



YEAR LEVEL	5 & 6
TITLE	Discovering Our Christian Heritage
STRAND	CHURCH AND TRADITION
SUGGESTED DURATION	6 weeks
ENDURING QUESTIONS	What does Church look like in our community? How can I be like Jesus in our community?

Unit Focus

Students explore Christianity in the context of its origins in Judaism. Students will also be made aware that there are strong links among the basic beliefs of the world's three monotheistic faiths – Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Achievement Standards

By the end of **Year 6**, students should be able to:

Identify and explore Christianity, appreciating the similarities and differences with other world religions.

Unit Outcomes

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

- 1. Understand that Christianity has its roots in Judaism.**
- 2. Recognise and articulate the common beliefs and understandings across Christianity, Judaism and Islam.**
- 3. Appreciate the rituals and symbols, customs and practices of these religions.**

Key Understandings for Students

- Christianity has its roots in Judaism.
- There are different ways of expressing our belief in God.
- There are three monotheistic religions in the world – Christianity, Judaism and Islam.
- There are many commonalities among these religions.
- The elements of religion include rules or laws, sacred texts, rituals, symbols, sacred places, beliefs, stories and experience.
- Understanding of other religious communities enhances our understanding of religious practices.
- Christians accept and respect peoples of other religious traditions.

Student Context

Students in years 5 and 6 see themselves as members of a community that extends beyond their family and immediate surroundings therefore they are ready to explore further God's love for us and respond generously as Christians to all creation.

At this stage of their schooling students in upper primary can enter into the perspectives of others to gain meaning for life. By being introduced to other religions, children can begin their journey of understanding their Christian faith whilst appreciating and respecting people of other faiths.

Students in years 5 and 6 are becoming capable of abstract thinking, critical analysis and operational thought. They have some sense of history and enjoy stories of past events. Students have an increasing notion of other times, other places and other types of societies.

Theological Background for Teachers

- "In its origins Christianity is deeply rooted in Judaism. ... Jesus is fully Jewish, the apostles are Jewish, and one cannot doubt their attachment to the traditions of their forefathers." (Charlesworth in Martini 1990)
- Basic Christian beliefs are strongly linked to prevailing Jewish ideas about God, religious leadership, ethics, worship, and the structure of the religious assembly. There are also important links between Jewish festivals and subsequent Christian liturgical celebrations. (Anna Marie Erst 1996 p3)
- Judaism is the parent religion to Islam and Christianity and so it has an indirect affect on hundreds of millions of people.
- Judaism is not a missionary religion although people can be converted to it through a lengthy process of learning and commitment. People born to Jewish mothers are Jews.
- The main theological tenet of Judaism is the belief in one God. Ethics and ritual are very important to Jews as they are laid down in the Torah. Bound up in the nature of Judaism is the corporate identity of its people which is social and political as well as religious.
- The main tenet of Islam is the absolute oneness of God (Allah) and that his truth has been revealed to humans in the Qur'an, which also outlines the various duties that believers must carry out. It may be taken that the God referred to by Muslims is that referred to by Jews and Christians, though there may be debate about the nature and will of God.
- The figure of Abraham is central to three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the documents of Vatican II, the Catholic Church recognised the role and significance of Abraham and the implications of his place in fostering religious understanding and harmony. The faith of Abraham in "one God, living and enduring, merciful and all powerful, Maker of heaven and earth, and Speaker to humans." Is shared by all three religions (*Nostra Aetate*, par 3). Abraham's faith is seen as a unifying feature of the three "religions of the book" . While the Catholic teaching recognises that there are many things not shared between the three religions, especially the belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, still Abraham appears in the Scriptures of each and has a special place of reverence and pre-eminence for all three religions. (M Ryan, 2003, Book 3, p 36)

Scripture

1 Jn 4:8 - God is love.

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Major Assessment Task

Set up a scenario for the students to work either individually or in small groups: Two schools in our town are closing, one is a Jewish school the other Muslim. As a result several new families are coming to our school next term and our aim is to make them very welcome.

The task is to educate our new school community, students, teachers and parents, about Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the similarities, rituals, symbols, customs and practices of these three monotheistic religions.

This information is to be presented in such a way that it is accessible to the whole school community.

Suggested Learning Experiences

Focusing Activity:

Use 100 beads/counters to represent the population of Australia. Divide the beads to represent the three monotheistic religions and 'others'. Of total Australian population % are Christians,% are Muslim and are Jews.

NB: Australian Bureau of Statistics Website has this information.

OR

Using a selection of Christian, Jewish and Islamic ritual objects/illustrations

eg **Christian** - Cross, Bible, Rosary beads, Easter Candle, Sacramental Stole.

Judaism – Tallit, Torah Scroll, Tefillin, Menorah, Kippah, Mezuzah

Islam – Sajjadah, Subhah,

discuss in what context these objects may be used and by whom.

(Refer to Glossary for explanations of ritual objects)

- Read Genesis Chapter 17. Abraham is seen as the common ancestor of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. "God revealed himself to Abram, entrusted to him knowledge about himself, and gave him the task of passing on that truth to his descendants. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of many nations." *Erst, 1996. p 64.*
- Create a simple 'family tree' of Abraham's descendants showing the connection to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- In small groups complete this grid for each of the three monotheistic religions:
Can you find out something about each of these features?

Religious Symbols	Sacred Writings
Prayer	Celebration Meals
Places of Worship	Holy Days

- Brainstorm your experience of Christian Initiation (Baptism). Create an information pamphlet on the welcoming/initiation rituals of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Baptism and Shahada.
- For Catholic Christians the Creed is a statement of beliefs. Create a mural depicting the beliefs of the Creed.
- Create a poster outlining the Five Pillars of Islam.
- Children copy the Shema onto a miniature scroll.
- Islamic design is very special because it is a way for humans to reflect the glory of nature as created by Allah. Look at some Islamic styles and create a design for a tile.
- Many Christian churches have stained glass windows that tell a Scripture story or teach about the Saints. Design a stained glass window.
- Make a Mezuzah. (Refer to *Teaching the Bible* M Ryan, p 28)
- Read a picture story book eg '*The Friday Nights of Nana*', '*One yellow daffodil: a Hanukkah story*' and discuss the Jewish rituals and practices. Do these remind you of any Christian rituals? Note similarities/differences.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Glossary of Terms
- Appendix 2 - Additional information on Islam, Judaism and