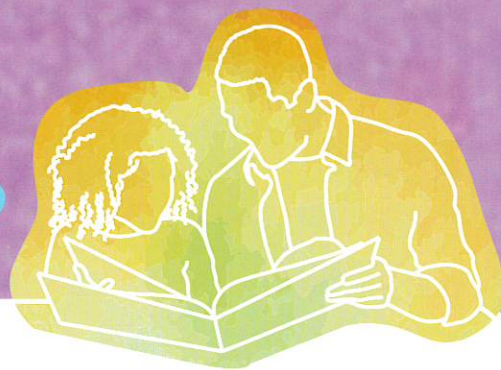


Growing Together

Inspired by the Christian Faith

WHAT IS CHURCH FOR?



Read together

One aspect of church is celebrating together and remembering together. Church is God's house, a place where God is and so it provides a special place and structure where we can celebrate and remember.



A retelling of John 2: I-II

Our village is alive with excitement, especially at the well when the young women go to collect water. Miriam and Zach are getting married on Friday and everyone is involved.

New clothes are being sewn, with love stitched into every seam. A fabulous feast is being prepared, new cheeses pressed, bread baked...

A wedding is a time of joy and celebration, a time of remembering too. Older people like me look back on our lives. We think about the people we have loved, our own times of celebration... and the times of sadness too.

In my younger years, I helped with so many weddings. I was a server, one of the people who helped with the food and drink. This was a responsibility because everyone wants their wedding day to be just right.

It did mean I enjoyed lots of good food and drink - there was always lots left over, except on one occasion, and that's a wedding I will never forget.

The party was in full swing. People were dancing, laughing and sharing stories, when I realised, we had run out of wine! It was a disaster, an absolute disaster.

There was one very thoughtful, gentle lady at the wedding - Mary. She sat calmly taking it all in. She must have noticed something was wrong because she stood up and spoke quietly to her son. I have to say, he looked a bit annoyed at first, but then the most peculiar thing happened. Mary told all of us who were serving to do just as her son, Jesus, told us.

So we did.

First, we filled all the huge, empty jars which we used for special Jewish rituals. We filled them right to the brim with ninety litres of water. Then Jesus told us to fill our serving jugs and take them to the Master of Ceremonies. When we poured from our jugs it wasn't water that came out, but wine. It was not just any wine, it was the most exquisite wine we had ever tasted.

I can still remember the taste of wine on my lips.

I still remember Jesus too. He did even more extraordinary things teaching us about God's love and generosity.

Before he died, Jesus asked his friends to remember and celebrate his life every time they broke bread and drank wine together; so that's what we do. Church is where we can be together to celebrate and remember all kinds of things: weddings, funerals, baptisms, harvest, but always we celebrate and remember Jesus.



Did you know



Many Christians understand that Church is the family of God. The Bible talks about people being the living stones of the Church.

Simon was one of Jesus' closest friends. Jesus changed his name to Peter which in Greek is Petros and means Rock. Jesus said to him, 'And so I tell you, Peter: you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my Church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it.'. Matthew 16:18 (Good News Translation).

Peter went on to share Jesus' story with hundreds of people and lots of them became Christians.

Does your name have a special meaning?



As well as cathedrals built from stone, like Gloucester Cathedral, there are also tree cathedrals, cardboard cathedrals and even Lego™ cathedrals.

Create & make



Using any construction or creative material, create a model of a church. Can you add a modern twist or a feature that you'd really like a church to have?

Family Fun



Visit a church or cathedral. What can you spot there that shows how Christians celebrate or remember together?

Idea for Pre-schoolers



Using small world people, recreate a special occasion like a birthday party, or if you are a family familiar with church, simply 'play church'.

Courageous Advocacy



Bravely making the world better

Jesus said, 'The greatest love you can have for your friends, is to give your life for them'. John 15:13 (Good News Translation).

Churches everywhere hold a special service on Remembrance Sunday to say 'thank you' to people who have died during times of war so that all can live in peace. Perhaps you can find a service near you to attend or you could support the Poppy Appeal.



Prayer space ideas



Gather reminders of things which help Christians to remember and celebrate together. For example,

- A glass and plate** To represent the chalice and patten/dish used in a communion service
- A table and cloth** To represent the altar and altar cloth we use to celebrate Jesus' last meal before he died
- A poppy** To remember the people who died in war
- A cross** To remember that Jesus died to save us
- Nativity figures** To remember Jesus' birthday
- Flowers** To remember people we love at funerals

Use these things to help you remember and celebrate too.

Web Links & Extended Ideas



<http://request.org.uk/life/church/what-is-church/> has a short video of different people sharing what church means to them. CBeebies animation about Remembrance Day for very young children [youtube.com/watch?v=wOT5CDnYHEs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOT5CDnYHEs)

Poppy's story. A story to listen to for younger children from CBeebies <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jolMzR5VoWc>

Stories about wartime experiences by Michael Morpurgo for older children include: *Private Peaceful*, *War Horse*, *Friend or Foe* and *Adolphus Tips*. There is also Judith Kerr's *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*.