

YEAR LEVEL	3 & 4
TITLE	Community of Believers
STRAND	CHURCH AND TRADITION
SUGGESTED DURATION	6 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	<p>What does the Church look like in our community?</p> <p>How can I be like Jesus in our community?</p>



Unit Focus

In this unit students will be invited to discover ways in which they can contribute to the Church - through actions of unity and justice. They will be encouraged to recognise ways in which the Holy Spirit empowers them to live, work and love like Jesus. They will be given opportunities to identify the different ways in which the Church community proclaims the Good News.

Achievement Standards

By the end of Year 4, students should be able to:

Identify how the early Christian Church continued the mission of Jesus. Students explore the history of the local parish Church. They explore and describe the ministries that exist within the local church community and explain how they connect to the early Church communities.

Unit Outcomes

By the end of the unit students should be able to:

1. Express an understanding of the way in which the early Christian Church was shaped.
2. Have a knowledge of the story of the local Parish church.
3. Name some of the ministries that exist within their local church community.

Key Understandings for Students

- The church is a community of people who gather together with a common belief in Jesus Christ.
- When people are united with a common purpose or belief this is called community.
- The Holy Spirit is active in our Church community and evident in the qualities and actions of people in our families and faith community. The Holy Spirit is active in the lives of God's people.
- We need to be open to the active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

- When we share the gifts of the Spirit we are building a community of believers.
- Jesus taught his disciples and friends to follow his actions.
- Jesus' most important message to his people was "Love one another as I have loved you." (Jn 13:34).
- Through the various ministries of the Church we are invited to live out our calling to be people of faith.

Student Context

At this level students have a new understanding of rules and are developing a moral framework that stresses fairness and equal treatment. They are beginning to understand how individual stories can be part of a larger story that can help them make sense of their life and the world.

Students are beginning to make sense of themselves in the context of their community, so they need to be provided with opportunities to explore, analyse and discover how the believing community lives and proclaims the Good News. Students in Years 3 and 4 need to be able to see how they can be actively and meaningfully involved in the community.

Theological Background for Teachers

- "Christian faith is also a communal faith. When a believer responds to God, he or she becomes more united with others striving to do the same. Christians cannot become more united with Christ without becoming more united with each other. As they open themselves to Christ, they are bonded together by the Holy Spirit." (*The Word Dwells Among Us*, 1990, p. 55)
- "Jesus called them together to follow him and be his disciples. He spoke of his 'flock' [Lk 12:32], his 'companions' [Mk 3:14] and 'branches' of his vine [Jn 15:5]. He promised that, 'wherever two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them' [Mt 18:20]. Christian faith can never be a purely private and personal affair. Christ cannot be followed alone. As the twelve, the seventy-two, and the others who sought Christ discovered, a person can only walk with Christ if he or she is willing to walk also with others." (*The Word Dwells Among Us*, 1990, pp. 72 - 73)
- Each one of us is a living temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) and we become bound together more closely as each responds to the Holy Spirit within.
- Commonly, the building where Christ's followers gather is referred to as the church. Too often, in fact, people associate the word church only with a building and forget that the word is attached to the building only by association.
- It is important to understand that although Jesus began his life and mission in Israel two thousand years ago, the salvation his father sent him to proclaim was intended for the whole of humanity.
- To offer his salvation to all, Jesus needed to be present in a visible way among peoples throughout the world. He revealed his way when he promised "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I shall be there with them." (Mt 18:20) Jesus would be present to all humanity henceforth through his followers – his Church.
- Jesus' followers show their convictions that he is present in them today as they continue his mission, showing that his salvation is for all, regardless of colour, race, gender, political belief or socio-economic status. (*The Word Dwells Among Us*, 1990, p. 73)
- On the occasion of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which we call Pentecost, there were only a few disciples in Jerusalem. By the end of the first century, their message had reached west through the whole Roman Empire and east to India.

- Like the Gospel, (Lk 1:1-4) the Acts begin with a prologue. As in the Gospel, Luke addressed Theophilus in Acts. This name means 'friend of God'. Theophilus represents everyone who will read the text – including us!
- After Pentecost the men and women who wanted to follow Jesus began to meet together, as Christians. They would meet for the meal, the breaking of bread and to praise God.
- Christians gave this coming together a new meaning; sharing in the Eucharist, they were people united by faith and friendship. Their numbers increased steadily. Soon, small communities sprang up all over the country and across the empire.

Scripture

Mt 16:17-19

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Acts 2:41-47a - *Life Among the Believers*

So those who welcomed his message were baptised, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

Major Assessment Task

Design an advertisement / social media post / website for your local Church that tells people about how your parish celebrates Jesus' life and work.

Your advertisement should include:

1. A diagram identifying the ministries of the parish.
2. A picture of how your parish celebrates the life and work of Jesus.
3. A reference to the history of your local church.
4. A Scripture reference to compare the early Christian Church with your parish.
5. A heading for the advertisement that captures the reader's interest

Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity

Show students different images of communities, eg: school photos, football teams, clubs, dance groups. Read the singing hat by Toby Riddle. Students have the opportunity to respond and share wonderings about the story. Using the story and the images students begin to create a list of words they associate with a community.

Community Look like sound like feel like, what communities are you part of. Create a wordle of the responses to the word community.

- Individually students list all the communities they belong to. Parish, School, Town etc.
- Ask students to draw a symbol representing their class or school community. Students share with their peers why they have designed their symbol the way they have.
- Begin to think about the features of being in a community: Eg, wear the same school uniform, have same goals, spend time together, and have similar interests.
- Read Scripture Acts 2: 41- 47, discuss students list questions and wonderings about the scripture. Students respond to the scripture by drawing a storyboard of all of the elements within the text.
- Students explore the disciples' actions in the scripture Acts 2: 41- 71. They draw and write these down. What would these actions look like in today's community?
- Using the list of actions, created by students, students identify people in their own community who follow these actions. Eg; people who gather together to pray, people who help those in need etc. Students explore these people or groups.
- Read **Mt 16:17-19** , focusing on the imagery of the rock and Peter. You may even want to collect a rock to use. Record the quote “ on this rock I will build my church” for students to wonder and reflect about. The actions of the disciples and followers of Jesus built the early Christian community of believers. Students begin to explore their Parish, who is the priest? What groups do they have? What gatherings do they hold? Access a copy of church bulletin, look at rosters etc
- Research the history of various aspects of the local church.
- If possible visit the local church or invite someone from the parish to speak with your class. Students begin to create responses to how their parish supports the community. This could be presented in any way possible. Eg: We are part of St Mary’s Parish,,, in our parish we gather in these groups..... to do this.....
- Write a prayer about how we can grow a strong community of believers by our actions. students may wish to create this in a powerpoint/google slide format to present to the class during the prayer ritual.(Prayer space)
- Create an ongoing class graffiti board that shows actions of the community of believers that are based on the actions and teachings of Jesus.
- Visit e.g. a retirement/nursing home, talk to them, sing to them, make cards etc for them.
- Write a prayer about how we can grow a strong community of believers by our actions. students may wish to create this in a powerpoint/google slide format to present to the class during the prayer ritual.(Prayer space)

Prayer Ritual

Gather the students in the prayer space and begin with the sign of the cross. Settle the students.

Ask students to present their prayer about how we can grow a strong community of believers by our actions (created throughout the unit). This may take a number of prayer sessions to ensure all students present.

