



Introduction

The following outline looks at:

- what makes somewhere a special place for Christian worship
- how Christian worshipers feel about these places
- how Christians experience God there.

To do this the unit aims to help the children:

- to talk about their own or their friends' special places
- to contribute ideas/ pictures/ items for a classroom special place
- to produce pictures/ writing/ ideas for a classroom display about a Christian church.

The learning outcome of this piece of work is:

- that the children should gain an understanding of what makes a place a sacred place for Christian believers;
- that the children might appreciate that different aspects of such special places will mean different things to different people;
- that children should understand that many people go to church to feel a special closeness to God.

Preparation

The following book will be helpful:

- [A-cross the World](#) by Martyn Payne and Betty Pedley (This focuses on the meaning of the cross)

Development

Here is a suggested sequence of activities to explore this topic:

1. What makes a place special?

Open up a class discussion about special places. What makes a special place? How do you feel there? What do you do there? Start off the discussion with the teacher sharing his or her own special place and answering the questions as a model for the children to follow, when they share their ideas.

Read a story together such as *Duncan's Tree House*, emphasising the specialness of his den. What makes Duncan's house special etc.?

Ask the children to draw a picture of themselves in their special place.

2. How can we create a special place?

As a class plan a special place that could be created in a corner of the classroom. Discuss what would make such a place special for everyone? How will they make this place feel different and secret; private and quiet; sacred and peaceful?

Set up a 'design and create' activity as a whole class or in teams along these lines:

- i. One group making a recording of music, which will play in their special place.
- ii. One group selecting and making items, which will be put into their special place
- iii. One group making decorations and pictures to be included in their special place
- iv. One group in charge of lighting and smells for their special place

Finally, as a class, make some rules about how they should conduct themselves in their special place and when it is to be used.

3. Where is a special place for Christians and why is it special?

Talk with the class about how people of faith have special places where they go to pray, to be peaceful and to have a special time of closeness to God.

Explain that churches are such special places for Christians, where they go to think about God and to pray.

Next, either organise a visit to a local church or use material that introduces a range of items that you might find in a Christian place of worship. (N.B. Some cathedrals provide on-line guides of what you can see).

Items may include all or some of following:

Special seating; a font; hymn and prayer books; special banners, decorations or stained-glass windows; an altar or focal table; flowers; a cross; a lectern and Bible; a pulpit or speaker's stand; an organ and/or other musical instruments; icons; special notice boards; prayer stools or kneelers; chalice and paten; ministerial robes.

Identify similarities and differences with their own classroom special place.

If you visit a local church (or possibly a couple of churches from two different traditions), divide the children up into in small groups of 3 or 4 to examine aspects of the building that they think are special and to formulate questions about them to put to the vicar/minister or layperson, who is showing the class around.

If possible, have them ask a number of local worshipers about how and why the church is a special place for them.

Take digital pictures of the 'special' things found in the church, so that they can create in groups a



display about what they found in the church and/or discovered through discussions, with labels that begin with the words: **This is the special 'because'**. Each group can present its display to the rest of the class.

4. What about other special places?

This work on special places could be extended further by investigating in a similar way the specialness of places of worship from another faith tradition. What are the similarities and differences etc? What might be learned from this about what is regarded as essential to enable a place to become 'sacred'?