

Faith and Society Files: Church and School - Pre-school and Primary

Helping you make the most of the opportunities afforded by school visits - includes photocopiable worksheets.



WELCOMING A SCHOOL TO YOUR CHURCH

Most schools include a visit to a local church in their RE syllabus. Usually this will be an Anglican Church, but there is no reason at all why a visit to a Baptist Church cannot take place as well - either as a contrast or at a different time. If you have no direct contact with a local school but someone in your church does, it might be possible for them to make the suggestion or you could approach the school directly with an offer to host a visit.

Schools often want to focus on the building or the artefacts, but even within those boundaries it is possible to arrange an interesting, or even exciting, visit that provides an opportunity to explain what we believe. Many children will not have been into a church building and may well be surprised by what a positive experience it is. This can also be true of accompanying parents.

This section is designed to help you make the most of the opportunities afforded by school visits. It focuses on primary children but many of the principles would apply to a secondary school visit, particularly for years seven and eight students. There are guidelines that will be helpful in preparing for and facilitating school visits, as well as practical ideas and specific teaching points that you may wish to put across.

Before the visit

Make sure that you have the name of the school's contact person and that the school has your name and contact point (a mobile phone number will be helpful). It may be advisable to include both your home and phone numbers since many teachers find it hard to get to the phone during the day.

Find out how many children are coming on the visit, their age and what specific areas of the curriculum they want to cover. Try to ensure that these are covered by the visit so that it is as helpful as possible to the school.

Schools are required by law to provide for a certain ratio of teachers/adults to children for the entire time they are away from school. Therefore there should be enough adults from the school available to control the group. It makes for a better visit if there are enough people from the church to answer questions and talk to the children.

It always goes down well if, having checked with the school, you can provide refreshments for both children and adults. If you do, you need to be well organised so that you know when you are going to serve the drinks, where they will drink them and how many children there will be. Similarly, please make sure the toilets are clearly labelled (and clean).

Remember, there is nothing like chaos to stop a school asking for a return visit. If you can find adults from the church to make cups of tea and talk to accompanying parents this is usually very welcome.

Child protection

It is unlikely that anyone from the church would be left alone with a child. It is still important that all those involved should be aware of your Safe to Grow policy and understand the guidelines about contact with children.

Use of language

If you are not used to talking to children it is important to find someone who can help. Try not to use Christian jargon, but if you do make sure you can explain it in their terms. We want to make our faith accessible and we need to think about the language and images we use to engage them. It's worth taking the time to get it right so that we build and maintain good relationships.



During the visit

Outside the building

If the weather is suitable and the activity can be well supervised, encourage the children to explore the outside of the premises. They could be encouraged to draw the building as a way of looking more closely at the architecture and style of the building. In discussion with them you might like to ask:

- Would they know it was a church building?
- If yes how?
- What can they find out about the church from the notice boards, foundation stone etc?
- Is there anything they notice particularly, wheel-chair access etc?
- Would the students want to come inside voluntarily?

Inside the building

It is helpful have a set of acetates or a PowerPoint presentation showing various parts of the building and church activities. This might include some or all of the following:

- Baptistry and baptism
- Communion table and communion
- Lectern/pulpit
- Instruments/musicians
- Banners
- General view of interior
- Congregation
- Flowers
- Service
- Wedding
- Infant Dedication
- Funeral

Different churches

It is likely that the children will have visited other churches. It is worth trying to draw the comparison between them to explain distinctive emphases of theology and ecclesiology and to emphasise the unity of the Christian Church. What differences do they see between your church and (for example) the local Parish church? Why do they think these differences exist? What things are similar in the churches? Why do they think they are similar?



If you can arrange a collaboration with your local churches, perhaps you could arrange a similar syllabus to enable the students to make comparisons and see the differences and similarities of different Christian traditions.

A day or week in the life of a minister

This can be another useful way of exploring the life of the church, as most activities relate to the minister in some way. Not all children realise that a minister works full-time; this will give them a chance to see what he does. It also helps to have his name for the children to copy and possibly a list of the things he does on a prepared sheet. This kind of display can be helpful in a 'minister's question time.' Children love the chance to ask questions and pictures can help to illustrate the answers. Be prepared for the inevitable: "Do people wear clothes when they are baptised?" There are also likely to be some questions that will throw you completely, so be prepared for the unexpected question, or the child who thinks they can embarrass or upset you. One minister was asked by a mischievous child whether he was celibate!

Atmosphere

What is the atmosphere like?

How many words can they use to describe it?

Ask them to sit in silence. How does it feel?

(This can be a very effective activity; you may be surprised by how positive the answers are.)

Listen to several types of Christian music, modern, classical, hymns, gospel etc. Then ask questions along the following lines:

- What effect did they have?
- What atmosphere did they create?
- Why do you think they were written?
- Which did you like and why?

These kinds of activities don't necessarily have to be done sitting on chairs. If things seem reasonably under control the children could sit or lie on the floor.

Teaching point

To get the children to settle down, sit them all together around a candle and ask them to sit quietly as you light the candle. Get them to watch the flame of the candle and think about what it makes them feel or think. After they have sat quietly for a minute or two, ask them to take it in turns and express how they feel, respecting each other's feelings. Explain that the atmosphere in the church is important.



The church is the people not the building

It is important for the children to understand that the building is the place where the church meets, not the church itself. What can they learn about what you do as a church?

- Information about missionaries.
- Who looks after pastoral care? (You will need to explain what this is)
- What activities take place?
- What kinds of groups use the building?
- What activities happen for children and young people?

Teaching point

After inviting the children in, explain that the church building is a special place where children and adults come to worship God. Although we can worship God and pray anywhere at any time, it's good for us to get together at different times and meet with God together. The people who gather together on a Sunday and other days of the week are the 'church' not the building. As Christians we believe that we are, as people, God's church or family. We are very fortunate to have such a beautiful building and we have to look after it and treat it with respect because it belongs to God.

Baptism

This is a big 'selling point' for a visit to a Baptist Church as it is one of the most obviously distinctive characteristics of Baptist Churches.

- If it is possible to have the baptistry open without danger to life and limb, the children will find this of great interest.
- A video of a baptism is useful. If possible, why not include an interview with the person being baptised about why they decided to be baptised and what the experience was like.
- A 'dry run' baptism with a child (with the teacher's permission) will have them queuing up, or you could use a willing church member.



Teaching point

The symbolism of Believers' Baptism lends itself naturally to explaining Jesus' death, burial and resurrection and the washing clean that happens through faith and repentance. Draw the contrast (sensitively) between Believers' Baptism and Christening or Infant Baptism.

The building

Allow the children to explore the building. See if they can find:

- The cross
- The baptistry
- The communion table
- A communion tray
- A Bible
- A musical instrument
- The pulpit or lectern
- The offering bags or tray
- The library

How would the children describe it? Plain, ornate, old, modern etc.

Does it have any historical interest? How does it fit in with local history? If you have a Victorian building, this could fit in with the study of the Victorians that usually takes place in year five. (How about the Minister dressing as a Victorian complete with side-whiskers (if the Minister is male)? This might make a good photograph for the local press or school magazine.)

After the children have heard all about the church, put them into teams (sometimes they have existing teams at school and it's best to use these). Sitting in the centre of the church, hold up the pictures or photos one at a time and ask the children to show you where the items are in the church. For a bonus point, they can tell you why they are there and what they are used for.

This works well as a quiz, as children often like a bit of competition. You could even ask if house points could be awarded for this.

Library - if your church has one. What are the different books about? Who are they for?

Organ - what is it used for? How easy is it to play? Why is it important to sing in church?

Musical Instruments - if there are other instruments in the church, who plays them? Why do you have these as well as an organ (if you have one)?

Teaching point

Communion cup and plate - why do we have communion? You can explain the origins of the meal in the Last Supper and the symbolism of bread and wine.

Offering plate and bags - why do we give our money to the church? God asks us to give our money to the church to help others find out about him. How is the money spent locally, nationally and internationally?

Cross - why do we have crosses in church? You can relate it to Christ's death as the central moment of the Christian faith. Is it strange to have an instrument of execution as the symbol of our faith? A parallel with today might be an electric chair.

Bible - why does your church have an open Bible on display? Why is the Bible so significant to Christians? It may help to think of the Bible as like both a mirror and a magnifying glass. A magnifying glass makes things easier to see. The Bible can help to explain things we didn't understand before; it makes God clearer, and it helps us understand about Jesus. A mirror shows us what we look like. The Bible shows us how God sees us.



Serving the community

Make a display of the different activities that help others who are not part of the church. Is it possible for someone who works in this area to explain what they do and answer questions? The children could have questions that can be answered by looking at the display. If the church has a Mission Statement, this could be used to explain why the church works beyond the needs of its own membership.

Banners

Many Baptist Churches have banners hanging from the walls.

- Is it in words or pictures?
- What kinds of symbols or images do they use?
- Why are they there?

If you have time and space the children could draw or design their own banners declaring Christian truths.

Other ideas

Word searches are a popular activity – a sample is included in the worksheets.

Dramatised story telling using the building to tell a story. You could move round to different places to show the different locations of the story. Simple props could be used and the children could be observers or participants in the story. This idea was used by one Baptist Church to tell the Easter story. It worked very well and many of the children heard the story in 'one go' for the first time.

After the visit

It is a good idea to get some kind of evaluation from the school (staff and children) and also from anyone who helped you. To maintain the contact it would be good to write to the school saying how much you enjoyed their visit and look forward to seeing them again.

It is not tactful to advertise your next children's club at this point, you could however ask to see some of the follow-up work, possibly even to display in the building. This helps to keep the church involved and the children might even bring their parents in to see it.

2 TAKING THE CHURCH TO SCHOOL

If it is not possible for the children to come to your church, you could offer to take your church to the school. It will help if you can show plenty of pictures and have visual aids. These can be used to show the children both what the building is like and what the church does. Make the encounter as interactive as possible, asking the children to play different parts.

A tick list can be used to help them spot different parts of the church from the pictures. If you have a service sheet you can talk about what happens in a service.

- What is the sermon?
- What does 'testimony' mean?
- Why is there an offering?
- What is a 'blessing'?
- What's the difference between a song and a hymn?
- Why do people dance in church (if they do)?
- What is Believers' Baptism?

Look at what is happening during the week from copies of your notice sheet. What are the different activities? How many people go to them? How does the church care for those who are ill, whose names might be included on the sheet?

A classroom service

You might be able to run a mock service in the classroom. You may want to bring:

- A cross
- An offering bag or plate
- A baby doll (for infant dedication)
- A CD with Christian songs
- A clerical collar – can be made from card if you don't own one.
- A Bible with a simple reading marked. The Lost Sheep is good and can be acted out by the children.

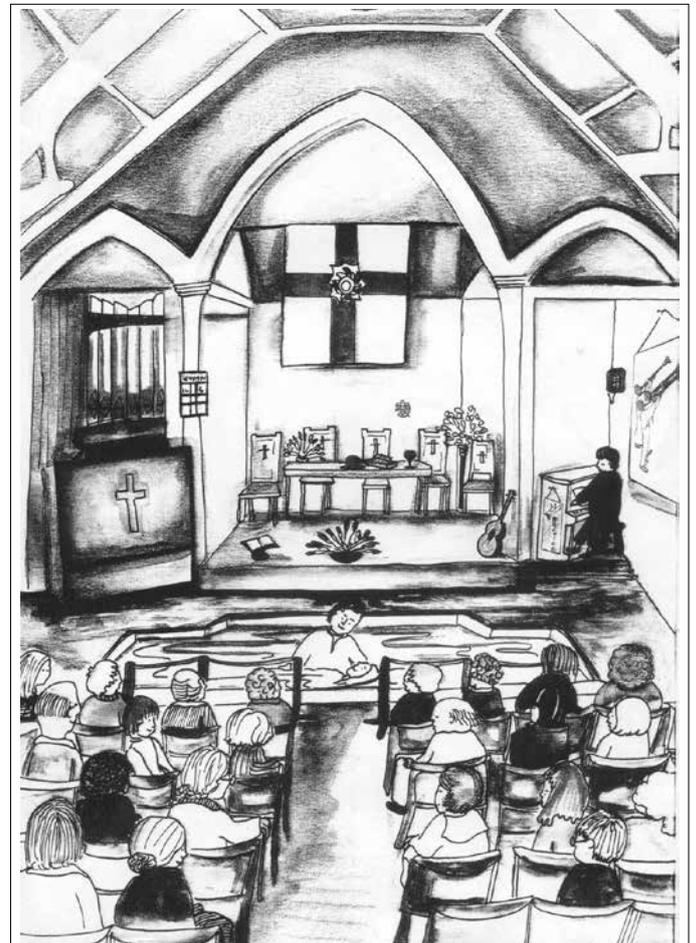
- A simple 'sermon' (no more than five sentences.)
- A short prayer
- The notices
- A simple form of infant dedication

Children are needed to play:

- The minister
- The secretary to do the notices
- A reader
- Parents for the baby
- Congregation

Arrange the chairs so that the children are sitting in a circle or rows, perhaps in a way that is similar to your church. Run through the service in the way that it normally unfolds in your church. The children will need to be well prompted by you, perhaps with a script, if their reading age is appropriate. Ask the children to sing a song they know.

(This will be probably be fairly formal as it is difficult to demonstrate anything charismatic without causing mayhem or losing sight of the fact that the Holy Spirit prompts it!)



3 USING THE WORKSHEETS

Please feel free to adapt these worksheets to your needs. It's best to check with the school before using them to ensure that the level and content will meet the needs of the class. It is not necessary for every visit to include a worksheet; there are other ways of recording. A sheet of paper with a nice border, easily done on the computer, can be used for a drawing of the part of the church they liked best. Photos, video, and drama can also be used.

(A school in South London made a model of a baptistry complete with a submersible figure on the end of the pump. This is a good cross-curricular link with science.) From both the church and school's perspectives, a good experience is as important as good recording.

Notes for the Minister

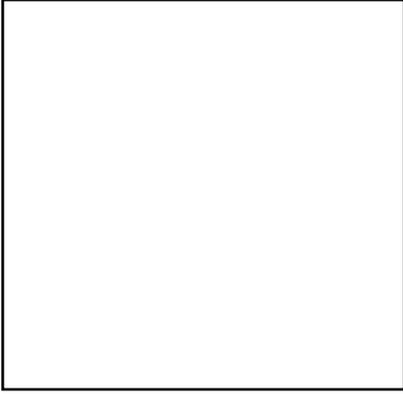
These worksheets can be used by children to help them discover more about the outside and inside of a Baptist Church. They are intended to introduce children to religious buildings and symbols as part of their Religious Education course at Key Stages 1 and 2.

After appropriate introductions, children can work on the activities individually or in small groups. It is important that they are encouraged to ask questions and talk about their own responses and experiences. Ideally, children should visit places of worship and have the opportunity in school to handle some of the artefacts described.

- Worksheet 1** Each child will need a copy of the worksheet along with the pictures to stick in the correct place. You may prefer to take your own photographs and create your own worksheet.
- Worksheet 2** Each child will need a copy of the worksheet and will write in the correct words under each picture. You may prefer to take your own photographs and create your own worksheet.
- Worksheet 3** This is a wordsearch containing a number of items to be found in a Baptist Church. You may prefer to take your own photographs and create your own worksheet.
- Worksheet 4** Children think about special occasions and draw pictures to show how they are marked in church.
- Worksheet 5** Children imagine that they are spies and complete their 'Spy Report' to answer questions about the church.
- Worksheet 6** These pictures may be useful if you are visiting a school as they show a baptism and some of the main areas at Hooe Baptist Church. Ask the children what they think the difference people are doing.
- Worksheet 7** This contains a number of extension activities.

Our thanks go to Glenis Ruston, Margaret Griffin and Paul Bellingham for their help in developing these worksheet ideas.
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Can you find the picture of:

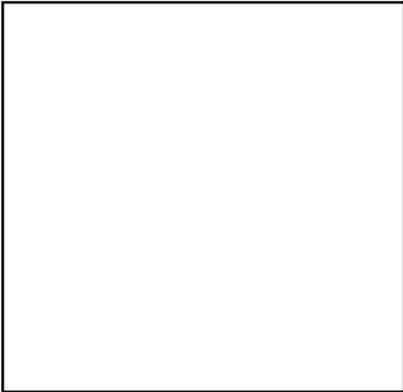
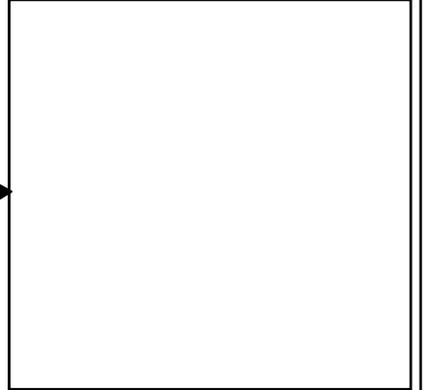


The Pulpit or lectern?

Where the preacher stands

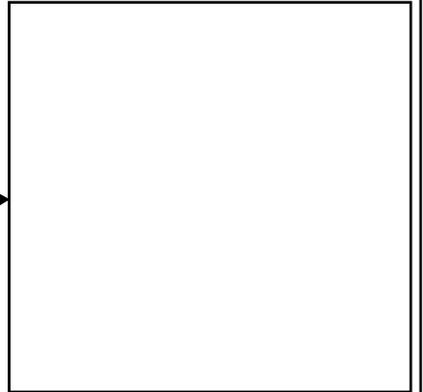
The Baptistry?

Where we are covered with water



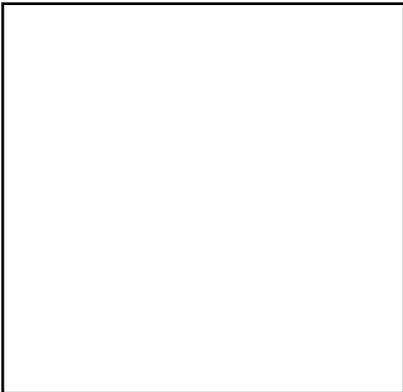
The Cup of Wine?

We sip wine at communion



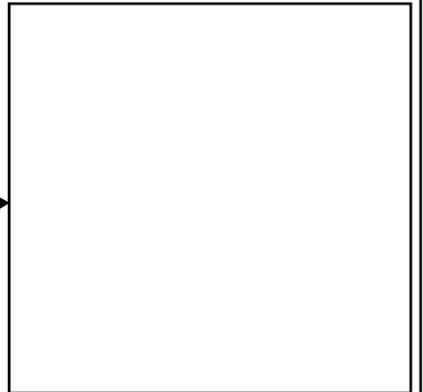
The Bread?

A sign of belonging



The Organ or piano?

One of the musical instruments in church



The Offering Bag?

For our gifts of money



The Banner?

This displays special words



The Bible?

Our special book



Can you find the words to match these pictures?

Bread
Bible

Wine
Organ

Offering Bag
Lectern

Baptistry
Banner



Baptist Church Wordsearch

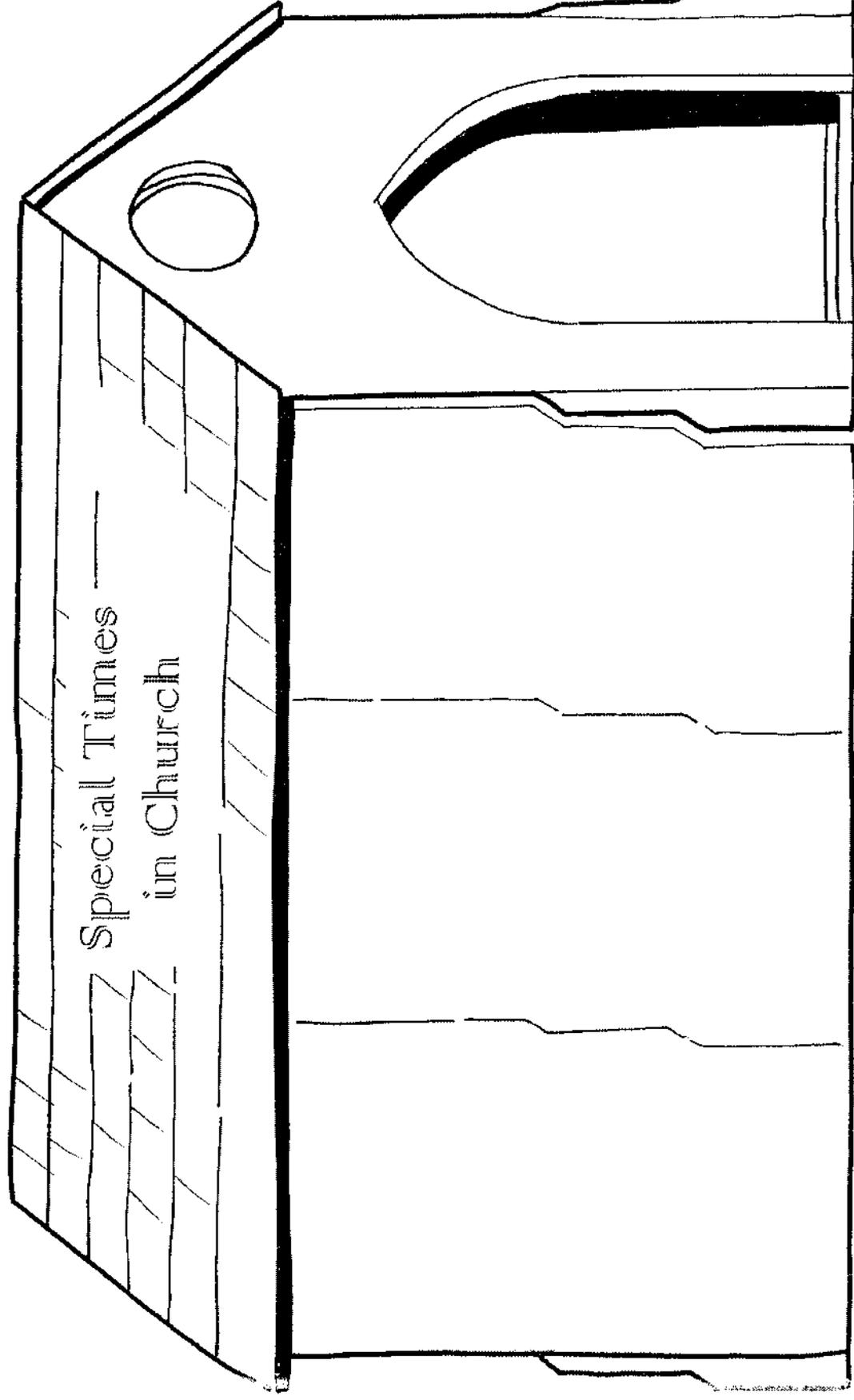
S O S B A P T I S T R Y R P C
O E F R E T S I N I M I O O R
D O R F O O N I M P B R M K O
V U N V E B L T E C I M M B S
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S C D U T N G O G N M I R E N
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S S O C C N M B A O B O C E N
D Y A B O A I O M O O N M R E
A E S R E B T R N O O R A C S
D S G W L R E I O Y K R C Y M
O A C E E S S L O M S I I R G
N O S M C P S B M N R E U E R

Can you find these words in the wordsearch?

DEDICATION, HYMNBOOKS, BAPTISTRY, COMMUNION,
TESTIMONY, MINISTER, BELIEVER, OFFERING, SERVICE,
NOTICES, BIBLES, SERMON, DEACON, PIANO, ORGAN,
CROSS, PEWS

What happens in a place of Christian worship?

Draw a picture of what is happening in each section



When someone
dies

Every Sunday
When someone
is born

Getting married

SPY REPORT



You are a spy and your mission is to investigate the large building to find out what it is, who goes there and what they do. You have a list of things to find out and some clues to help you.



What is the name of the building you are checking out?

Clue: Look at the notice board or notice sheet

Draw a plan of the outside

When was the building put up?

Clue: Stone at the front of the building

What do they call the people who use the building?

What special symbol do they have? Draw it.

Clue: There is one outside and at least one inside the building

There is a special book that the people read. Can you find one and write down what it is called?

Clue: There are lots of these books in the building

What things go on inside the building on a Sunday?

Clue: Look at the notice board or notice sheet

What things go on inside the building during the rest of the week?

Clue: Look at the notice board or notice sheet

We know that they play a lot of music. Can you see and draw any musical instruments?

Somewhere in the building is a large pool. Can you find it?

What is it used for?

Draw the glasses in the tray at the front. What do you think they are used for?

The banners tell you some of the things the people believe. Can you draw one and tell us what it says?

What is the name of the leader?

Clue: Look at the notice board or notice sheet

Can you find the names of some of the people who help him / her?

Are there any questions you would like to ask him / her?

What have you learned from your visit?

Do not lose this report. It should only be shown to your Spymaster.



Photos from baptisms - used with the kind permission of Hooe Baptist Church

Extension Activities



- Draw the symbol of the Baptist Union. Find out what the parts of the symbol mean (cross, water, fish)
- Make a banner with words and pictures which are special to you.
- Learn a new song (eg 'Welcome to the family', *Baptist Praise and Worship*)
- Find some pictures of water and explore its power to bring life, cleanse, create and destroy.
- Collect pictures of baptisms. Share your feelings about being baptised. Were you baptised as a baby? Do you think it is important to choose when you are baptised? Why are people baptised?

Read Romans 6:4. Write some questions you would like to ask someone who chose to be baptised.

- Discuss things you would change in your life if you could.
- Find and copy some words from the Bible that you like.
- Share some bread and grapes together and talk about your feelings. Talk about why Christians use bread and wine in church.
- Decide as a group how you would spend £100 to help others.
- Find out something about the life of John Bunyan.
- Search www.baptist.org.uk for more information about Baptist churches.