Introduction:
Across Scottish schools, Christmas is a topic regularly revisited at different stages of learning. This series of learning journeys is designed to offer varied approaches to Christmas which support progression and depth of analysis in relation to this topic area. Specifically, it supports learners in considering the key religious aspects of Christmas and so supports the development of their own emerging beliefs and values. Many aspects of Christmas are explored in our education system through art, music, drama and other approaches drawing upon a range of curricular areas. While these learning journeys draw upon such curricular areas and their approaches, the key focus is exploring the beliefs, values and practices and traditions associated with Christmas in relation to Religious and Moral Education in Curriculum for Excellence.

Prior Learning
It is likely that learners growing up in Scotland will have been exposed to some aspects of the celebration of Christmas, whether these are specifically linked to Christianity or to more generic aspects of Christmas celebrations. Learners at this stage may well have engaged with aspects of the symbolism of Christmas and cultural expressions such as gift-giving, celebrations, special meals and so on. The relationship between the learner’s understanding of Christmas celebrations and specifically Christian aspects of such celebrations will vary, though it is likely that learners will have already started to reflect upon and question aspects of Christmas celebrations and their religious and cultural origins.

Skills
- Exploring
- Reflecting
- Discussing
- Listening
- Describing
- Presenting
- Performing
- Explaining
- Clarifying
- Questioning
- Collaborating
- Evaluating
- Comparing
- Analysing
- Creating
- Evaluating
- Remembering
- Understanding
- Connecting
- Categorising
- Justifying
Significant Aspects of Learning in RME:

Learning about religion and morality:
1. recognising religion as a significant factor which has shaped our social, political and spiritual heritage
2. investigating religious beliefs, values, issues, traditions and practices through a range of primary and secondary sources

Learning from religion and morality:
3. experiencing a sense of awe and wonder about what it means to be human, the nature of the world we live in, the interconnectedness of it all and developing a deepening sense of spiritual awareness
4. appreciating the importance of respect for the beliefs, values and traditions of others and being able to demonstrate this
5. developing skills and attributes to make well-judged moral and ethical decisions and to justify personal beliefs and values.
Learning Experience

Introduction:
This Learning Journey assists learners to explore the Nativity story to allow for progression across CfE levels. This sequence of learning experiences aims to develop the following Learning Intentions:

- to analyse the text of Away in a Manger and offer personal responses to the key Christian beliefs making connections with the story of the Nativity
- to explore a Russian folk-tale about Christmas and identify links with the Nativity story, the key Christian belief that Jesus will return to Earth some day and teachings of Jesus about kindness, generosity, compassion and love for neighbours linking this to scriptural sources
- to compare depictions and symbolism featured in Christian and ‘non-religious’ Christmas cards and reflect on the messages contained within them
- to learn about the historical context of Christmas trees, the significance of tree decorations and Christian symbolism of lights.

Possible learning opportunities/tasks:
1. UNDERSTANDING CHRISTMAS THROUGH CHRISTMAS CAROLS
Learners could explore the narrative of the Nativity story through the text of ‘Away in a Manger’.
- In pairs learners could explore and highlight unfamiliar vocabulary and capitalisation of key words and discuss with the class why these capitalised words are important to Christians and connected to the narrative of the Nativity.
- Groups could be given envelopes containing individual lines or couplets of the text to arrange in order. They might be asked to select and sequence the particular lines which re-tell the narrative of the Nativity story.
- Learners could identify individual lines which answer ‘who, what, when and where?’ questions about the story. They might also make a separate collection of lines which describe a Christian’s relationship with Jesus.
- Learners could identify individual words or phrases which suggest attributes of Jesus as a baby E.g. ‘No crying he makes’. Discussion of prior knowledge about the behaviour of babies could take place, with debate around how Christians perceive Jesus as a baby i.e. Does he not cry because he is perfect and God’s son? Or, if all babies cry to communicate needs why would baby Jesus be different? Does the baby Jesus not crying give us clues about what Christians might think Jesus will be like as an adult? Are there any other words or phrases in the song which we can connect to the attributes Christians think that Jesus possesses?
The Christmas Story
CfE Level: Early / First Levels

Learning journey - Religious and Moral Education
Focus: RME

• Learners could explore and reflect upon their understanding or personal response to lines from the text such as 'Look down from the sky' or 'Stay by my side until morning is nigh' or 'I love thee, Lord Jesus'. Discussion could be held around feelings or emotions prompted by these lines, such as safety, reassurance, adoration etc. and the abstract concept of Jesus being present to Christians in their daily lives, heaven being associated with the sky and behaviours and actions towards those we love. Learners could be invited to share their views if they are comfortable doing so.

• Learners could consider the idea of Jesus as a gift to the world from God. Parallels might be explored - e.g. Between babies being a gift to his or her parents, siblings and wider family. Many learners might be able to draw upon personal experiences and ideas about what is meant by another person being a ‘gift’. This could be explored through discussion about companionship, friendship, and how these qualities influence behaviour.

• The gifts brought to the baby Jesus by the visiting shepherds and Magi could be recalled and compared with current day gifts given to celebrate the birth of new babies. The symbolism of the gifts given to the baby Jesus could also be investigated alongside gifts given in modern times between the population generally.

• Learners could consider the purpose of a lullaby and the effectiveness of the carol ‘Away in a Manger’ as such. Comparisons could be drawn between other well-known lullabies eg. Silent Night, Au Clair de la Lune, Rock-a-by Baby, The Skye Boat Song, Twinkle Twinkle etc. There could be some discussion around the feelings evoked by the music of the lullabies.

• Learners can listen to a range of versions of ‘Away in a manger’. Groups could be tasked with creating an accompaniment using un-tuned percussion, perform to other learners and then reflect on how well this compliments or juxtaposes the intended soothing atmosphere of a lullaby.

• Learners could then discuss the feelings evoked by the music of the carol and how this might link to Christian beliefs about Jesus as someone who heals/soothes and comforts them.

2. UNDERSTANDING CHRISTMAS THROUGH STORY: ‘PAPA PANOV’S SPECIAL CHRISTMAS’ by Leo Tolstoy
The Papa Panov story is from the Russian folk-tale tradition and links to the Nativity through themes of anticipating the arrival of a special visitor, the Christian belief that Jesus will return to Earth and the values promoted in Christian teachings of kindness, generosity, charity to others and Jesus’ key teaching to ‘Love one another’.

• ‘Papa Panov’s Special Christmas’ by Leo Tolstoy
  o Possible url source: http://classiclit.about.com/od/christmasstoriesholiday/a/aa_papachr.htm
  o A narration over a series of still illustrations can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8Y3eloiJ6Q

• Read the first section of the story, up to when Papa Panov falls asleep after reading the Nativity story in his Bible.
  o Learners could consider and record, as a class, what kind of character Papa Panov is based on his actions and decisions so far.
• Read the next section of the story, up to when Papa Panov wakens on Christmas morning and remembers his dream about Jesus promising to visit him.
  o Learners could reflect individually on how they feel when a special or important visitor is coming to see them alongside feelings they experience on Christmas Eve. Santa might be a common theme for discussion, but learners could also think about a relative that might be coming from a distance, one whom they’ve never met or a social figure or celebrity of significance to them.
  o Learners could be invited to share their ideas with the class, perhaps by acting out their response, and explain what they would be looking forward to or anticipating would happen. A template of thought bubbles might be completed with text or drawings.
  o In groups, they could consider what preparations they might make in anticipation of receiving a special visitor and create a ‘To Do’ list for Papa Panov.
  o Learners could be asked to consider what the scene will look, sound, smell and feel like when Papa Panov’s special visitor arrives and continue to make and explain links with their own experiences.
  o Learners should be encouraged to discuss their own response to the Christian belief that Jesus will return to Earth again and share ideas about how Christians and others will recognise him. E.g. Will he return as a baby again? What are the core beliefs that Christians hold about this? [Generally speaking, Christians believe that Jesus will return to earth at some point. This is known as the ‘second coming’. There are various views about how far the first Christians expected this return to be imminent, and there have been religious groups throughout history who have prophesised specific dates for this. However, mainstream Christianity tends to take the view that the second coming will usher in the ‘Kingdom of God’ on earth.]
  o Learners might also be made aware of a link that could be made between Papa Panov’s sadness at his wife having passed away and his children having grown up and moved away and the loss of Jesus to followers at the time. (This link to the Easter story is likely to be a discussion for learners at late first level.)
• Read the next section of the story, about all the visitors Papa Panov shows kindness to while waiting for his special visitor, up to when he begins to think that his dream was ‘just a dream’.
  o Learners could dramatize this section of the story in small groups (Papa Panov, the street-sweeper, the girl with the baby, some neighbours and beggars) to become involved with the narrative about kind and generous actions as well as to make sense of the story sequence.
  o Both the street sweeper and the young mother tell Papa Panov that he deserves his dream of meeting Jesus to come true because of the kindness and Christmas cheer he has shown them.
    ▪ Links could be made here to exploring what local charities, Christian and other religious groups do for the homeless and disadvantaged and the Armed Services etc. at Christmas or through the winter months. E.g. Salvation Army soup kitchens, food banks, Christmas boxes for soldiers, fundraising events. (This also makes links to activities about the Christmas Tree.)
• Read the final section of the story.
  o The Bible passage from Matthew 25:36-38 is referenced in the story when Jesus’ voice speaks to Papa Panov saying ‘I was hungry and you fed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was cold and you warmed me.’
    ▪ The text and parallel verses can be found at http://biblehub.com/matthew/25-36.htm
    ▪ With a partner, learners could create a list of things they look forward to about Christmas and then categorise their ideas into ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ and then share their ideas with another group to identify differences or similarities in ideas.
    ▪ By drawing and annotating illustrations, learners could make links between the teaching of Jesus from the Bible and the actions that Papa Panov takes in the story that exemplifies these behaviours commonly associated with being Christian.
    ▪ Learners could be challenged to share their response to whether these behaviours should be exclusive to those who follow the Christian faith or if there are benefits to all people in society regardless of their faith background, of acting with kindness, generosity and compassion.

3 UNDERSTANDING CHRISTMAS THROUGH EXPLORING CHRISTMAS CARDS
• Learners could examine a wide range of Christmas cards in collaborative learning groups, and select one to describe/talk about/share their response to during a class discussion E.g. during Circle Time.
  o The range of cards could include those which show characters, symbols or aspects of the Nativity story, feature traditional customs, winter scenes, humorous images and/or commercial items associated with Christmas etc.
    ▪ Consider question prompts such as:
      • What does the image on your chosen card show?
      • Why did you select this particular card?
      • What do you think is special about this card?
      • What do you think is most interesting about this card?
      • Who would you send this card to?
      • Why would you choose to send someone this card?
      • What is different about this card compared to the others you could have chosen? What would you think if you received this card?
      • Think – Pair- Share: what is the same and what is different about you and your partner’s chosen card?
Learners could explore the Christian symbolism depicted on a variety of cards, chosen either by the practitioner or learner, and consider why these images are important to Christians and most commonly seen during the Christmas period. For example, many images feature aspects of light which Christians consider to be symbolic of Jesus as the ‘light of the world’.

- Symbols to explore could include stars, candles, light around characters, halos, angels, bells, trumpets, holly and gifts from the Magi etc.
- Varied depictions of the characters from the story could also be compared from sources such as stained glass imagery, alternative/humorous depictions of Nativity characters or parody scenes (such as LEGO or with current celebrities), representations in classical art, children’s Bible illustrations or online animations etc.

Learners could build on these shared responses by ‘sorting’ a wide range of cards into categories such as religious/non-religious or those which show different aspects of Christmas. Categories could be justified by learners themselves who are then be invited to explain or show their thinking.

- This task could be extended and linked to Numeracy and Data Handling by using Carroll diagrams to show similarities or differences.
  - See Teaching ideas>Maths>Sorting>Carroll diagrams
  - Some suggestions for categories for sorting in Carroll diagrams for display:
    - Characters from the Nativity / Characters not from the Nativity
    - Shows image of Jesus / Shows image of Santa
    - Shows Christian symbols / Shows Christmas items (for example, Christmas puddings, tree lights, snowy scenes etc.)

- The FOX tool approach: (see Powerpoint on Clevedon School wikispaces) could be used for each learner to record why they think their selection of cards is similar: Each learner is given a wedge from a doughnut to draw or write their thoughts on and then the wedges are joined together. Donuts with three or four sections give best results. In the ‘hole’ of the doughnut, the group records their response to any or all of the following:
  - What did we think that was similar?
  - What did we think that was different?
  - What have we changed our minds about?

Learners could cut around images from the selection of cards and create a large collage story-board or poster version of the Nativity story with a partner or in a small group.

- Each group would then be invited to present their story-board to the class; describing each of the key aspects of the story they have chosen to feature in turn.

Learners could explore the historical beginnings of the Christmas card tradition in Victorian times.

- Learners could review some examples of traditional Victorian depictions of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and investigate who created, published and sent the first commercial Christmas card. A brief history and links to images can be found at Project Britain>Christmas Cards.
• Learners could consider the range of choices that can be made about whether cards support a charity or not, are recycled or not and justify the choice they would make. A discussion could centre on the question. ‘Should you send everyone in the class a Christmas card this year?’ (or indeed, ‘should only Christians/religious people send Christmas cards?’)

• Learners could collate a range of popular messages written in Christmas greeting cards; both with religious and secular sentiment.
  o They could categorise the different messages collected, discuss the similarities and differences and find the most popular phrases or scripture verses used.
    ▪ Learners could choose their favourite message and explain why it is meaningful to them.
    ▪ A display could be created featuring the sentiments found in Christmas cards. Numeracy links could be made here with Data Handling. E.g. frequency/tally charts, bar graphs, pie charts of results.

• Learners could explore and respond to the meaning or significance of the messages in a variety of Christmas cards. They could complete bubbles that show their reflections about why certain messages are written in Christmas cards, what is the meaning of these messages for Christians and their consideration of whether the messages also have application to non-Christians and those whose beliefs are not based on Christianity or any world religion.
  o Learners could also be encouraged to discuss whether the text in their chosen card has a message for all people in society and not just Christians e.g. messages like ‘Peace on Earth’

• By using the learning and connections made in previous activities, learners could consider which type of card would be most appropriate to send to a range of specific recipients; e.g. The Queen, a local pastor/minister/priest, the Head Teacher, a neighbour or classmate of a different faith etc.
4. UNDERSTANDING CHRISTMAS THROUGH THINKING ABOUT CHRISTMAS TREES

- Learners could begin by discussing the Christian symbolism linked to Christmas trees – e.g., star at top to represent star of Bethlehem, Angel to represent angelic appearance to Mary etc. Learners could be asked to think about why we have Christmas trees and how these link to religious and other beliefs.
- Learners could be invited to share what is special to them about their Christmas tree or one that they have seen.
  - Links can be made to prior learning about Christmas card imagery and further discussion as to the variety of tree and decoration depictions on cards explored further.
  - Learners might be invited to bring in a decoration that is special to them and talk to the class or their group about what it is, why it is special and what connections they make with Christmas through it. Key features of traditional and contemporary decorations might also be explored.
  - Learners could discuss the links between the use of lights, candles, stars and angels as Christian symbolism for Jesus as the ‘light of the world’ or ‘light in the darkness’.
  - They could be asked to draw/model/use ICT/ write about a representation of their tree.
  - Individuals or small groups could explore what the ‘most special’ Christmas tree might look like and create a representation of this tree by drawing, modelling, using ICT, creative writing or audio describing.
- Learners could investigate the historical beginnings of the Christmas tree tradition from Victorian times and might make some paper decorations in the Victorian style.
  - Comparisons could be drawn about the kinds of decorations used between the first newspaper image of Queen Victoria’s Christmas tree and a photograph of the learner’s own tree or a tree displayed in the class, school or local community. http://www.bbc.co.uk/victorianchristmas/history.shtml
- Learners could investigate the source of a significant Christmas tree in their town, nearest city, Edinburgh, London or beyond; its place of origin, from where/who it’s donated or purchased.
  - Aspects of any ceremony which surrounds the lighting of the tree and community might be explored. (E.g., often charitable donations can be made for bulbs to be lit in memory of a loved one or celebrities are invited to switch on display of lights.) There could be some further discussion around the symbolism of the Christmas tree lights/light in darkness at Christmas generally etc.
- Learners could engage in a debate about the sustainability of Christmas trees i.e. choosing between a real or an artificial tree?
  - Learners could participate in an Agree/Disagree line where they commit themselves to their immediate response to the statement, ‘A real tree is better than an artificial tree.’ Arguments for both sides would then be presented, debated and learners given another chance to show whether they agree or disagree and explain which arguments influenced their change of opinion or further persuaded them to commit to their original stance.
  - Where possible, a visit to a local Christmas tree nursery to investigate planting procedures, growing processes and growers’ commitments to sustainability might be arranged.
## Possible Assessment / Evidence:
The following is a list of possible assessment evidence from which practitioners can draw as appropriate to their learning context.

### CAROLS:
- Can learners interact effectively with a group to make choices and justify their thinking about how the lines of the carol should be sequenced?
- Can learners accurately recall the order of the carol lyrics from prior knowledge?
- Can learners respond to questions during class discussions or contribute to giving group feedback which shows insight, personal reflection, makes connections to the learner’s own experiences or shows a developing train of thought or line of questioning?
- Are learners able to construct and ask further relevant questions during discussions?
- Are learners able to use comparative language effectively to draw comparisons or state differences?
- Can learners contribute effectively to a group performance of the carol with percussion accompaniment they have created?

### PAPA PANOV:
- Can learners identify some of Papa Panov’s actions, and thereby infer some character traits, to contribute to a class list that records these?
- Can learners explain, by saying, drawing or writing, how they feel when they know a special person is due to visit?
- Can learners identify and contribute to a class list of ideas for preparations that might need to be made for a special visitor?
- Can learners explain, by saying, drawing, writing or sharing objects, what a scene of welcome for a visitor might look, sound, smell and feel like?
- Can learners share their response to the idea that Christians believe that Jesus will come back to Earth? Can they ask further probing questions about this key belief for Christians?
- Can learners identify the link between Papa Panov losing his wife and the Easter story? (Late First level)
- Can learners participate in a dramatized retelling of a section of the story as a key character, ensuring accurate sequencing of events?
- Can learners identify, by saying, writing or drawing, the positive actions made by Papa Panov and make links to charitable activities and events that occur in their community during the Christmas period?
- Can learners identify, by making a list, which of the things they look forward to most about Christmas are needs or wants?
- Can learners explain, by saying, writing or acting out, the links between behaviours which feature in the story and those which are promoted in the Bible passage from Matthew’s gospel?
- Can learners explain why they think people in society should treat others with kindness, generosity and compassion and make links to the story of Papa Panov, the Nativity, teachings of Jesus contained in the Bible and their own experiences?
CHRISTMAS CARDS:
- Can learners justify their choice of Christmas card and respond appropriately and personally to a variety of questions?
- Can learners work with a partner to examine and share similarities or differences between cards?
- Can learners identify, by pointing to or describing, common symbols and images used on religious and non-religious Christmas cards?
- Can learners explain that a symbol is a way of communicating a message or belief in a picture?
- Can learners explain the significance of some symbols associated with light for Christians?
- Can learners categorise images of Christmas into those which depict Christian/Religious content and those which depict commercial/secular content?
- Can learners work with others to sort a variety of cards into categories and justify their choice of categories?
- Can learners complete an individual wedge with their own thoughts about a collection of cards and contribute to a group discussion to identify similarities and differences in ideas?
- Can learners create and share a story-board or poster made from elements cut from Christmas cards to create a Nativity scene which features key characters and some symbolism from the story learned in previous activities?
- Can learners share knowledge of who designed and sent the first Christmas card?
- Can learners express why they think they should or should not send Christmas cards to each classmate?
- Can learners express why a particular message contained in a Christmas card is meaningful to them?
- Can learners express why some messages contained in Christmas cards might be applicable to all people in society, regardless of religious beliefs?
- Can learners use their experiences and knowledge from previous activities, and make reference to them, to justify why they would send a specific type of card to a variety of recipients?

CHRISTMAS TREES:
- Can learners describe, by saying, drawing or modelling, what is special to them about a Christmas tree?
- Can learners express views about the Christian symbolism on some Christmas trees?
- Can learners work with others and draw on class discussions and the experience of others to describe, draw or model a ‘most special’ Christmas tree?
- Can learners draw comparisons, by saying, annotating drawings or modelling, between Victorian and modern day Christmas trees?
- Can learners identify which aspect of traditional tree decorating links with the Christian belief of Jesus being the ‘light of the world’?
- Can learners justify their reasons for choosing a real or an artificial tree, showing respect for the opinions of others and an awareness of environmental impact?