

What happens in a Place of Worship?

Background to these activities

These teaching ideas offer ways of helping pupils to explore some basic information about places of worship, but also to go beyond the labelling to think about the significance for believers. These activities are presented in a random order – teachers are not expected to work through all twelve systematically. Please select those that are most appropriate for your class.

The activities accompany six wonderful illustrations offering cutaway images of a Buddhist centre, church, gurdwara, mandir, mosque and synagogue. Please be aware that the church is a Baptist church, to offer a contrast with Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. Many Protestant churches have a similar layout, with prominence given to the pulpit for preaching the Bible as the Word of God, although not all will have a baptistry pool for baptism by full immersion. The cutaway of the Buddhist Centre shows a centre from the Triratna Buddhist order. An ordained member of the order can be seen leading meditation. Also, the synagogue is an Orthodox synagogue. This means that there are separate sections for male and female worshippers. More progressive synagogues have many of the same features, such as the ark, bimah and everlasting light, but men and women mix during worship and women can take on the same roles as men during a service.

The activities here make connections with the lives of pupils by focusing on ideas such as peace, service and purpose.

Subject knowledge

Pupils should know that places of worship are important to many religious followers. Their significance varies, however. Many Christians emphasise that the 'Church' is really the community of Christian believers, who are called the 'body' of Christ. Buildings are places to allow Christians to gather together to worship, and to give them a place from which to serve the community. Some newer Protestant church groups use other buildings, such as school halls. The Holy Qur'an says that "The world, the whole of it, is a Mosque [a place of prayer]...Wherever you turn, there is the face of God." 2: 115. The mosque itself reveals some key Muslim beliefs, such as the idea of ummah or community, submission, and the Oneness of God.

Links across the curriculum

SMSC: the resources and activities here help pupils to reflect on ideas of identity and community, love and service, and develop sensitivity and respect.

Literacy: the activities encourage pupils in developing skills in spoken language, reading and writing, including questioning, giving reasons and writing for different purposes.

Art and design: you might extend the activities in this unit by getting pupils to consider ways in which calligraphy and geometric art are used to express the beauty of God in Islam, without trying to draw pictures of God – an activity that is forbidden in Islam. You might ask pupils to create models of different types of church or synagogue, or they could re-create specific local or famous places of worship.

Twelve Ways to Use the Cutaway Pictures

1. **Why are some places sacred?:** Split the pupils into groups of three and give each group a cutaway picture. Ask the pupils to:
 - Identify any parts of the picture that they can name or explain what is happening.
 - Choose three parts of the picture that might make the place sacred. Label them and talk about why some people would say they are sacred.
 - Meet up with a group who were looking at the other picture. Discuss what is similar or different about the pictures. Is it similar or different things that make these places sacred for some people?

2. **Listing and labelling:** Here are 8 key words and phrases linked with each place of worship. There is a generic set of words that can all be linked to more than one place of worship. When learning about a place of worship, you might introduce the relevant words to the class first and then give pupils the labels to put onto picture in the right place; or you might give pupils the pictures and a dictionary, and get them to work out for themselves the correct places. Get them to practise saying and writing the words.
 If pupils are learning about more than one place of worship, jumble up the words for the places they are learning about, plus those from the generic set. Pupils will need to identify which words match which place of worship before they begin their labelling task.

Buddhist Centre

shrine	stupa	Buddha rupa	bell
meditation	sangha	prayer flags	Buddhist flag

Church

baptistery	pulpit	pastor	worship band
youth group	Jesus	Sunday school	bible

Gurdwara

chauri	granthi	guru granth sahib	langar
karah parshad	Golak	sach khan	headscarves

Mandir

bell	murti	arti lamp	incense
prasad	musicians	shrine	priest

Mosque

minbar	qibla wall	minaret	imam
wash room	clocks	mihrab	madrassah

Synagogue

rabbi	ark	sefer torah	bimah
everlasting light	tallit	yarmulke	siddur

Generic

balcony	kitchen	shoe rack	G-d
library	worship	prayer	incense

- Spot the difference:** Ask pupils to find at least five similarities and five differences between two places of worship. Why do they think there are some things that are the same and some that are different between the two places of worship?
- Framing: what matters most?**
 - Give pupils a small cardboard or paper frame and ask them to place it on the picture over the place that they think is: busiest, happiest, noisiest, most thoughtful, most important, most holy. There are no specific right answers, so pupils should give good reasons for their choices.
 - Where do pupils think that worshippers will find peace and why? Where do worshippers learn most, and why? Where do worshippers get a chance to serve others? Where is the place for the youngest, and for the oldest? Where is there somewhere for all ages together? Where do worshippers go to find a purpose for their lives? Where do worshippers get most help with their lives, when they are struggling?
 - Follow this up with some reflection on pupils' own lives. Where do they find peace, and why? Where do they learn most, and why? Where do they get a chance to serve others? Where do they go where people of all ages go together? How do they decide the purpose in their own lives? Where do they get most help when they are struggling? Talk about how and why their own answers are similar to and different from the answers from part a).
- Maps from memory:** Carry out this activity using a cutaway image that pupils have not yet seen. Get pupils to work in groups of four. Pupil 1 from each group comes to the front of the class and you show them one of the pictures for ten seconds. They go back to the group and explain to Pupil 2 what they saw, and Pupil 2 draws according to their direction. After two minutes, all the Pupil 2s have a 10 second look at the picture and explain what they have seen for Pupil 3 to draw. Go around twice and then get pupils to show other groups their drawings, explaining what they have drawn. Show them the real image and get them to give the pictures marks out of ten for accuracy!
- Alien report:** Imagine that you are aliens of high intelligence who are on a mission to find out about life on earth. Your spaceship lands near a large building. Using your x-ray vision you look through the walls and see the scene from one of the cutaways. You know nothing about what human beings do. What do you think is happening? What might be going on?

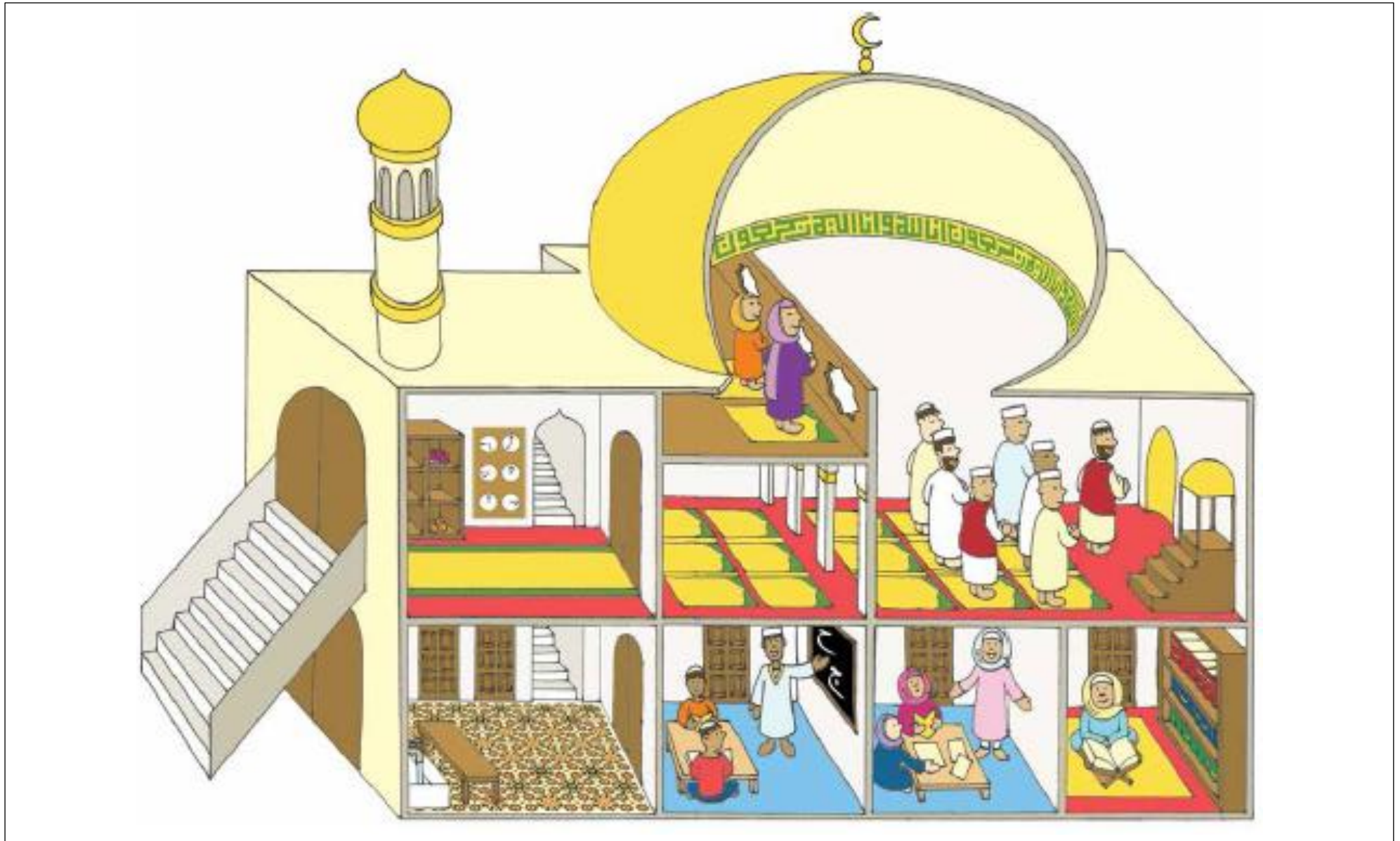
Working in groups, write your report. What might the creatures be doing in this place? Try to think like aliens might think!

Read some of your alien reports. Did your reports get it right? Could you tell what the people are doing and why the human beings are behaving like this? Why not? What would you need to do to find out what is actually going on and why? Being able to speak with the human beings, asking questions, spending more time observing, reading the religious stories and teachings – all of these will help aliens to be able to get their report right. Use this approach to start an investigation into what it means to be a member of the religion that the cutaway is based on and what it means to worship.



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7. **Alien questions:** Having (probably!) got their first Alien Report wrong, set your alien pupils the task of finding out better answers. Start with all the questions pupils can think of. Question stems are a good place to start: Who/what/where/when/how/why? Get pupils to direct their questions at three people in the picture.

Go through the questions and sort them into categories.

- Simple categories are Big Questions and Little Questions.
- Others are those with just one correct answer and these with many possible answers.
- These can be further broken down into **comprehension** questions (about understanding the facts); **knowledge** questions (that need some specialist knowledge); **speculation** questions (that use our imagination) and **enquiry** questions (that take you on a journey of discovery).
- Use resources to find out the answers to as many of the questions as possible. Decide on a class enquiry question. Go on a visit or two; invite some believers in to answer questions.

8. **Sense trail:** Ask pupils to focus on one of their senses. You might get them all to focus on hearing, first of all, or give groups of pupils one sense each. (Smell and taste can be the most difficult, of course!) Get them to imagine walking in to the building. What would they see/hear/touch? As they wander around the building, what are the key things that strike their senses?

You might do this as a guided reflection, where you get pupils to close their eyes as you describe walking into and around the buildings in the pictures. Or pupils have a copy of one picture and label it with the sounds they might hear (worship music, call to prayer, sermon) or the sensations from what they might touch (shaking hands, washing hands, face and feet, bare feet on the floor).

9. **Tour guide:** Ask pupils to imagine they are part of the welcome team for a specific place of worship. They have a group of children coming on a visit. To which three parts of the place of worship would they take their visitors, and what would they say?

10. **Recreate a place of worship:** This activity can work especially well after pupils have been on a visit as well as seeing the cutaway. Choose a team of four pupils to be the architects for the place of worship. The architects then physically move each of the other class members to create the building or significant part of the building outline. Once the outline has been created, use masking tape or chalk to draw around the outline. The pupils can now step back and admire the parameters of the place they have recreated. Ask the children to work in groups to identify key features in the place of worship. These features can then be simply added by a pupil with a label or action representing the item, e.g. everlasting light – arms stretched high, fingers flickering like flames; clock – arms as clock hands, ticking sound. These could also be represented by pupils holding photographs or pictures they have drawn.

Pupils then rehearse their role as a tour guide. They practise what they will say at various parts of the tour, how they will describe why significant features are important to believers, and practise answering questions. Invite the visitors! Give as many of the pupils as possible the opportunity to be tour guides.

A short film of a KS1 class participating in this activity can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4_CX8oKzy4

11. **How do places of worship help believers to...?:** Places of worship often represent an attitude towards God; but they can also offer places of community too. Ask pupils to find out and explain how the place of worship helps believers: to say thank you; to say sorry; to praise God; to celebrate; to be quiet and still; to learn what is good and bad; to care for others; to serve people in need; to learn from each other. Ask pupils to consider whether there are any parts of their own lives that are similar or different: where and when do they: say thank you, say sorry, praise [God or ...?], celebrate, be quiet and still, learn what is good and bad, care for others, serve people in need, learn from others? Do pupils think these are good things to do? Why?

12. **Meet the people:** This activity focuses on the church and mosque cutaways. Introduce Fred, Naomi and Tim from the church and Wasim, Imran and Nasima. Choose people to represent them from the pictures. Below are six short accounts from people who use the church or mosque regularly. Before reading the information, ask pupils to think what they expect the people to say about what they do and why church/mosque is so important to them. Next read the verses from the Bible and the Qur'an. Use these to add to their ideas. Finally read the information from the six believers; talk about what pupils got right, what surprised them, and any further questions they would want to ask.

Learning from six people from the church and mosque

<p>Hello. I'm Fred and I'm one of the welcome team at this church. I'm a primary teacher during the week but on Sundays I say hello to people as they come in to church. I make sure new people are introduced to some Christians who come regularly, to make them feel welcome. I am also on the Street Team. Two evenings a week I work with supporting the homeless. I do this by cooking food some weeks and other weeks by going out into the town to take soup and sandwiches to people in need. I think being a Christian is about being like Jesus to everyone around me.</p>	<p>Hi, I'm Naomi and I lead the worship at this church. This means that I organise the music, and sometimes lead the band in services. I sing and play guitar. I try to help people remember that we are here to worship God, because God is so great! We praise and thank God for all the great things God has done.</p> <p>But worship is not just about singing. It is about following God in everything we do. We ask Jesus for forgiveness, and we say thank you to him for taking away the bad things we do. Jesus also shows us how to live, by loving other people and doing what we can to help those in need.</p>	<p>Hi, I'm Tim. I'm pastor of this Baptist Church. I'm called a pastor because my job is to be like a shepherd to the Christians who come to church, but also to help people in the wider community. I try to guide people in how to live well, teaching them about Jesus and God, using the Bible. I visit people in hospital when they are ill, and also in their homes when they are well. I love bringing God's love to people's everyday lives. I try to pray for all my congregation, including the children. I work with a group of Deacons. They are members of the church who give their time to serve and lead others.</p>
<p>As-salaam aleikum! I am Wasim and I am the imam at this mosque. My job is most importantly to lead people in the five daily prayers. I stand at the front and help Muslims to submit to Allah by praying together. At Friday prayers I give a short sermon or khutba. During the rest of the week I help people when they are looking for advice on spiritual or practical matters, to bring them closer to Allah. I visit people who are sick. I also perform wedding ceremonies – but not as often as I would like!</p>	<p>Hello, I am Imran. At this mosque I am a hafiz. This means that I have spent many hours learning to memorise the words of Allah, the Holy Qur'an. This helps me to be closer to Allah because I have his words in my head all the time. I help to lead the madrassah, the mosque school. I help children and young people to learn Arabic so that they can read the Holy Qur'an. Some of my students are learning to become Hafiz too!</p> <p>At this mosque we run youth groups. We want to help young people get fit and healthy, but also to respect others.</p>	<p>Hello, I am Nasima and I sometimes worship at the mosque, particularly at Friday prayers. I sit in the balcony with my daughter, Abidah. I help at the madrassah twice a week, with the younger children, aged 6-8. I am a lawyer in my day job and so the Mosque committee have asked if I can give advice to people who need help. I might advise on buying a home, but I also offer advice to women who want help on a whole range of issues.</p>

Learning from six teachings from the Bible and the Qur'an

<p>Whenever two or three are gathered together in my name, said Jesus, I will be with them. Matthew 18:19-21</p>	<p>Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbour as you love yourself. Matthew 22:37-39</p>	<p>Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:19-20 (NIV)</p>
<p>God's mosques should only be tended by one who believes in God and the Last Day, and is constant in prayer, and gives Zakat (charity), and stands in awe of none but God: for only such a person may hope to be among the rightly-guided! Qur'an 9:18</p>	<p>In houses [of worship] which Allah has permitted to be built so that His name may be remembered in them; there glorify Him in the mornings and the evenings. Qur'an 24:36</p>	<p>Wherever the hour of prayer overtakes you, you shall perform it. That place is a mosque. Hadith</p>