



Exploring the Christian Church today

Living Church

**Murray
McBride**

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**Includes
photocopy
permission**

**Ideal for RE
and Citizenship**

Years 2-6



Introduction

School trips offer many opportunities for creative learning, but often overlook that treasure house of history, faith and culture available on the doorstep: the local church. The *Living Church* project is designed to unite the local church with its local schools, to unlock the building and the community it represents as an interactive learning resource for children in Years 2–6.

Simply visiting an empty church can be a cold, dim and disappointing study of stones and bones. The *Living Church* project aims to bring the building alive with the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the living church within its walls. The project provides schools and churches with ready-to-use material for an interactive learning experience in which everyone can take part. The experience brings different parts of the building to life through the dramatic re-enactment of familiar ceremonies such as baptism and marriage; explores physical attributes such as furnishings, architecture, vestments and artefacts; and brings the senses to life with the living tradition of the local Christian faith community, through its music, colour and storytelling.

John's Gospel reminds us that God came in person to live with us: 'The Word became a human being and lived here with us' (John 1:14). The Christian faith does not comprise disembodied concepts, but the living faith of a real community of people who embody their Christian beliefs in everyday life. *Living Church* teaches the Christian faith by allowing religious words to become flesh and blood through the lives of real people. The material enables Christian ceremonies to be brought alive in a way that children can understand and relate to, through the re-enactment of the sacraments and celebrations that are part of church life.

HOW TO USE LIVING CHURCH

Living Church is designed to be used as a teaching experience in small groups, followed by a celebration with the class or year group as a whole. Large groups give a sense of occasion, while smaller learning groups give pupils a greater opportunity to ask questions.

The material is written in the form of short storyteller's teaching scripts. This enables the local

minister to give an overall welcome to the group as a whole and then to divide the children into smaller groups, each with an adult leader—either a teacher or a volunteer from the church. The groups go to different parts of the church, where teachers and church members use the storyteller's scripts to bring the building alive through different activities. Ideally, each adult should be allocated one storytelling script, with the small learning groups hearing each story script as they rotate to different areas of the church. The number of options depends on how many storytellers you have available (drawn from both the church and the school) and how many topics you wish to cover. Ideally, the storytellers should learn their script or familiarize themselves with the material enough to put the teaching into their own words. Once each small group has visited each learning area, the children then reunite to experience a big celebration, such as the re-enactment of a wedding, ideally led by the minister.

Each topic also includes learning quote cards to help the children distil what they have learnt about the session, and storyboard cards, which are designed to be used as flash cards during the storytelling, or as part of a project file to remind children of different aspects of their learning. There are also several activity sheets that can be added to the project files or used on the day. Even if you are not planning to build up a project file, the storyboards will provide a good illustration for the small groups to show what the re-enactments might look like and help the children understand the different aspects of living worship.

The *Living Church* project offers no more than a brief encounter: there will not be enough time to explore individual topics in great depth. You will therefore find it helpful to appoint a timekeeper to alert the storytellers when it is time to complete their presentation and move a group on to the next storyteller. Poor timekeeping will mean that you run short of time in the final stages. Note: Suggested time allocations are given within individual teaching scripts.

An RE resource for teachers

Living Church has been designed as a ready-to-use resource for teachers working with children in Years 2–6. With reference to the Non-statutory National

Framework for Religious Education, the material covers many of the learning attainments required for teaching Christianity by making use of local resources such as the Christian faith community, the church building, sacred writings, artefacts and traditions from the worldwide Church. The strength of *Living Church* is its experiential approach to exploring religion. The material offers schools the means to experience a wide range of worship, sacraments and celebrations, and provides the space to help children consider feelings of wonder, praise, thanks and sadness.

Cross-curricular studies

As well as covering many of the learning attainments for the Non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education, the *Living Church* project offers an ideal opportunity to use religious education as a point of contact for curricular studies in English, art, history, technology, music and geography.

The Christian community

Equally, *Living Church* encourages the Christian community to offer itself as a resource for schools. In bringing the local church building to life with music, ritual and colour, pupils have the opportunity to explore the meaning and purpose that faith inspires in the daily lives of local Christians.

Role play

The use of role play to explore celebrations such as baptism and marriage enables children to understand more readily the challenges of religious belief, commitment, society and belonging to a community. Role play creates an enjoyable means for children to participate fully using their imagination, while at the same time enabling them to realize that they are playing characters and are not personally involved.

Pupils are invited to take on the roles of characters in two imaginary families, to explore how these families take part in different aspects of the church's life. Their lives are followed through different worship services, with opportunities to stop and think about how their character might feel and how the building, music and celebrations help to give meaning and purpose to life.

As well as introducing the theme of beliefs and lifestyle, *Living Church* also introduces the idea of a sacred space within a community. Visiting a church can be a refreshing discovery of sacredness in a busy and impersonal world. It is a great privilege for the church community to be welcoming guardians of holy ground: an oasis of peace and security at the heart of society. The *Living Church* project seeks to share this sacred space with children who may never have visited a holy

place or experienced the timelessness of the spiritual dimension. Visiting a place of Christian worship also enables children to experience the sacred books, songs and space of the faith community, together with the sacredness of each person.

NB: The material in this book was devised within the Anglican tradition and field-tested with local schools in a parish church. Therefore, many of the terms used are Anglican, although terms and titles have been varied where possible to encompass other Christian denominations. If the minister needs to change terminology to match his or her own denomination, it should be easy to do so—and will provide a point of learning to explain the variety within the Christian Church.



Getting started

Preparing for the Living Church project

PREPARING TO VISIT A CHRISTIAN PLACE OF WORSHIP

Stage 1: Enlisting help

The school may wish to consider inviting parents to support the *Living Church* project, especially in helping with the journey to and from the church building. Alongside classroom assistants and ancillary staff, parents may also be able to help lead small learning groups. The minister of the church may wish to ask for volunteers from the church's community, especially organists, churchwardens and other key people who understand how the building is used and can be available for the children to ask questions about how the Christian faith affects daily life.

NB: To comply with current legislation, you will need confirmation from the minister of the church that members of the church volunteering to take part in the project hold an Enhanced Certificate of Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau. You will also need to ensure that volunteers taking part on the school's behalf also hold such a certificate. Visit www.crb.gov.uk for further information.

Stage 2: Setting the scene

On page 51 you will find a simple timeline showing how the Christian community grew from a group of persecuted followers of Jesus, meeting secretly in homes, into an institutional state religion with public places of worship. The *Living Church* construction model on pages 52–54 shows the development and changes that have taken place in the typical Anglican parish church over the last thousand years, from simple chapels into the complex and multi-faceted buildings that we see today.

Stage 3: Choosing topics of study

Living Church provides a wide range of topics that may be studied during a visit to the local church. Teachers are encouraged to select units according to time restraints and teaching requirements. Please refer to the Contents page for a full list of topics and activities available. A helpful 'jargon buster' glossary of terms can be found on pages 77–80.

ADAPTING LIVING CHURCH TO SUIT YOUR SITUATION AND RESOURCES

The material in this book is best suited for children in Years 2–6, and the ideal way to organize the project is to plan a *Living Church* day, which will enable pupils to learn about many aspects of church life and worship in a single experience. In this way, teachers can work together for a special RE day involving everything from just one class to year groups, Key Stage groups, or even the whole school. This model is often adopted for activity days in cathedrals around the country.

However, this ideal is not always possible. The material can therefore be split into several learning units, which can be adapted in a pick-and-mix fashion to suit the teaching plan for the year. The project can then be organized into several visits with a group of classes visiting together, or one class visiting on its own. Your choice may therefore be:

- ❖ One day visit, with several groups and several storytellers.
- ❖ Two or three short visits, with several groups and several storytellers.
- ❖ For those with few resources, the material can be adapted to use with one class group and one storyteller. However, this will be second best to the teaching advantages of learning in small groups.

NB: If transport and helpers are a concern, the single-day event will be the easiest to organize.

PREPARING THE SCHOOL

Making contact with the local church minister

If you don't have regular contact with the minister of your local church, the local telephone directory should list his or her number (or the number of the church office) under the name of the church. Ask for a meeting to explore the *Living Church* material together and to establish the level of support available. It is advisable to plan a term ahead in order to give time for everything to be arranged for your visit.

Making use of collective worship

You may wish to consider inviting the local minister or another member of the church to lead an assembly in order to introduce the planned visit to the church. The minister may also be able to advise on the choice of music or songs for the assembly.

Using the construction model preparation session

Living Church introduces the church as a building in the community where special occasions are celebrated. Making the construction model on pages 52–54 will help the children to prepare themselves for their visit to an unfamiliar building.

Preparing for the role play scenarios

For the role play scenarios, you will need to divide the children into mixed groups, with boys and girls in each group. Invite the children to bring along dressing-up clothes to suit the roles they will be playing. You will also need specific items for individual celebrations, such as large dolls or special clothes for a baptism, and jackets, waistcoats, ties, shirts, a wedding dress, a veil, a bunch of flowers and hats for a wedding.

Recruiting adult support

Classroom assistants, parents and members of the church community will be needed to stay with each small group as they rotate from one area of the church to another. As previously stated, all adult helpers will need to have an Enhanced Certificate of Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). Visit www.crb.gov.uk or www.disclosure.gov.uk for further details.

Safety first

It is advisable to visit the church with the minister beforehand to assess where groups can gather and to identify any possible dangers, such as uneven steps or flagstones. If the children are walking to the church, it is advisable for a member of staff to walk the route beforehand to identify the safest crossings. School guidelines on health and safety should be observed at all times during the visit.

Photographs

A photographic record of the visit would greatly enhance a *Living Church* classroom display. You will need to seek permission from the children's parents or guardians and allocate someone in the class to take group photographs of the activities.

PREPARING THE CHURCH COMMUNITY

Recruiting volunteers

The minister is the key contact with the church and will be able to advise you on who to invite to be involved in the project. Volunteers will need to be able to use the storytelling scripts and answer the children's questions about the faith community. Those to approach could include churchwardens, musicians, lay ministers and members with experience of uniformed organizations and church-based children's work.

Preparing the church building

Having everything prepared ahead of the visit, so that artefacts are ready to use, will ensure that the activities run smoothly and keep to time. You will need to produce A4 signs to label items such as the font, pulpit, Communion table, lectern and so on. The minister will be able to give advice to help you. The following areas of the church will need to be prepared in advance:

- ❖ The font (water, oil, candle and candle lighter)
- ❖ The pews or chairs (kneelers, Bibles, hymn books, service books and welcome cards)
- ❖ The pulpit (Bible)
- ❖ The altar or Communion table (candles, cloths, chalice, paten, candle lighter, blackcurrant juice, bread)
- ❖ The organ (music edition hymn books, clear access)
- ❖ The choir stalls (choir robes, crucifer's processional cross, processional candles, candle holders)
- ❖ The vestry (vestments, service register)

Follow-up

The minister may wish to find out whether project work can be borrowed to display in the church after the visit. You may also wish to explore any other way in which the Christian community could offer the building or the skills of their people as a resource for the school.

Advertising the event in the church community

The minister may wish to put a notice about the event in the church newsletter or weekly notice sheet, or display a poster. Details need to include the date and time of the planned visit, plus information about the event. For example, 'We are planning a joint project uniting our church with (*name of the local school*) as partners in learning. This initiative, called *Living Church*, is an educational day to help the school learn more about the Christian faith. If you would like to offer practical support for the day, please contact (*name and telephone number of minister*). You will need to hold an Enhanced Certificate of Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau and be willing to be questioned by the schoolchildren about your faith and the life of the church.'

A CREATIVE PREPARATION SESSION

This preparation session takes place in the classroom before the visit to the church. The session should last approximately 30 minutes.

You will need:

- Pictures of typical church buildings
- One copy of the *Living Church* timeline on page 51
- Copies of the *Living Church* construction model on pages 52–54, photocopied on to thin card (one model per child)
- One copy of the brief history of the *Living Church* information sheet on page 55
- Copies of the *Living Church* poster on page 56 (one poster per child or as required: see page 15 for suggested use)
- Scissors
- Colouring materials
- Glue

In preparation for the session, gather together pictures of typical church buildings and photocopy the *Living Church* timeline on page 51. Also, cut out and

assemble a demonstration construction model from pages 52–54, but don't join all three parts together at this point. Keep the tower, nave and chancel separate from each other.

Introduce the idea of *Living Church* to the children by saying that you are going to have a special project to explore why there is a church in your community, and that you will be going on a special trip to meet the minister and discover more about what Christians believe. Show a picture of a typical church (the local church, if possible). Ask if anyone knows what the building is called. Ask if anyone has ever been in a church. What happened when they visited a church? Ask if anyone knows what special things might happen in a church building.

The Living Church timeline

The account below gives a very brief history of how the local church developed over a long period of time. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the *Living Church* timeline.

Explain that we need to go a long way back in time to find the beginnings of Christianity and the Christian church. Display the *Living Church* timeline so that everyone can see it. The timeline shows how the Christian community grew from meetings held secretly in each other's homes immediately after the death and resurrection of Jesus, into an institutionalized state religion with public church buildings, steeped in history and tradition.

Take the class through the different stages of the timeline, stopping along the way to answer any questions that might arise. Explain that AD is short for the Latin *Anno Domini*, which means 'In the year of our Lord'. The life of Jesus has had such a remarkable effect on the world that it was decided to begin numbering our years from the date of Jesus' birth. This indicates just how unique in history Jesus was.

AD1–30

AD1 is the estimated birth date of Jesus. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in modern-day Israel. The Bible tells us that Jesus began his adult work of teaching people about God when he was about 30 years old (about AD30).

Jesus was not trained as a religious leader. He did not have a temple or building where people could gather to listen to him teaching about God. Sometimes he taught in the local synagogues (the religious buildings of the Jewish community), sometimes he taught in the open air and sometimes he taught in people's homes. As well as telling people stories to help them understand about God, he also spent time praying and healing those who were unwell.

After Jesus died and rose again, his closest followers

Welcome and introduction to the day

Preparation



You will need:

- A completed *Living Church* construction model

Remind small group storytellers to prepare their areas of the church so that they can begin working with their small groups as soon as the overall introduction has been completed. Have a finished *Living Church* construction model ready to show the children.

Teaching area

Gather the children by the main church door.

Aim

To welcome the children and help them to get their bearings in the building.

Action

Divide the class into three groups of equal size. It is helpful if the groups can be prearranged, with a mixture of boys and girls (if possible) in each group. These learning groups will rotate after each 15-minute session, so that all groups experience all storytelling spaces.

Time allocation



10 minutes

Learning quote cards

On page 57, you will find cards to help the children reflect on the experience of each topic they complete. You will need to photocopy one card per session for each child taking part. Simply ask the children to pause at the end of each activity, reflect on their learning experience and write a short sentence on their card. The cards can then be added to their project file or collected for a classroom display.

Storyboard cards

The storyboard cards are designed to be used as flash cards as the storytelling progresses, or as memory cards for the children to help them to recall each stage of the storytelling or re-enactment. The cards can be photocopied so that each child has his or her own set to add to the project file, or just one set of each storyboard can be photocopied for the classroom display. The children can colour the cards in as desired.



STORYTELLER'S SCRIPT

Welcome to (*name of church*). What special things do you think take place in this building?

This church is known as 'the house of God' because local people come here to meet with God. Look how big the doors are! This reminds us of the big welcome everyone receives. Everyone is invited to come and meet with God in this place. A church is not a club. It is a place where everyone— whoever they are, whatever their background,

colour, race or religion—is welcome. No one is excluded.

Can you remember the name of this church?

Perhaps the church has a patron saint or a special name. Talk about the name of the church and why it might be called by that name. The following script is an example.

This church is called ‘St Peter’s Church’, which means that St Peter is the ‘patron saint’ of this church. St Peter was a fisherman who became a very close friend of Jesus. His name reminds us that this church only exists because people like Peter listened to Jesus and followed his teaching. Peter passed his belief that Jesus is the Son of God to others, and those people have passed on the Christian message, down through the generations and so to us today.

Look around you. Can you see a window, a picture or sign that commemorates the life of the patron saint of this church? See how many other names you can find in this church today. All these people have followed Jesus’ teaching in their daily life.

Hold up the Living Church construction model.

Now we are inside the church building, we can see the different parts of a church. Think back to when we made our *Living Church* construction models. Can you remember which part of the church was built first? The nave is the main part of the church building. It is the most public part—the part where the congregation sits. The tower was the next part to be added. It was built so that the people could find protection in times of trouble. Bells were hung in the tower to warn the people of danger, to mark time and to call the people to the church for worship. Lastly, the chancel was added to create a more private area. This area is sometimes called the sanctuary. It is where the altar or Communion table may be found.

Today we are going to find out what happens in all three areas of the church building—the nave, the tower and the chancel. The word ‘church’ doesn’t only mean the building itself. The word ‘church’ also refers to the people who meet within the house of God. They can’t all be here today, so

we are going to imagine that we are the people who belong to this church.

First of all, this morning, we are going to act out what happens when a baptism takes place. Then, we are going to find out how the people who worship at this church use the holy Bible and why they pray to God. Next we are going to find out what happens at a service of Holy Communion, think about the pattern of the Christian year and learn about the way God can be praised through music and singing. Finally, just before lunch, we are going to find out about the special clothes that ministers wear in church. After lunch, we are going to find out what happens outside the church and in what ways the people who worship here care about the whole world and share their faith far beyond the walls of this building.

Because we are going to be acting, each of us will be invited to think up a new name for ourselves as we go along, so that we can act out each part of our drama and see how this building can be changed from cold stones to a living church.



Preparing the learning groups

Divide the children into three learning groups as previously planned. Invite each group to choose a name so that you can identify each one. Choosing one of the names of Jesus’ closest friends would be suitable: for example, Mary, Peter, John, Martha, Andrew, James, Philip, Joanna, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddeus or Simon. Make sure that each child knows which name has been chosen for his or her group.

Invite the first three storytellers to lead their small group into the different parts of the church building. In their groups, the children will learn simultaneously, rotating to the next storyteller after 15 minutes until every group has experienced all of the first three storytelling areas.

When the point in the programme is reached for the next three storytelling areas, you may either use the same three storytellers or three further storytellers, depending on the number of helpers you have. The same principle will apply with the final three storytelling activities, which take place in the afternoon.

Living worship: Baptism

Preparation



You will need:

- Baby dolls
- Water
- A jug
- The church's large paschal (Easter) candle
- A small candle
- A candle lighter or matches
- Baptism storyboard card photocopied from page 58 (one per child if they are building a project file)
- Learning quote cards photocopied from page 57 (one per child)

The baptism storyboard card can be found on page 58. Set everything up near the baptism font before the session starts. Put water into the jug and fill the font from the jug.

Teaching area

The font.

Aim

To discover that baptism marks the beginning of the Christian journey of faith. Explain that we are going to re-enact the baptism of an imaginary child (a doll) from an imaginary family (role play).

Action

Gather around the font and the paschal candle.

Time allocation



15 minutes



STORYTELLER'S SCRIPT

Does anyone know what this is called? It is called a font. Can you guess what the font is made of? Put your hand on the font to feel the material it is made of. Do you know what special purpose the font has in the church? The font is used to baptize people of all ages, from tiny babies, just a few weeks old, to elderly people perhaps 100 years old! Sometimes you may hear people refer to a baptism as a 'christening', but the church normally uses the name 'baptism', because this is the name given in the Bible. (You can find the story of John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:1–17.)

Baptism services take many different forms depending on what type of Christian tradition and country the people are from. However, all baptisms are a service of welcome into the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ. When a small child is baptized, adults make promises to bring that child up to know and follow Jesus. Adults who are baptized make promises to follow Jesus, in their own words, thoughts and actions. This is the beginning of a lifelong journey that will help each person to follow Jesus more closely.

To re-enact a service of baptism, choose two children from your group to be the parents of the child being baptized. Give them a doll. Ask them to make up a first name for themselves and a surname for their role-play family. Ask the mum and dad what name they would like to choose for their 'baby'. Next, choose three children to be the baby's godparents. (Traditionally, two of the godparents are the same sex as the child.) If there are enough children in the group to make a second family unit, repeat as above, and so on, until all the children in the group have a role. If

there are not enough children in the group to make up further family units, the remaining children can become the 'congregation'.

What do you think a godparent's job is? Godparents are people who are followers of Jesus. The baby's godparents promise at the baptism service to help the baby learn more about following Jesus as he or she grows up. The child's learning might include reading about Jesus in the Bible, going to church and praying.

The form of baptism service used below is a simplified version of the baptism service from the Church of England's Common Worship liturgy. This is only role play, so if a minister is not available the storyteller can take their place and read their part.

Minister's introduction to the congregation

Minister: Today we welcome this child (these children) into the church of Jesus Christ. This child (these children) need(s) the help of his/her (their) parents and godparents to grow up as a follower (followers) of Jesus.

The promises of parents and godparents

Parents and godparents stand.

Minister: The church asks parents and godparents to make these baptism promises... Will you turn away from doing wrong?

Parents and godparents: With the help of God we will.

Minister: Will you turn to Jesus for help?

Parents and godparents: With the help of God we will.

Minister: Will you follow Jesus all your life?

Parents and godparents: With the help of God we will.

The sign of the cross

Minister: *(Baby's name)*, I mark you with the sign of the cross, the sign of Christ.

Minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child/doll.

The sign of the water

Minister: *(Baby's name)*, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When baptizing a child, it is customary to pour a handful of water on the forehead of the child. With adults, in many traditions the person being baptized will go into a baptism pool, a river or the sea where they will be completely immersed under the water for a moment.

The sign of light

Light the large paschal (Easter) candle. Light the small candle from the large paschal candle.

Minister: This is a sign to remind us that Jesus is called the light for the world. All who follow Jesus are promised that, when they feel lost and in the dark, Jesus will give them the light of hope to live by and overcome the darkness of doubt and fear. *(Turning to the child)* You have received the light of Christ; walk in this light all your life.

Give the lit candle to the parents. For safety reasons you may prefer to light a small candle on a stand near the children. Repeat the baptism liturgy with the other family groups as appropriate.



Follow-up

Give each child a learning quote card and ask them to write a sentence on the card about their learning experience during the baptism re-enactment. The cards can be used later to build a folder or illustrate a school display in the classroom.

Finish by asking if there are any questions. When the group is ready, direct them to the next storytelling area.

Living worship: the Bible

Preparation



You will need:

- A selection of Bibles
- The Bible storyboard card photocopied from page 59 (one per child if they are building a project folder)
- Learning quote cards photocopied from page 57 (one per child)

Have a selection of Bibles available for the children to look at as appropriate during the storytelling period.

Teaching area

The chairs or pews nearest to the lectern, followed by the area around the pulpit.

Aim

To discover how important the Bible is for Christians and why it is often referred to as 'the word of God'. Christians believe that the Bible reveals what God is like, teaches people how best to live, bears witness to the life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and helps people to follow Jesus in their daily lives.

Action

If there is a special stand for the Bible (a lectern), gather the learning group around it. In some churches, the lectern may be shaped as an eagle; in others the lectern may be of a simple wooden design.

Time allocation



15 minutes



STORYTELLER'S SCRIPT

Every Christian church places special importance on its holy book. Do you know what this book is called? The Bible is common to the faith of all Christians in every part of the world. It has been translated into many languages.

The Bible contains many famous sayings, some of which are used even today in everyday conversation. People don't always realize that the saying they are using comes from the Bible! For example, people say that they will 'turn the other cheek' when they don't want to argue with someone else. This phrase comes from Jesus' teaching about not trying to get even with anyone (Matthew 5:38–39). Another famous saying from the Bible is 'Love others as much as you love yourself.' This saying sums up what Jesus taught about the way we should treat each other (Luke 10:25–37).

Here are four of the most popular questions asked by children about the Bible.

Who wrote the Bible? The word 'Bible' gives us a clue. It comes from the ancient Greek word *biblia*, which means 'books'. The Bible may look like one book, but it is actually 66 books, all together under one cover. Many of the books of the Bible are named after the person who wrote that part of the Bible. There are more than 40 different writers in total. Their books were chosen to be in the Bible because it was believed that their work was special—inspired by God.

There are two main parts to the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written many years before Jesus was born, but Christians believe that the writings of the Old Testament point towards Jesus' birth. The New Testament was written after Jesus was born and

tells the story of his life, death and resurrection and the beginning of the early church.

One of the people who wrote a large part of the New Testament was a man called Paul. Paul wrote two letters to a friend called Timothy. In the second letter, Paul says to Timothy: 'Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live' (2 Timothy 3:16). Christians believe that what Paul wrote to Timothy is true. It shows why the Bible is sometimes called 'the word of God'.

How long ago was the Bible written? The books and letters collected together to make up the Bible were written over a period of one thousand years. The most modern writings are letters in the New Testament part of the Bible. These letters are almost two thousand years old. Some of the historical events, stories of kings and battles described in the Old Testament part of the Bible date back to three or four thousand years ago.

What kind of book is the Bible? The Bible is not like the books in the school library, which cover single subjects such as biology, history, cooking or maths. As we have said, the Bible is made up of many books. In fact, it is much more like a mini mobile library, containing 66 books in total. Of those books, 39 were written before Jesus was born, and 27 were written after he was born. The 66 books cover a huge range of different subjects, such as:

- ❖ **Creation:** writings to explain who created and cares for the world.
- ❖ **History:** writings that record the family history of God's people, telling of their kings, their conflicts, their adventures and their failures.
- ❖ **Laws:** writings that set out God's laws for his people to live by. Like school rules, these laws are designed to help keep everyone safe.
- ❖ **Poems and songs:** the songs in the Bible are called Psalms. They give us help and encouragement, but they also include sorrowful songs, songs of love, songs of worship and songs in praise of God.
- ❖ **Wisdom:** writings that give wise advice about the difficulties of life.
- ❖ **Prophecy:** challenging writings from people who

were chosen by God to spread his work and make readers think about the state of their whole nation and the world. They help us to think about the kind of communities we are making in God's world.

- ❖ **Gospels:** four accounts of the life of Jesus, showing why Christians believe that he was the Son of God.
- ❖ **Letters:** written to the first Christians to encourage and guide them.
- ❖ **Stories:** accounts of the adventures of the first Christians as they travelled far and wide to tell everyone the good news about Jesus.

Who is in the Bible? There are many people in the Bible whose names have become famous: Noah, who built the ark; Samson, the strong man; Joseph, with the multi-coloured coat; Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale; and David, who killed the giant Goliath, to name but a few. Of course, there is also Jesus, who Christians believe is the Son of God. The New Testament tells us about the stories he told, the amazing things he did and about his cruel death. Most amazing of all is the story of his coming alive again on the first Easter day.

However, the person who is most mentioned in the Bible is God. The Bible tells us many things about God. It shows us what God likes, what God hates, how creative he is in making the world, how strong yet gentle he is, how wise and mysterious. Most of all, the Bible shows us how loving God is. It shows us how he is always with us and, even though we cannot see him, we can see evidence of his presence in our world and in people around us.

The Bible is usually given a place of great honour in the church building. Sometimes it is a very large book. Sometimes it has a stand of its own from which it is read. It is used to teach people about God. Most of the prayers, songs and words of the services come from the Bible. It is the most important book in the church. The Bible is so important that in many churches the people stand up when the Gospel is read—just as you might stand up when a very important or famous person comes into the room. Some churches use special announcements, as you might when an important person arrives and you want everyone to pay

attention. After reading part of the Bible, the reader in church may say, 'This is the word of the Lord' and people reply, 'Thanks be to God.'

The storyteller and children move to gather by the pulpit.

Does anyone know what this is called? It is called a pulpit. What do you think happens here? This is the place where someone with training explains the Bible reading and teaches us to how to follow Jesus today in our daily life. Why do you think it is so high? It is high so that the teacher can be seen and heard by everyone.

Invite someone to come and stand in the pulpit, and ask them how they feel: scared... or important?



Follow-up

After the storytelling is completed, you may wish to use one of the activities suggested below as follow-up:

- In two pictures, illustrate a Bible being read from the lectern, and someone explaining what the reading means from the pulpit.
- The Bible has been translated into many languages. How many languages can you think of, into which it might be translated?
- In medieval times, monks and nuns illustrated the Bible with wonderful pictures to produce 'illuminated Bibles'. Choose a sentence or a verse from the Bible and design your own illuminated page to illustrate the words.

Give each child a learning quote card and ask the children to write a sentence on the card about their learning experience during the storytelling about the Bible. The cards can be used later to build a folder or illustrate a school display in the classroom.

Finish by asking if there are any questions. When the group is ready, direct them to the next storytelling area.

Ideal for RE
and Citizenship
Years 2-6

Exploring the Christian Church today

For many children, their first encounter with the local church is on a school visit. This book provides everything needed to turn such a visit into a memorable learning experience.

Living Church is a ready-to-use project-based resource. Inside its covers you will find dramatic re-enactments of familiar ceremonies such as baptism and marriage; explorations of physical attributes such as furnishings, architecture, vestments and artefacts; and encounters with the living faith of the local Christian community through the music, colours and storytelling associated with the church.

The project covers 12 key aspects of church life and contains everything you need for a visit to a Christian place of worship with your class or year group, including:

- ❖ Storyteller's scripts
- ❖ Church construction model
- ❖ Church history timeline
- ❖ Storyboard cards
- ❖ Learning quote cards
- ❖ Activity sheets
- ❖ Project-building ideas
- ❖ Jargon buster

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