

# Worship

## LESSON 2a

# Worship



ARCHAEOLOGY  
time in transition

IT'S ABOUT TIME 2



## Aim(s)

To explore the concept of worship and examine the archaeology of Christian worship in Ireland.



## Objective(s)

To enhance the students understanding of churches as places of Christian worship.



## Time Period

4th/5th Century AD to the present day.



## KEY INFORMATION

### Lesson

- Worship is an act of devotion most typically directed to a supernatural being.
- There are different acts of worship common to all societies past and present.
- Churches are buildings designed for public Christian worship.

### Context

- There has been Christian worship in Ireland since the 5th century AD.
- There are lots of monuments and artefacts associated with Christian worship.
- Church architecture (shape, style, and size etc) is sensitive to changes in society.



## METHODOLOGY & MEDIUM

- Instruction
- Discussion



## SECTIONS

**Section 1** What is Worship?

**Section 2** Evidence for Christian Worship in Ireland

**Section 3** The Archaeology of Christian Worship in Ireland

**Section 4** The Archaeology of Churches


**Key Question(s)** How do Christians worship in Ireland today?

- Worship is an act of devotion showing the reverent love of a deity, an idol or a sacred object.
- Worship has been a feature of human society since prehistoric times (see *The Magic Ring*, T1,U1,L1).  
The chief religion in Ireland since the 5th century is Christianity. Christians are people who worship Jesus Christ.


**Teacher Instruction**

Ask the students to name ways in which Christians worship in Ireland today.

**Examples of worship**

- Praying.
- Going to church.
- Baptism.
- Holy Communion.
- Singing hymns.
- Visiting a holy shrine.
- Reading the Bible.

These are all examples of familiar acts of Christian worship.

The general categories that cover most acts of worship, both today and in the past include the following

- Prayer and meditation.
- Ritual ceremonies.
- Sacrifice.
- Sacred music.
- Chanting and dance.
- Going on pilgrimage.
- Venerating at shrines.
- Seasonal festivals.


**Key Points**

- Worship is a feature of all cultures and societies.
- Though each religion has its own specific forms of worship there is a commonality in the way in which all human societies perform worship.





**Key Question(s)** What is the evidence for Christian worship in Ireland?



## Teacher Instruction

Ask the students to imagine that they are non-Christian travellers from a far-off country and a distant time visiting Ireland today.

### What evidence of Christian worship will they find in:

- Towns?
- Countryside?
- Homes?
- Schools?
- Places of work?
- Places of leisure?



## Teacher Instruction

Note the student's suggestions in two columns. Place the monuments (buildings and structures) in one column, and the artefacts (portable objects) in the other.

It should look something like this:

### Monuments

Church  
Gospel Hall  
Monastery  
Grotto  
Calvary  
Holy Well

### Artefacts

Prayer book  
Bible  
Holy Statue  
Cross  
Sacred Heart lamp  
Chalice  
Hymnal  
Holy Picture

From this evidence, what would the traveller conclude about Christian worship in Ireland?



## Key Points

- Christianity is the main religion in Ireland.
- Christians worship in sacred places called churches.
- Christians use special objects, like a chalice or Bible for worship.
- Christian worship is an important part of life in Ireland.

There are other religions in Ireland today apart from Christianity. What evidence is there in the country for these other religions?

- Muslim—mosque
- Jewish—synagogue
- Hindu—temple
- Buddhist—shrine

What does the fact that these places of worship are relatively rare tell us about these religions in Ireland today? (There are not many people who practise these religions in the country by comparison with the number of Christians though this is changing with increased immigration from the Middle East, Africa and Asia).



**Key Question(s)** What is the archaeological evidence of Christian worship in Ireland?



### *Monuments*

Old churches  
Old monasteries  
High crosses  
Round towers  
Holy wells/trees  
Holy trees/bushes  
Calvary  
Memorial crosses

### *Artefacts*

Chalices  
Holy Books  
Statues  
Reliquaries  
Crosses



### **Key Point**

The variety and number of Christian monuments and artefacts from the different ages tell us that Christianity has been important in Ireland over the past one and a half thousand years, since St Patrick's time.

## SECTION 4 The Archaeology of Churches



**Key Question(s)** What are the main features of a Christian church?

### **Where is the main place for Christian worship?**

- The Church.

### **What is a Church?**

- A building where public Christian worship takes place.

### **What activities take place in a Church?**

- Religious ceremonies.
- Prayer.
- Singing of hymns.
- Baptism.

### **What does a typical church look like? What are its main features?**



### **Teacher Instruction**

Explore with the students their ideas of what a church looks like. Record their suggestions on the board and discuss the results with them pointing out the function of the features.

- **Large impressive building**  
Interpretation: they were of importance to the people who built them.
- **Decorated building**  
Interpretation: a lot of effort went into its design and construction.

- **Open plan inside**  
Interpretation: to accommodate lots of people and ensure they all have a clear view of the ceremonies.
- **Stained Glass Windows**  
Interpretation: to allow in light and create a special atmosphere inside.
- **Altar**  
Interpretation: a special area with a table to perform ritual celebration; communion/prayers.
- **Doors**  
Interpretation: access to the interior. Usually wide enough to allow two people walking abreast; e.g. married couple, people carrying a coffin etc. Decorated door surround emphasises its role as the entrance into an important place.
- **Bell**  
Interpretation: device for calling people to worship.

### Overall Interpretation

- The appearance of churches reflects their important role in society.
- Many of the features of a church reflect their role as places of Christian worship.

When we look at churches in Ireland over the last one and a half thousand years we see that they have changed in form and appearance over that time, though still retaining the same basic function.

These changes have been brought about for a variety of different reasons.

- The change in architectural style—Romanesque, Gothic, Modern etc.
- The change in availability of material—Wood, stone, concrete, steel etc.
- The change of ecclesiastical regulations—Vatican 2 (altar facing the people etc.)



### Key Point

These changes in form and fabric are helpful to archaeologists who study old churches as they provide clues to date and function over time.



### Teacher Instruction

In the next section we go back in time and see how churches in Ireland have changed and developed since Early Christian times.

## WEB LINKS

WWW.



Alternative Worship  
Worship Services  
Goddess Worship  
Christian Places of Worship  
Christian Worship

[www.alternativeworship.org/](http://www.alternativeworship.org/)  
[www.spirithome.com/worship.html](http://www.spirithome.com/worship.html)  
[www.religioustolerance.org/goddess.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/goddess.htm)  
<http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00157/christplaceofworship.html>  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/ritesrituals/worship.shtml>