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Schools Pack developed by Chris Hudson for the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture

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[Logo] Christianity & Culture

[Logo] Barnabas in Schools
RE Lessons and Worksheets

Lesson B: What special events happen in a church building?

Aims:
To explore the ways that churches are often used to mark and celebrate key moments in the stages of someone's life.
To gain an understanding of the nature and importance of promises.

Objectives:
• Each pupil will compare, evaluate and reflect, both on what they see happening in different Christian ceremonies, and their own experiences.
• Each child will participate in a discussion about the importance of making and keeping of Promises.

Resources:
• DVD-ROM images of baptism (Search the Resource Gallery for “baptise”, “baptism”), confirmation (“confirmation”) and weddings (“marriage”, “wedding”).

Additional resources required:
• Images of key Christian ceremonies such as the christening or dedication of a baby, an adult baptism, a confirmation, a wedding, or a funeral. (Activity 1)
• A selection of images of common symbols such as a mathematical sign, a fast food shop logo, and a Christian cross. (Activity 3)
• Images associated with water, the life of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, life and death, communion. (Activity 3)

Information for teachers:
Read this article on the DVD-ROM:
Section 6: Churches to the present day ▶ Daily life and worship ▶ The Christian community ▶ Lifecycles
Lesson Introduction:

Display the word Promises. Ask and discuss what it means. Explain that people make all sorts of promises – but that there is a difference between saying you are going to do something, and really doing it!

Introductory activity

In small groups, set the drama challenge of creating 3 freeze-frame moments that ‘flow’ into each other when you give a signal:

1. Somebody making a promise
2. The moment when somebody breaks the promise
3. That person then keeping the promise.

Each group has to go from one, to the next, to the final scene, in smooth movements, which will take some time for rehearsal. (Younger or less mature groups could just do one or two freeze-frames – just the making of a promise, and possibly the breaking or keeping of it.)

Develop this by saying that churches have traditionally been the place where many people
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make important promises intended to last for the rest of their lives. What could these promises be?

Show images from the DVD associated with baptism / christening.

This was first done in the sea, a river or a lake – and still is, by some churches. However, many churches have their own special place for this called a baptistery, or font. Show images from the DVD-ROM of a baptistery or font. Some of these are very old, and have been used many hundreds of times.

Part of the baptism includes promises. If the person is an adult, they are asked special questions just beforehand, and they answer. The minister then says special words as they are baptized. If the person is a young child, then the parents make the promises for them, and the child later makes the promises for themselves when they are older, at a special service called Confirmation.
RE Lessons and Worksheets

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Class Activity 1: Baptism promises for a baby (Worksheet 1)

Get the children thinking about a promise that each of them has made in the past.

Give out copies of the worksheet ‘A Royal Christening’ to stimulate thinking about what happens when babies are baptized – and also whether they agree with the idea of parents and godparents making baptismal promises for a child, until the time they can decide for themselves.
Worksheet 1 – A Royal Christening

1) What special promises have you made in your life? Write about one of them. Why was it so special to you?

2) This picture shows the christening of a princess, the daughter of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Can you spot…
   - her parents?
   - the font?
   - the godparents?
   - the minister asking them to make their promises?
   - the prayer book?

What do you think the different people in the picture might be thinking? Write about the thoughts of three people.

3) Some people think babies shouldn’t be baptized, because they can’t make the choice for themselves. Others say it gives them a chance to grow up as a Christian so they can choose wisely for themselves when they are older. What do you think – and why?
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Class activity 2 - Designing a place for promises.

*Explain* that a symbol is a special kind of image carrying an important message in its shape, patterns and colours.

*Illustrate* this by showing a few obvious examples such as a mathematical sign, a fast-food shop logo, and a Christian cross.

*Set the task* of designing a baptismal font for use in a new Christian parish church. The font has to be decorated with symbols and colours, to show it is a place for Christians to make special promises to God that will last a lifetime. You could use images associated with water, the life of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, life and death, communion...

(a search on Google Images for ‘Christian symbols’ should provide the teacher with more than enough to work with, although the meaning of each one will need unpacking before being offered for use by children.)

*When* pupils have made their design, they should label the different features to show what everything means.

This work with symbols is developed further in lesson C.
Class activity 3 – Baptism promises for an adult

Ask pupils to think about an important promise they have made. Who did they make that promise to? Why was it so important? These are the 6 promises that people make to God at an adult baptism in an English Parish Church.

Pupils should underline any words they don’t understand, find out what they mean, write that meaning in a bubble to the side, then think about the 6 promises again. What questions would they have for somebody making them? They should then try to think of at least three ‘open’ questions that start with questioning words such as Why... How... When... What if...)

Minister:

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:

1) Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God? I reject them.
2) Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil? I renounce them.
3) Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour? I repent of them.
4) Do you turn to Christ as Saviour? I turn to Christ.
5) Do you submit to Christ as Lord? I submit to Christ.
6) Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life? I come to Christ.
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Class activity 4: Marriage promises

Christian marriage involves the making of promises. Find the modern words used in an English Parish church at:

http://www.yourchurchwedding.org/planner/FullServiceSample.pdf

Local clergy may be prepared to help a class stage a ‘mock wedding’ or ‘mock christening’ at their church, to help pupils get a feel for the event. The whole class (and community) can be involved in planning and preparing for this, including ‘dressing up’, creating a service booklet and presents (etc), having readings, and even holding a ‘reception’ afterwards – but don’t neglect the crucial importance and discussion of the making of promises. Discussion prompts could include:

What do you think are the most important words and phrases here - and why?

Do you think you would like to make a promise like this in future? Give your reasons, either way.
Worksheet – A Royal Wedding

What do you think this king is promising at his wedding? What do you think his bride-to-be is promising? Write their words on either side of the picture.

If you were to get married, what promises would you want to make? And what would you want the other person to promise you? Give your reasons too.
The English Parish Church Primary Schools Pack has been created for the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at the University of York by Chris Hudson (Barnabas for Children team member, Bible Reading Fellowship). Chris is an experienced primary teacher, subject leader and educational author.

Editorial Team: Dee Dyas, Patrick Gibbs, Louise Hampson, Brian Rahn

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The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture:

The Centre was founded in 1999 to support teaching and research through books and international conferences, and the provision of cultural tools to help students engage with literature, history, art, architecture and music significantly influenced by Christian thought and spirituality.

The Centre has produced a range of resources, including two CD-ROMS (Images of Salvation: the Story of the Bible through Medieval Art' and ‘Pilgrims and Pilgrimage: journey, spirituality and daily life through the centuries’) as well as ‘The English Parish Church through the Centuries: daily life & spirituality, art & architecture, literature & music’. Grant funding means that these resources can be made available at very affordable prices. The books and interactive resources created by Christianity and Culture are now used worldwide in universities and schools and by a general audience.

Christianity and Culture also works with important historic churches to bring recent research to life through interpretation schemes which will help people of all ages and backgrounds understand and enjoy these remarkable buildings and the stories which they hold.

We welcome your feedback on this Schools Pack and would like to create a forum where teaching approaches, experiences and projects can be shared online.
Barnabas for Children exists to support teaching and learning about Christianity, Spirituality and the Bible in primary schools, and to support children's work both in the Church and the home.

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