

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

TEXT IMPACT CONNECTIONS



The key purpose of this resource is to support pupils in developing their understanding of Christianity, as a contribution to their understanding of the world and their own experience within it.

"This resource manages to interconnect the text of the Bible, the beliefs and practices of Christians, and the world of the pupils – a remarkable achievement."

Professor David Ford

Understanding Christianity offers a clear, coherent approach to teaching and learning about Christianity in RE, for 4s–14s (Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3). It is based around a selection of core Christian concepts and structured across the age range to support pupils in deepening their understanding.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There has been a need identified in RE for support to enable the progressive and systematic investigation of Christian beliefs and practices. A number of funders, together with the Church of England, agreed the need to create a more intellectually coherent and challenging approach for teaching about Christianity as part of the wider RE curriculum, and to use this resource as a contribution to raising the level of pupils' religious literacy.

THE AIMS of *Understanding Christianity*

- To enable pupils to know about and understand Christianity as a living world faith, by exploring core theological concepts
- To enable pupils to develop knowledge and skills in making sense of biblical texts and understanding their impact in the lives of Christians
- To develop pupils' abilities to connect, critically reflect upon, evaluate and apply their learning to their own growing understanding of Christianity, of religion and belief more widely, of themselves, the world and human experience.

"As an RE specialist I am convinced that this resource will have a significant impact on the quality of RE taught in church and community schools."

Tatiana Wilson,
Diocesan Education Officer

Note:

The outline on the following pages offers a simplified account of the concepts selected, representing a mainstream Christian understanding. The resource materials themselves show that there are different ways to make sense of Christian belief and practice.

THE RESOURCE

Understanding Christianity Teaching Resources

This resource was written by a team of RE advisers from RE Today Services, in collaboration with more than 30 expert teachers, advisers and academics, and trialled in over 50 schools. www.retoday.org.uk

"I loved teaching with this resource, and the students loved learning. The pedagogy is well thought through, with detailed guidance for teachers, and it is brilliantly resourced. It is ambitious and sets high standards for all learners. I know I would love to teach students in KS3 who have received this kind of grounding in KS1-2."

Teacher of Religious Studies, Kings Norton Girls' School.

The Resource Pack includes

- A Teacher's Handbook
- 29 full units of work, from Foundation Stage 2 through to Year 9
- Introductory booklets for each phase
- More than 150 photocopiable resource sheets
- The 'Big Frieze' illustration, by Emma Yarlett.
- The 'Big Frieze' guide book, setting the concepts within a wider biblical context.
- *Understanding Christianity* Website – www.understandingchristianity.org.uk
- *Understanding Christianity* Accredited Official Resources: resources that are available to teachers and advisers to support the teaching in *Understanding Christianity*

Understanding Christianity resources feature the 'Big Frieze' illustration by Emma Yarlett

Emma is an author and illustrator who lives and works in Falmouth, Cornwall with her husband Alex. She has authored and illustrated many award-winning picture books, most notable of which are *Orion and the Dark*, *Poppy Pickle* and *Nibbles: the Book Monster*. She also illustrated RE Today's best-selling *The Bible: The Big Story*.

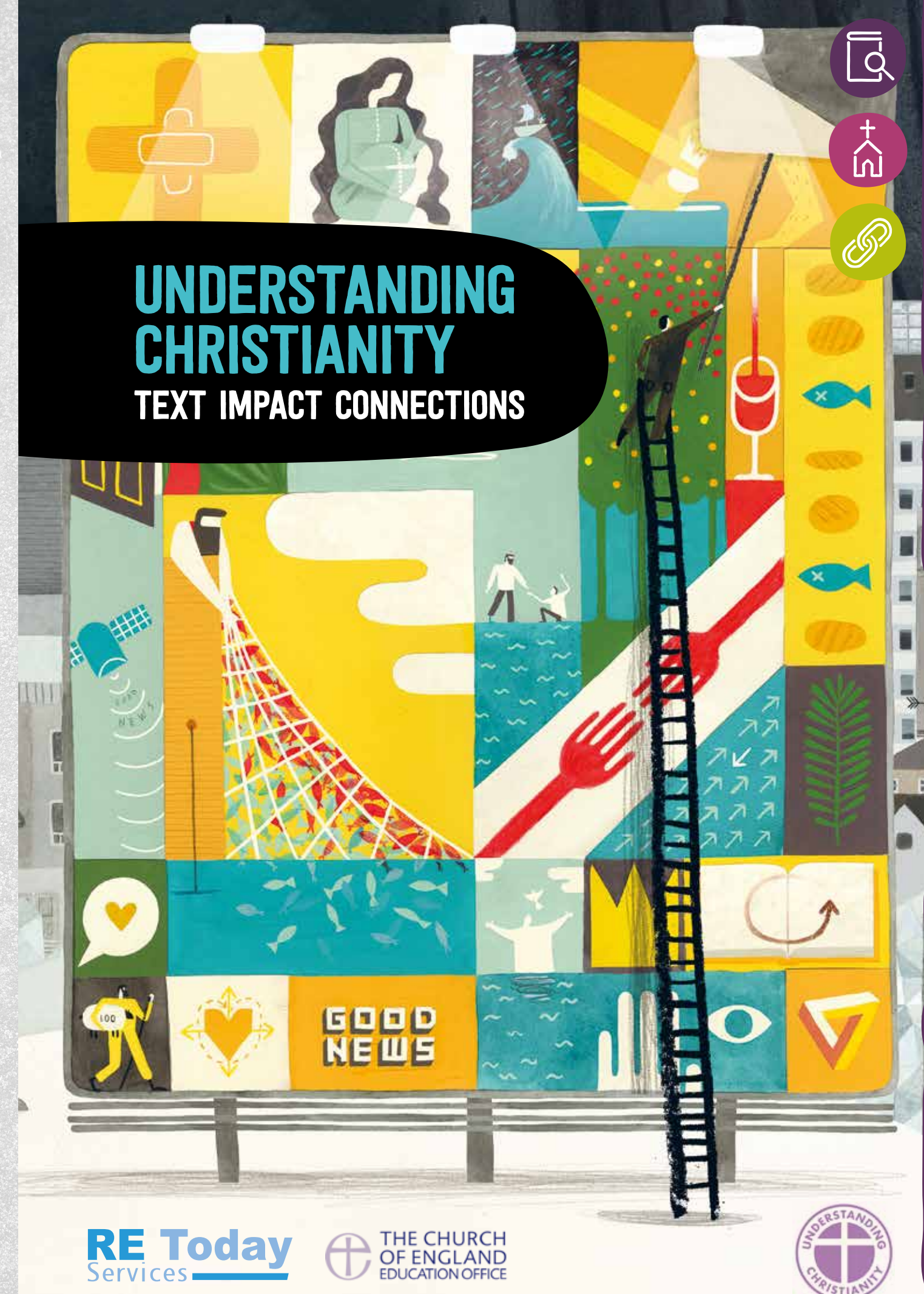
www.emmayarlett.com

These resources were commissioned by the Church of England Education Office. Both they and the funders were keen that the project should support RE within church schools, community schools, academies and free schools.

www.churchofengland.org/education.aspx

For more information, go to www.understandingchristianity.org.uk

The *Understanding Christianity* Project was generously supported by the following trusts:



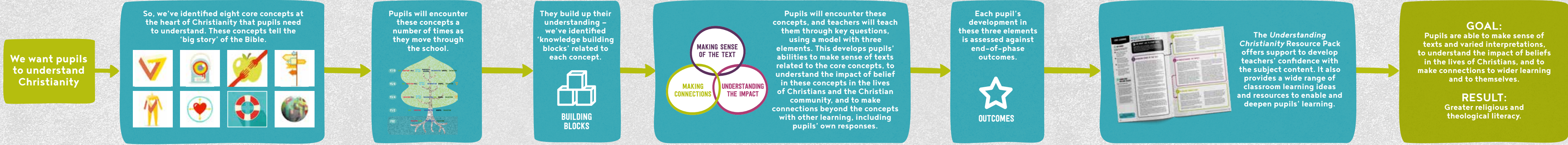
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INTRODUCTION TO THE UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY APPROACH



INTRODUCTION TO THE 'BIG FRIEZE'

Artist Emma Yarlett was commissioned to create a wall frieze to illustrate seven of the eight core concepts that are explored throughout the *Understanding Christianity* materials. Effectively, *Understanding Christianity* presents a view of the 'big story' of the Bible, and the frieze is an artist's response to this idea. The Big Frieze is designed to give teachers the opportunity to make pupils aware of the wider context of each concept, unit and text studied in the *Understanding Christianity* materials.

Reminding pupils regularly of where a particular text occurs within the 'big story' by pointing it out on the frieze, for example, helps to build up a coherent understanding of the core concepts and the relationships between them. The artwork illustrates these concepts, from Creation to Kingdom of God, presenting a Christian view of the Bible as more than a collection of different texts - one which has an overarching coherence and story.

"I really enjoyed teaching this unit of work. The activities were inspiring."
 RE Coordinator
 All Saints' CE (VA) First School, Leek

"Great, easy to use materials that also allowed the teachers to be creative in their teaching."
 Headteacher
 Eccleston CE Primary

CREATION

Christians believe the universe and human life are God's good creation. Humans are made in the image of God.

FALL

Humans have a tendency to go their own way rather than keep their place in relation to their creator. Christians call this attitude sin, and Genesis 3 gives an account of this rebellion, popularly called 'the Fall'. This describes a catastrophic separation between God and humans, between humans and each other, and between humans and the environment. This idea that humans are 'fallen' and in need of rescue (or salvation) sets out the root cause of many problems for humanity.

PEOPLE OF GOD

The Old Testament tells the story of God's plan to reverse the impact of the Fall, to save humanity. It involves choosing a people who will model a restored relationship with God, who will attract all other people back to God. The Bible narrative includes the ups and downs of this plan, including the message of the prophets who tried to persuade people to stick with God. The plan appears to end in failure with the people of God exiled, and then returning, awaiting a 'messiah' - a rescuer.

INCARNATION

The New Testament presents Jesus as the answer: the Messiah and Saviour, who will repair the effects of sin and the Fall and offer a way for humans to be at one with God again. For Christians, Incarnation means that Jesus is God in the flesh, and that, in Jesus, God came to live among humans.

GOSPEL

Christians believe Jesus' incarnation is 'good news' for all people. ('Gospel' means 'good news'.) His life, teaching and ministry embody what it is like to be one of the people of God, what it means to live in relationship with God. Jesus' example and teaching emphasise loving one's neighbour - particularly the weak and vulnerable - as part of loving God.

SALVATION

Jesus' death and resurrection effect the rescue (or salvation) of humans. Christians say he opens the way back to God. Through Jesus, sin is dealt with, forgiveness offered, and the relationship between God and humans is restored.

KINGDOM OF GOD

This does not mean that no one sins any more! The idea of the 'Kingdom of God' reflects God's ideal for human life in the world - a vision of life lived in the way God intended for human beings. In anticipation of a future heavenly Kingdom, Christians seek to live this attractive life as in God's Kingdom on earth, following Jesus' example, inspired and empowered by God's Spirit.

