It may be appropriate to invite a member of the local Christian community to talk about their experiences of Advent.</i></p>

Key Question: *What does Christmas tell us about Jesus?*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To know that the story of the birth of Jesus is of central importance in Christianity and understand some of the reasons why.</p>	<p>Pupils to sort Christmas cards into piles according to their picture. Categories could include Santa, Jesus, snow scenes, party scenes, animals etc. Make a display to show the different images. Talk about what Christmas was originally all about - that all those other ideas have been added. Discuss how/ why.</p> <p>Recap the story of Christmas briefly using pictures, or retell the story using Nativity poster.</p> <p>Look at painting “The Nativity” by Botticelli. Discuss how Jesus is made to be so important/central in the picture. Look at pathway, light, size etc. Pupils to fill in thought bubbles for people in picture to show their feelings towards Jesus.</p> <p>Create own Christmas card for Christians, using artists’ techniques to draw attention to Jesus in picture.</p>	<p>I can use some religious words to identify how important Christmas is for Christians. (AT1 L2)</p> <p>I can retell and suggest meanings for religious stories and symbols. (AT1 L2)</p>	<p><i>Emphasise that Christians believe that Jesus is God in human form (incarnate), and that he became incarnate to show how much he loved the world he had created.</i></p>
<p>To know that the gifts brought by the Wise Men had special significance.</p> <p>To consider the significance of the story of the visit of the Wise Men.</p>	<p>Talk about who visits after a baby is born and why they visit. Discuss who visited Jesus. Why did they visit? Talk about the gifts brought by the Wise Men and their significance – Jesus was born to do special things. Pupils to design an appropriate gift that Christians might give to Jesus and explain its symbolism. Discuss how these events show Jesus was special for Christians. Look back at cards – halos etc. How is Jesus’ specialness expressed in art in the Nativity scenes? Conclude that the story of the birth of Jesus is important to Christians as it shows the special nature of Jesus.</p>	<p>I can suggest meanings for the symbolism in the story of Wise Men. (AT1 L2)</p>	

Key Question: *How do Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas?*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To know how Christmas is celebrated in the Orthodox traditions.</p>	<p>Watch a video of Orthodox (or Catholic) celebration of Christmas and identify the ways in which they show the importance of Jesus. Identify the symbols and relate them to the event.</p> <p>Watch other videos/DVDs or read text to allow pupils to compare the celebrations with how Christmas is celebrated in a different tradition / country in simple ways. Contrast with celebrations in the local community.</p> <p>Ensure the focus is on how the Christian Church celebrates the birth of Jesus and not on commercial events.</p>	<p>I can identify how Christmas is celebrated in different ways. (AT1 L2)</p> <p>I can describe ways in which some groups of Christians celebrate Christmas. (AT1 L3)</p> <p>I can make simple comparisons between different groups of Christians, recognising similarities and differences. (AT1 L3)</p>	

Key Question: *Why is light so important as a Christian symbol?*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To consider reasons why the symbol of light is so important in Christianity.</p> <p>To reflect upon what light can mean to us.</p>	<p>Darken the room and ask pupils to close their eyes. Without telling them what you are going to do, find some space to light a large candle, away from the centre and out of the direct eyeline of the pupils. Move back to a central position and ask the pupils to open their eyes. They will glance at you first – the direction of your voice – and then towards the light source. Now light the candle in a central position and ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did you feel when you were in the dark? - Why did you look at the light over there? - What did you feel like when you saw the light? - Did the light remind you of anything? - What difference did the light make to the darkness? <p>Create, “candle cards”, which have: “Candles make me feel...” on them. Pupils complete and display.</p> <p>Discuss times when candles are used. Why is light so important generally? Darken the room again, ask pupils to relax and light a candle in the centre of the room. Ask the pupils to concentrate on the light and just let thoughts come into their heads. From the central candle, slowly light others and place them in safe positions around the room, creating several pools of light, which shine on the pupils near them but leave other pupils in shadow.</p> <p>With the candles burning, ask pupils what thoughts came into their heads;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did the candles make them feel? - Did they feel any different when the light from a candle shone on them? - Did they notice that the candles did not shine their light on some pupils? Did this make a difference to the way the pupils felt? <p>Write reflections / poems about this experience, focusing on thoughts / feelings.</p>	<p><i>I can ask, and respond sensitively to, questions about my own experiences and those of other people. (AT2 L2)</i></p>	

Key Question: *Why do Christians think of Jesus as the “Light of the World?”*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To know that Jesus is considered to be the “Light of the World” to Christians.</p> <p>To consider what this title means.</p> <p>To reflect on kind, caring people who work for the good of others today.</p> <p>To link the symbolism of light at Christmas with Jesus.</p>	<p>Talk to the pupils about the ways in which we use certain words about light to explain how we are feeling: for example; “beaming” smile, face “shining” with pride, “lighten up” etc. We talk about people as “guiding lights” and someone who has “seen the light” when they understand.</p> <p>In groups explore William Holman Hunt’s “Light of the World” painting. (www.rejesus.co.uk).</p> <p>Discuss;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who do you think the person in the picture is? - What can you see in the picture? - This painting has a message for Christians. What do you think the message is? - Why do you think Jesus was called “the light of the world?” - What do you think Christians mean when they talk about the “light of Jesus” being present in people today? - People who you know who are kind and caring about other people. <p>Focus on Christmas tree lights and play a Christmas carol that has “Bethlehem” in it, e.g. “O Little Town”. Tell the pupils that carols are Christian songs, which were written to teach people about the Christmas story.</p> <p>How do Christians celebrate Christmas today? Why are lights so important at Christmas? What sort of activities might Christians do at home / in church?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>What is there in church at Christmas that shows the Christian belief of Jesus as the “light of the world?”</p>	<p>I can describe why Christians call Jesus ‘Light of the World’. (AT1 L3)</p> <p>I recognise that there are people who care for others and can describe what they do. (AT1 L3)</p> <p>I can make links between the symbolism of light at Christmas and the title ‘Light of the World’. (AT1 L3)</p>	

Key Question: *What does light represent in the Christmas Story?*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To reflect on kind, caring people who work for the good of others today.</p> <p>To link the symbolism of light at Christmas with Jesus.</p>	<p>Light as a symbol of holiness Give pairs of pupils a selection of old Christmas cards, both religious and secular. Ask them to sort out any which show the symbol of light in some way. You will get a selection of candles and lanterns as well as specifically religious cards. Sort these again into groups: candles, stars, Christmas trees, angels and nativity scenes (depicting halos). Discuss the symbols of light depicted on the cards.</p> <p>To talk about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at a child’s painting of an angel. What do pupils notice about it? • What do artists often use in their pictures to show that Jesus is special? (halo or light) • Why do some pictures also show a halo around Mary and Joseph? What do you think this means? (The halo represents the light of God.) <p>The star – following a guiding light The star is seen as a ‘guiding light’ for the Wise Men in Matthew 2:1-12. The star of David is often used at Christmas to show that Jesus was born into the Jewish house of David. These six-pointed star shapes are made with two equilateral triangles.</p> <p>Pupils could reflect on the ‘guiding lights’ in their lives and write these inside the tips of the cut-out star, with some of the ways in which each helps written outside e.g. ...teaches me to...; ... shows me...; ... helps me...; ...helps me see that...</p> <p>Pupils could repeat the activity for a Christian. Talk together about what guides someone who follows Jesus - help them to identify such things as reading the Bible, going to church, praying, talking to other Christians. Either make another star for this or use the reverse of their own star.</p>	<p>I can make links between the symbolism of light at Christmas and my own experiences. (AT2 L3)</p>	

Key Questions: *What have I learned? Is Christmas a festival of light or love?*

Learning Objectives	Suggested Teaching and Learning	Learning Outcomes	Points to note
<p>To make links between symbols used by Christians and the beliefs that underlie them.</p>	<p>Give the pupils time to talk in pairs about the symbols they have found out about in this unit, as well as discussing what they have found out about the Christmas story. Share with another pair and then 'snowball' to gather the class' thoughts.</p> <p>Drawing on the art they have looked at earlier in the unit, pupils then design a stained glass window to show what they think is important about the Christmas story for Christians. They could then go on to create the image either using glass paints or with tissue paper and glue on acetate.</p> <p>The children could then write a short paragraph to explain why they have included certain things in their designs. (Lower attaining pupils could be provided with a writing frame or sentence starters, or could record their ideas.)</p>	<p>Suggest meaning in Christian symbols, language and stories. (AT1 L2)</p> <p>Make links between Christian symbols, language and stories and the beliefs/ideas that underlie them. (AT1 L3)</p> <p>Show how religious beliefs, ideas and feelings can be expressed in a variety of forms, giving meanings for some symbols, stories and language using technical terminology. (AT1 L4)</p>	