

# **RE, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) – Closure work for Year 9 Full Course**

Continuing with this topic on Christian Practices, please complete the following work:

1. Read sections two information sheets
2. Make notes in your books
3. Write each question and answer each question

You do not need to print any of this work. Please write on paper.

# The Worldwide Church

## Mission, evangelism and church growth:

**Mission:** A vocation or calling to go out and spread the Christian faith

**Evangelism:** Spreading faith to others. Jesus said to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19).

**Church growth:** The effort to expand the numbers of people in the Church

Christians follow Jesus who said, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). They are called to serve God's mission by living and proclaiming the good news (the 'Gospel').



For Christians, God's mission is about transformation - transforming individual lives, transforming communities and transforming the world. By following Jesus Christ, they believe that God's mission is revealed to them by the Holy Spirit in three ways:

- through the Bible
- through the tradition and life of the Church
- through listening, praying, thinking and sharing

## Christian beliefs in action: Tearfund

Tearfund are a relief and development charity who aim to tackle the causes and effects of poverty worldwide. Tearfund tackle physical and spiritual poverty by building churches, carrying out community development projects, providing disaster relief and changing unjust practices and policies.

Tearfund do this because they recognise the presence of Jesus in all on earth. They believe that each person should be treated equally, with dignity and respect, as Jesus taught. They give everything to follow Jesus, just as in the Parable of the Rich Young Man. "*It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter heaven*" (Matthew 19:24).

## Persecution of Christians

Early Christians were persecuted for their faith. Christian missionaries and converts, both, were killed. Immediately after Jesus' death, Christians were hunted down as we are told in the famous conversion of Saul, who thereafter was known as Paul. The New Testament details many examples of Christian persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire. This led to the canonisation of many saints and therefore a more rapid spread of Christianity.

The Great Persecution in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AC ordered the imprisonment of Christian priests and Christians were forced to sacrifice to the Roman gods, or face execution. 20,000 Christians died during this time.



Today, Christian persecution largely exists among Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia, where freedom of religious expression is not practised or allowed.

### Working for reconciliation: The World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is an inter-church organisation seeking worldwide fellowship and unity for all Christians.



# World Council of Churches

The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. There are now 348 member churches.

For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches:

- are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship;
- promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism;
- engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation; and
- foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.

### Working for reconciliation: The Ecumenical Movement

The Ecumenical Movement is the movement towards worldwide Christian unity or cooperation. Due to historical schisms (splits), the Christian church has divided into many different denominations (branches within Christianity) such as Roman Catholic and Church of England. In some circumstances, the conflict has become so tense that war has broken out within communities, such as the Roman Catholic/Protestant divide in Northern Ireland.

Ecumenism understands that these divisions must be overcome, as people are all members of one faith; one Church. Therefore, Ecumenism seeks to reunite what was divided during the schisms in the past.

Underlying the movement is the belief that people should be focusing on Jesus and Salvation, not on their individual denominations or organisations. People should be coming together in a dialogue of love and a dialogue of truth, to spread the Gospel and follow in Jesus' footsteps on earth.



One in Christ

Galatians 3:28 *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

- 1) What is 'mission'?
- 2) What is 'evangelism'?
- 3) How are Christians called to serve God's mission?
- 4) What is meant by: "God's mission is about transformation"?
- 5) What three ways is God's mission revealed through the Holy Spirit?
- 6) Who are Tearfund and what do they do?
- 7) How many Christians dies during the Great Persecution?
- 8) What does 'WCC' stand for?
- 9) What are members of the WCC expected to do?
- 10) What underlies the Ecumenical Movement?