



## On your marks

Finding ways to connect with the worldwide family of the Christian Faith has been a growing area of interest both in churches and schools. Such windows into the multi-cultural and international practice of Christianity in today's world are a vital resource to give us a true picture of what it means to be a global Christian in the 21st century. For Christians this is of course also important evidence of the continuing truth and power of the story of Jesus to influence lives and transform societies.

In [A-cross the World](#), published by Barnabas in 2011, this connection to the big picture was through the symbol of the cross. Differing Christian traditions and various Christian faith communities around the world are united by this one key and central sign of a shared faith. This universal cross has at the same time been interpreted, designed and adapted to express a unique, local expression of that same faith. With each cross comes a particular story of how each community experiences God's love and puts it into action.

## Get set

Each of the crosses in this new series supplements the 40 crosses that can already be found in the book [A-cross the World](#). With each there is a Bible link with wondering questions, background information about the cross, stories to share and craft ideas to make a version of the cross - providing enough material for a session with children in a church group, in the classroom or at a mixed-age event. There is also a picture provided for each cross that could be printed or used in a PowerPoint presentation in order to provide a talking point for groups or as a focus for collective worship.

This cross belongs to a series of new crosses and, as with the first collection, the overall aim remains the same, namely:

- to enable children and adults to see the cross through the eyes of other cultures and traditions
- to prompt discussion and debate on why this single, historical event continues to exercise such an influence worldwide
- to explore how Christians in a wide variety of places, different times in history and in different circumstances, have lived purposeful lives because of their faith in a Christ, who died and who is risen - symbolised by the cross

For further cross ideas linked to the church's year, go to:

- [Easter - A resurrection cross;](#)
- [Lent - an ongoing idea for exploring the cross through Lent;](#)



## Go!

### Bible link

The Lord's followers who had been scattered went from place to place, telling the good news. Philip went to the city of Samaria and told the people about Christ. They crowded around Philip because they were eager to hear what he was saying and to see him work miracles. Many people with evil spirits were healed, and the spirits went out of them with a shout. A lot of crippled and lame people were also healed. Everyone in that city was very glad because of what was happening.

### Acts 8:4-8 (CEV)

Philip was one of the seven deacons appointed to help spread the workload for the apostles because the church in Jerusalem was growing so fast and they hadn't time to offer effective pastoral care to the new Christians (see Acts 6:1-7). When the church met with persecution in the capital, Philip became a missionary to the Samaritans in the north, helping to take the gospel across religious and ethnic boundaries and establish a new church there.

### Wondering about this Bible story

I wonder how Philip felt when he was forced to escape from Jerusalem and leave his important work there?

I wonder if Philip was nervous about sharing the story of Jesus with 'outsiders', who weren't from the same background and tradition as he was? In fact, Jews refused to have anything to do with people from Samaria, so Philip was taking a big risk. (It is worth noting that Philip was a convert to Judaism long before he became a follower of Jesus, so maybe he was better placed to do this missionary work than the apostles; but that still didn't make it easy.)

I wonder if Philip was surprised by the way the Samaritans turned to a faith in Jesus. Maybe they had been 'prepared' by Jesus' visit there during his ministry (see John 4:39-42) and also the positive stories about Samaritans Jesus had told, for example, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); the Samaritan leper (Luke 17:11-19).

### *The story of this cross*

The black flag with the white cross is often referred to as the banner of St Piran and is today recognised as the 'national flag' of Cornwall. St Piran is the patron saint of tin-miners and also regarded by many as the patron saint of Cornwall. Tin used to be one of the most important elements in the Cornish economy. The story goes that St Piran took his colours from his discovery of tin, when he first saw the white metal in the black ashes of his fire.

Cornwall is full of Celtic saints. Their history is recorded in the names of churches, holy wells and villages. Many sailed from Ireland or Wales and then often travelled further on to Brittany.



Piran was a bishop-abbot of Irish origin, who came to Cornwall in the 5th century. The first firm reference to the St Piran's cross flag dates from the 1830's. In 1835 Davies Gilbert edited the history of over 200 Cornish parishes, including one called St Piran-in-the-Sands, where there is a reference to 'a white cross on a black ground [that] was formerly the banner of St Perran and the Standard of Cornwall; probably with some allusion to the black ore and the white metal of tin.' It is not known where Gilbert obtained his information - probably from oral tradition.

One of the oldest depictions of the flag can be seen in a stained-glass window at Westminster Abbey. It was unveiled in 1888 in memory of this famous Cornish inventor and engineer Richard Trevithick. The window depicts St Michael at the top and nine Cornish saints, Piran, Petroc, Pinnock, Germanus, Julian, Cyriacus, Constantin, Nonna and Geraint in tiers below. The head of St Piran appears to be a portrait of Trevithick himself and the figure carries the banner of Cornwall.

The legend goes that his Irish persecutors had tied Piran to a millstone and rolled it over the edge of a cliff into the stormy sea. However, the sea immediately became calm, and the saint floated safely over the water to land upon the sandy beach of Perranzabulo (near modern-day Perranporth) in Cornwall.

Perranporth ('Piran's Port' in Cornish) hosts the annual festival of 'Lowender Peran', which is named in honour of him. St Piran's Day is 5 March and it is very popular in Cornwall; the term 'Piranstide' has been coined to describe the week prior to this day. The largest St Piran's Day event is the march across the dunes to St Piran's cross, which thousands of people attend, generally dressed in black, white and gold, and carrying the Cornish Flag. A play of the life of St Piran, in Cornish, has been enacted in recent years at the event. Daffodils are also carried and placed at his cross.

For many people Cornwall is the ideal holiday destination and thousands flock there each summer. Many young people go to Christian camps and special weeks held near the sea to learn more about the faith from others, just as St Piran shared the gospel the 5th century.

Surfing is a popular pastime, particularly on the north coast of Cornwall. You can discover about the work of [organisation of Christian surfers from their website](#).

And there are stories and information about the Anglican Church in the diocese of Truro (which covers the county of Cornwall) on their website.

Here is the Lord's Prayer in the Cornish language:

*Agon Taze nye, eze en Neve, Benegas bo tha Hanow. Tha Gwlaskath gwrenz doaz; Tha Voth bo gwreze, En Noer pecarra en Neve. Ro tha nye an journama gon bara pub death, Ha gave tha nye gon pehasow Pecarra tel era nye gava angye Neb eze peha war agon bidn. Ha na raze gon lewa en antall, Buz gweeth nye thurt droeg. Rag an Gwlaskath Che a beaw, Han Nearth, han Worrians, Rag nevra venitha. Andelna ra bo/Amen.*

### **Crafting the cross**



To make your own version of the cross that St Piran 'discovered', you will need some air-drying clay and some used toothpaste tubes.

Open up and clean out the used tubes, flattening the tin-like metal, which you can later use to make the cross. Cut this into thin strips.

Mould a lump of the air-drying clay into a small flattish stone shape. Now inset two of the strips into the clay in the shape of a cross. Embed them firmly but so that they are still clearly visible, as if the cross is emerging from the 'stone'.

Complete the cross by painting the clay black, the colour of the ashes, in which St Piran is said to have found the first tin.

Allow this to dry.

### **Cross reflection**

The following verses are taken from an early Celtic poem about the cross:

*Christ's cross over this face and thus over this ear, Christ's cross over these eyes, this mouth, this throat, the back of this head, this side; To accompany before me, to accompany behind me. Christ's cross to meet every difficulty Both on hollow and on hill. Christ's cross over my community Christ's cross over my church Christ's cross in the next world Christ's cross in this world.*