## How does worship make a difference to believers?

## How are two religions so different but still have some important similarities?

### Islam – Mosque

**What is Islam?**

Islam is a monotheistic religion that believes in just one god, Allah. The Muslim religion has a holy book named the Qur'an that is believed to contain the exact words of Allah as they were told to the prophet and messenger, Muhammad.

Muslim's believe that:

- Allah is absolutely one and eternal
- He is incomparable and self-sustaining
- Islam is the complete and whole version of the first faith that was found and told to lots of prophets including Ishmael and Jesus.
- These messages have been changed or misremembered over time and the holy book the Qur'an is the unedited or Final Testament from God.

Most Muslims can be classified into one of two denominations, Sunni and Shia.

Sunni focuses heavily on the traditions of the Muslim religion (Islam) and the prophet Muhammad and his friends. Unlike Sunni, Muslims who follow the Shia branch of Islam believe that Muhammad requested, and later appointed his son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor.

**What is a mosque?**

A mosque is an Islamic place of worship for people of the Muslim faith. The Arabic word for mosque is 'masjid' and it means 'place of prostration' to God. The first-ever mosque was a 7th-century house with a large courtyard and long rooms in Medina, Saudi Arabia. It was the Prophet Muhammad's home. In the UK, there are over 1500 mosques and 2.5 million Muslims.

**Worship in Islam**

Mosques are places where Muslims worship, they are an open area of prayer in Islam. There are two main types of mosques: masjid jāmi which means 'collective mosque' and is a centre of community worship and where Muslims attend Friday prayer services. There are also smaller, private mosques that are attended by various people within the community. In the past, schools and libraries were attached to medieval mosques. This was mainly to teach the Qur'ān and to give classes to other people in the community. No music or singing is allowed inside a mosque, though professional chanters (*qurrā*) may chant the Qur'ān.

**Inside a Mosque**

The first mosques were modelled on the Prophet Muhammad's home and were plots of ground that had been marked as sacred. Mosque buildings have large open spaces inside, with mats or carpets covering the floor. Men perform prayer on these mats, under the guidance of an *imām*, who is a worship leader in the Muslim community. When women pray in the mosque, they must be in a separate space or chamber. Inside the mosque, there is a *miḥrāb* and a *minbar*. A miḥrāb is a semicircular space pointed in the direction of Mecca that is reserved for the imām to perform a prayer, and a minbar is a seat to the right of the miḥrāb that is used by a preacher (or *khaṭīb*). There is also a place with running water for ablution, which is a ceremonial act of washing the body before prayer. The only decorations in a mosque are inscriptions of verses from the Qur'ān and the names of Muhammad and his Companions. There are no ritual objects, statues or pictures inside the mosque. Outside the mosque, there is a minaret (or maʾdhanah) - this used to be any elevated place, but is now usually a tower. It's used by a muezzin (muʾadhdhin or 'crier') to announce the call to worship five times a day.

**Christianity – Church**

**What is Christianity?**

Christianity is the world's biggest religion, with about 2.2 billion followers worldwide. It is focussed on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who Christians believe to be the Son of God. Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the Middle East over 2,000 years ago.

Christians believe there is only one God, but that he is revealed in three different forms:

- God the Father
- God the Son
- The Holy Spirit

Christians model themselves on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught people to love God and love their neighbour. Christians believe that God sent Jesus to live as a human being in order to save humanity from the consequences of its sins - the bad things humanity had chosen to do which had separated them from God. Christians believe that through the death and resurrection of Jesus this broken relationship with God is restored.

**Where do Christians worship?**

Many Christians worship in churches. Some groups meet in homes and other buildings. 'Church' means the gathering of Christians as well as the building in which Christians worship. Their leaders are called priests, vicars or ministers**.** Churches can vary throughout the world as there are many different branches of Christianity.

**Why do Christians go to church?**

Having a place of worship is important for Christians as it provides the opportunity to feel closer to God, to meet other Christians with the same beliefs and to feel like a part of a community of believers who regularly come together to express their faith. Christian churches hold services of worship every Sunday. There are usually other events happening at churches throughout the week such as bible studies, social events and prayer nights. Christians go to church to praise God together as a group, and to build friendships with other Christians (called fellowship) and learn from the Bible together.

During a Sunday service, the congregation will usually sing hymns and songs together as a way of worshipping God. Christians believe that singing helps them communicate with God. It enables them to express many emotions including thanks, joy and sorrow. Many Churches have choirs who lead the congregation in song.

In the church service, Bible teachings and readings are read aloud together. At the front of the church is a pulpit: this is a raised platform from which the church leader can teach from the Bible. Also, there is a lectern: a stand where the Bible sits.

Many churches hold a service called Communion, Eucharist or Mass. This is known as Christians receiving ‘Holy communion’ at church. This is where some Christians drink wine and eat bread to remember the events of the last supper. With the wine they remember Jesus’ blood and with the Bread they remember Jesus’ body, when he was crucified on the cross.

At the front of the church is the Altar. This is the focus of the church service as this is where the religious events happen, such as preparing the bread and wine for Holy Communion. Around the church there are many crosses; this is the symbol of Christianity because Jesus died on the cross. Candles are common in churches as they represent Jesus as the light of the world. Churches often have stained glass windows which show the stories from the Bible.