**SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR**

**LIFE CONCEPT:**  GOD GATHERS CHRISTIANS TO WORSHIP HIM

**YEAR:** ..........................................................  SUGGESTED DURATION:  5 weeks (135 minutes per week)

**DATE OF USE:** ..........................................................  FAITH STATEMENTS:  ①  ②  ③

**UNIT-SPECIFIC GOALS** (highlighted)

1. IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP GOD COMES TO HIS PEOPLE IN WORD AND SACRAMENT AND THEY RESPOND
   - 1a explore references to worship in the Old Testament
   - 1b examine elements of Christian worship

2. CHRISTIANS WORSHIP REGULARLY AND ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS
   - 2a identify the benefits for Christians of coming together for worship
   - 2b explore the seasons of the church year and the symbols associated with them
   - 2c identify ways people can worship God in their daily life

3. CHRISTIANS WORSHIP IN A VARIETY OF WAYS
   - 3a recognise and explore Christian worship rituals
   - 3b identify styles of Christian worship

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

**ASSESSABLE STUDENT OUTCOMES**

- Prepare a display which provides information about the seasons of the church year.  (2b)
- Describe ways Christians respond to the Bible’s message of God’s love.  (2c,1b)
- Plan a worship service which includes the basic elements of Christian worship and focuses on a particular season of the church year.  (1b,2b)
- Evaluate a variety of worship plans.  (1b,3b)

**ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES**

- work sample
- work sample
- worship plan
- TRS B2/7

**UNIT SUMMARY**

Students identify each of the seasons of the church year, the Bible’s message of God’s actions for each of the seasons, and the response of Christians to these actions of God. The students plan a simple worship service which includes some of the basic elements of Christian worship and uses one of the seasons of the church year as a theme.
UNIT NOTES

This unit can be taught all at one time, with students examining each of the seasons of the church year. Alternatively, sections of this unit could be explored during the appropriate seasons of the church year.

In the Introduction students could make a secular class calendar which identifies which months of the year relate to various seasons and describes the activities and characteristics of each season. Consider adding to the class calendar information students identify about seasons of the church year.

INTRODUCTION

1. SEASONS

Show students a variety of pictures which illustrate various natural seasons, eg summer, autumn, winter, spring, wet, dry. Ask students to name activities which take place during the various seasons, eg football, cricket, shearing, harvesting.

Students work in groups and choose a particular season. They identify the following for their chosen season:
- characteristics of the season
- activities which take place
- special events
- months of the year
- the number of days in the season.

Students produce a class calendar which displays the above information about each season.

This activity does not necessarily have to take place during Christian Studies time.

DEVELOPMENT

2. CHURCH SEASONS

Tell students that the Christian church celebrates special seasons too. These seasons are not related to the weather but to the Bible’s message of God’s love through Jesus. It’s a story Christians want to hear and celebrate over and over again. In each of the seasons Christians hear what God has done for them and they respond to this message.

This section can be dealt with in two ways:
1. The class can investigate each of the seasons of the church year as a group.
2. Divide the class into groups. Each group researches a particular season of the church year.

If this option is chosen, it may be advisable to model the necessary research.

For each of the following seasons and celebrations a Teacher Resource Sheet (TRS) is provided with information about the season and aspects for the students to investigate.

Students prepare a display which provides the following information about a season of the church year:
- a brief summary of the focus of the season
- summaries and/or illustrations of Bible stories which describe God’s actions relating to the theme of the season
- what God is saying to people in the season
- examples of songs or prayers which could be used during the season
- colours and symbols used during this season and their meaning.

ADVENT See TRS B2/1.
During Advent the focus of God’s actions is the ‘coming’ of Jesus — once as the promised Saviour and finally as the king of glory. Christians respond with anticipation and repentance.

CHRISTMAS See TRS B2/2.
At Christmas the focus of God’s actions is God sending Jesus into the world. Christians respond with joy and celebration.

EPIPHANY See TRS B2/3.
During Epiphany the focus of God’s actions is God showing Jesus as God’s Son and the Saviour of all people. Christians respond with praise and worship and sharing the message about Jesus with others.

LENT including Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday See TRS B2/4.
During Lent the focus of God’s actions is God sending Jesus to suffer and die for the sake of all people. Christians respond with repentance, prayer, and meditation.

EASTER See TRS B2/5.
During Easter the focus of God’s actions is God raising Jesus from the dead and bringing new life to all people who believe in Jesus. Christians respond with joy and celebration.

PENTECOST See TRS B2/6.
At Pentecost the focus of God’s actions is the Holy Spirit coming to help people believe in Jesus. Christians respond with celebration, thanks, hope, and holy living.
ORDINARY TIME
Tell students that the rest of the year Christians continue to celebrate the Bible’s message of God’s love for all people.

As an optional activity, students may also investigate special church celebrations, such as Transfiguration, Ascension, Trinity or other minor celebrations such as New Year’s Eve/Day, Harvest Thanksgiving, Mission Day. Alternatively, students could include these special days in the seasons of the church year when they are celebrated.

3. HOW CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO WHAT GOD HAS DONE

In this section the students hear that worship is the response of Christians to what God has done.

A guest (and/or the teacher) shares with the students their personal response to the Bible’s story of God’s love. Ask the guest to consider including responses such as: telling how wonderful God is, praying and singing songs to God, listening to God, asking for forgiveness, thanking God for his love, sharing God’s love with other people, serving God in daily life.

Organise for a Christian who worships regularly to give a personal response to the stories they hear year after year about what God has done through Jesus. The person could tell the students why they worship God and how they worship God. Include examples of the way they worship God in their daily life, not just when they are in church.

The teacher could consider giving a personal response to the stories of the church year and explaining how this response is related to worship.

An alternative way of helping students to identify Christians’ response to God’s actions through worship, is to share with them a book which deals with this area, such as Worship: Our Gift to God.

Students dramatise or illustrate the various ways Christians respond to God’s actions.

RESPONSE

4. PLANNING WORSHIP

In this section the students are introduced to planning worship using a very simple worship pattern. It does not contain all the elements of worship.

Students work in groups or pairs. They choose one of the seasons of the church year and plan a worship event which could be used for class or school worship. The following elements should be evident:

- welcome and invitation to worship
- praise to God (psalms, songs, visual arts)
- a Bible story applicable to the season of the church year they have chosen (story, drama, visual presentation)
- thanks to God for God’s actions in the Bible story (prayer, songs).

(Those students preparing the worship for Advent and Lent may be encouraged to include a section where people can tell God about the things they have done wrong and say sorry to God. They should also include God’s message of forgiveness.)

Students use the following as resources when planning:

- information they have acquired in Section 2 of the unit
- copies of school (or other) worship orders.

Encourage students to consider a variety of ways to express the message of each element of the worship service, eg drama, music, visual arts and multimedia.

Students share their ideas and plans for worship with the class or lead a worship service using their plan.

Students complete TRS B2/7 to evaluate each of the worship plans presented.
YOU WILL NEED

- resources about the seasons of the year
- materials needed to construct a class calendar
- photocopy TRS B2/1–B2/7 for students
- Bibles, illustrated Bibles
- non-fiction resources about festivals and celebrations of the church year
- to arrange for a Christian who worships regularly to talk to the students about why and how they worship
- copies of school (or other) worship orders

INTEGRATING INTO OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS


ARTS: Drama: Improvise and experiment in structured drama. Use known, given text as a basis for action. Shape own drama for particular audiences or purpose. Music: Improvise and compose music in response to psalms and moods. Listen, perform, talk about music composed for a purpose. Visual Arts: Make, design, arrange works for a specific audience or purpose. Consider how artworks have different values for people, eg communicate a message, express an idea.


from the National Statements and Profiles

UNIT EVALUATION

Which activities worked well in this unit?

Which resources were useful in the implementation of this unit?

How did I respond to the range of students' knowledge about seasons of the church year?

How did I respond to the range of students' attitudes towards planning worship?

What would I do differently if I was teaching this unit again?

How will I use and build on knowledge, understandings, skills, attitudes, and values students have developed in this unit?
Advent is the first season of the church year. It does not begin on the 1st of January but four weeks before Christmas. The word Advent means 'coming'. It is a time when God tells people that he is sending Jesus as their Saviour.

Advent is a time of hope and excitement. It's a time when Christians get ready to celebrate the coming of Jesus to the world at Christmas. For Christians this does not just mean doing their Christmas shopping! Preparing for Jesus means thinking of the things they have done wrong, and saying that they are sorry for these things. Advent is also a time when Christians look forward to when Jesus will come back again.

The colour used for worship during Advent is violet. Violet was the traditional colour of a king's robe. It is a symbol for royalty as well as for turning away from sin.

**BIBLE STORIES AND PASSAGES FOR ADVENT**

- Mark 1:1-8

**ACTIVITIES**

- Write three sentences which tell about Advent.
- Choose one of the Bible stories and do one of these activities:
  - Draw a picture or make a model/puppet of John the Baptist. Record or present orally, the message he gave to the people to prepare them for Jesus.
  - Make a storyboard which describes the angel's visit to Mary and Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth.
- Write what you think is God's message to people in Advent. Choose a Christian song(s) which describes the message of the Bible story. Or find or write a prayer which describes the way Christians feel about what God has done in this Bible story.
- Identify symbols which are used during Advent and find out their meaning or create your own symbol and explain the meaning.

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

1. Find out how to make an Advent wreath or Advent calendar. Write the instructions in your own words. Describe how to use the wreath or calendar.
2. Research ways people celebrate Advent in countries around the world.
3. Record information about Advent on the class calendar.
INFORMATION

Christmas is the season when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus. They believe that in a very special way, God became a human being. He came to bring hope and life to the whole world.

Christmas is a season of great happiness. It begins on the evening of December 24 and does not end until January 6.

No-one knows for certain when Jesus was born, as the Bible does not tell us. About three hundred years after Jesus was born, Christians decided that it would be a good idea to celebrate Jesus' birth. They chose December 25, as this day was already a festival.

The colour which is used for worship during Christmas is white. White is a symbol of light, glory and celebration.

A Bible story which describes the birth of Jesus
Luke 2:1-20

ACTIVITIES

☐ Write three sentences which tell about Christmas.

☐ Read the Bible story and do one of these activities:
  - Retell the story of Jesus' birth as though you were there when it happened.
  - Make a diorama or a model which illustrates the events which took place when Jesus was born.

☐ Write what you think is God's message to people at Christmas. Choose a Christian song(s) which describes the message of the Bible story. Or find or write a prayer which describes the way Christians feel about what God has done in this Bible story.

☐ Identify symbols which are used at Christmas and find out their meaning or create your own symbol and explain the meaning.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Investigate ways people in countries around the world celebrate Christmas.

2. Describe and illustrate a Christmas worship service you have attended.

3. Research and present information about the story of Saint Nicholas.

4. Record information about Christmas on the class calendar.
Twelve days after Christmas comes the season of Epiphany. The word Epiphany means ‘showing’. Christians celebrate the time when Jesus was shown to people as God’s Son and the Saviour of all people.

The Bible says that wise men from countries far away from Bethlehem visited Jesus and brought him special gifts to show that they believed that he was very important. Christians believe that this also shows that Jesus came for people everywhere, not just the country he was born in.

The colours for worship in Epiphany are white and green. White is a symbol for light, glory and celebration and green is the symbol for growth.

### BIBLE STORY FOR EPIPHANY

Matthew 2:1-12

### ACTIVITIES

- Write three sentences which tell about Epiphany.
- Read the Bible story and do one of these activities:
  - Make a star from silver or gold paper and record Matthew 2:2 on it.
  - Retell the story of the wise men visiting Jesus from the perspective of Mary or Joseph.
- Write what you think is God’s message to people in Epiphany. Choose a Christian song(s) which describes the message of the Bible story. Or find or write a prayer which describes the way Christians feel about what God has done in this Bible story.
- Identify symbols which are used during this season or design your own and explain them.

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Research the meaning of the gifts the wise men brought to Jesus.
2. Research the meaning of and make a ‘Christingle’. (See resources such as Festivals of the Christian Year by Lois Rock.)
3. Read other Bible stories which are told during Epiphany, such as Jesus’ baptism, Jesus calling his disciples to follow him, Jesus’ miracles.
4. Record information about Epiphany on the class calendar.
INFORMATION

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday six weeks before Easter, not counting Sundays. Ashes are a sign of being sorry.

Lent is a quiet time for Christians. They think about what they have done wrong. They think about how much God loves everyone and how God sent Jesus. They think about what it means to follow Jesus and how they can show more of God’s love to others.

Lent ends on Good Friday when Christians also focus on the Bible story of Jesus’ suffering and death.

The colour used for worship during Lent is violet. Violet is the symbol for royalty as well as for turning away from sin.

BIBLE STORIES ABOUT THE SUFFERING AND DEATH OF JESUS

Jesus enters Jerusalem

The Lord’s supper
Luke 22:14-20

Jesus prays

Jesus is arrested

Jesus is sentenced to death

Jesus is nailed to the cross
Luke 23:26-43

Jesus dies
Luke 23:44-49

Jesus is buried
Luke 23:50-56

ACTIVITIES

- Write three sentences which tell about Lent.
- Read the Bible stories about Jesus’ suffering and death from the Bible or a Bible story book and do one of these activities:
  - Make a story map which describes what happened to Jesus in holy week.
  - Imagine you are one of Jesus’ disciples. Retell the story of what happened to Jesus.
- Write what you think is God’s message to people in Lent. Choose a Christian song(s) which describes the message of the Bible story. Or find or write a prayer which describes the way Christians feel about what God has done in this Bible story.
- Identify symbols which are used during Lent or design your own and explain them.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Research different kinds of crosses used in churches. Illustrate or make a model of a cross.
2. Research ways people from countries around the world celebrate Lent.
3. Record information about Lent on the class calendar.
For Christians Easter is the most important season of the church year. It is also the happiest!

Christians believe that Jesus rose to new life on the Sunday after Good Friday. He had defeated sin and death for all people. By his suffering, death and rising from the dead, Jesus made it possible for all people who believe in him to have new life.

Easter Sunday is so important to Christians, that each Sunday is celebrated as a ‘little Easter’. This is why Sunday is the day of worship for Christians.

The Easter season is celebrated for fifty days.

The colour used for worship during Easter is white. White is a symbol of celebration, happiness and victory.

### Bible Stories about Jesus Being Alive Again

| Jesus is alive | Luke 24:1-12 |
| Jesus appears to two disciples | Luke 24:13-35 |
| Jesus appears to his disciples | John 20:19-29 |
| Jesus cooks breakfast for his disciples | John 21:1-14 |

### Activities

- Write three sentences which tell about Easter.
- Read the story ‘Jesus is alive’ from the Bible or a Bible story book and any of the other stories about Jesus appearing to his disciples and do one of these activities:
  - Imagine you are one of Jesus’ disciples. Retell the story of seeing Jesus alive again for the first time.
  - Make a visual display which illustrates the Bible stories describing Jesus after he had risen from the dead.
- Write what you think is God’s message to people at Easter. Choose a Christian song(s) which describes the message of the Bible story. Or find or write a prayer which describes the way Christians feel about what God has done in this Bible story.
- Identify symbols which are used during this season or design your own and explain the meaning.

### Optional Activities

1. Research the ways people in countries around the world celebrate Easter.
2. Make symbols of new life, eg butterflies, decorated eggs and attach them to branches to make an Easter tree or to a cross.
3. Record information about Easter on the class calendar.
INFORMATION

Jesus promised his disciples that he would send them a helper who would be with them in a special way.

The Bible says that during the festival of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus returned to heaven, God sent the Holy Spirit, the helper Jesus promised.

Christians believe that the Holy Spirit works in people’s lives and helps them to believe in Jesus, to understand God’s word, to share the message of God’s love through Jesus and to show God’s love in the way they live. Pentecost comes from the Greek word which means ‘fiftieth’. Pentecost Sunday is fifty days after Easter.

The colour used for worship during Pentecost is red. Red is a symbol of fire and reminds people of the Holy Spirit appearing as tongues of fire on Pentecost day.

ACTIVITIES

- Write three sentences which tell about Pentecost.
- Read the Bible stories from the Bible or a Bible story book and do one of these activities:
  - Retell the story, imagining you were in the crowd the day the Holy Spirit came.
  - Create a storyboard of the events which took place at Pentecost.
- Write what you think is God’s message to people at Pentecost. Choose a Christian song(s) which describes the message of the Bible story. Or find or write a prayer which describes the way Christians feel about what God has done in this Bible story.
- Identify symbols which are used during Pentecost or design your own and explain them.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Research ways people in countries around the world celebrate Pentecost.
2. Research the original Jewish festival of Pentecost or Feast of Weeks.
3. Record information about Pentecost on the class calendar.

BIBLE STORIES ABOUT THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST

The coming of the Holy Spirit
Acts 2:1-13

Peter’s speech
Acts 2:14-42
WORSHIP PLAN EVALUATION

Complete a worship plan evaluation for each of the worship plans you examine.

1. Name of season of the church year described in the worship plan
   ........................................................................................................

2. Names of group members
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................

3. Tick the elements of worship the students included in their plan.
   □ welcome/invitation to worship
   □ praise to God
   □ Bible story or message
   □ thanks to God
   □ other (please name what it is)
   ........................................................................................................

4. Comment on what you liked about the worship plan.
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................

5. Any suggestions to add to the worship plan.
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................
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6. Your name..............................................................................
GOD GATHERS CHRISTIANS TO WORSHIP HIM