

CHRISTIANITY—YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What is Christianity?

Christianity is the world's biggest religion, with about 2.1 billion followers worldwide. It is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ who lived in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. Christians believe that there is only one God. Most believe this one God is in three 'persons': Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is God the Son, but also a man. Christians believe that there is a life after death. Christians worship in churches, usually on Sundays and their spiritual leaders are called bishops, priests or ministers.

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a collection of holy books used by Christians. The books were written over centuries and tell the story of humanity's relationship with God. Generally, the Christian Bible has two main sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written before the life of Jesus. The New Testament is about the life and teachings of Jesus and his followers and letters, written mostly by St Paul, which were sent to the early Christian communities.

Who is Jesus Christ?

Christians believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, who was sent to save humanity from death and sin. The Bible says his mother was Mary who was married to Joseph and he was born in Bethlehem in a stable. Jesus appointed 12 men, called apostles, to closely follow him while he taught. Christians believe Jesus was put to death on a cross, and two days later he rose from the dead. This is called the resurrection.

Do Christians have the same beliefs?

All mainstream Christians believe in one God and the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, but there are many subdivisions of Christianity in the world with different beliefs. Some of the most well-known groups of Christians include the Church of England, which is the state church in England, and the Roman Catholic Church, whose leader is the Pope. The Church of Scotland is a Protestant Christian church. The Methodist Church is the fourth largest in Britain, after the Church of England and Roman Catholic Churches and the Church of Scotland.

What festivals do Christians celebrate?

There are many festivals throughout the year, but the two main Christians celebrations, with special church services are:

Easter: this takes place between late March and late April each year, depending on the full moon in spring. This celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - when the Bible says he died on the cross and on the third day came back to life. Traditions at this time include giving up luxuries in the run-up to Easter - called Lent - to remember Jesus' suffering. A special worship takes place on Easter Sunday. Hot cross buns are traditionally eaten on Good Friday to mark Jesus' death. Chocolate eggs are given at Easter, which are supposed to represent life.

Christmas is a holy day when Christians mark the birth of Jesus on 25 December (7 January for Orthodox Christians). At this time special church services take place and some schools put on nativity plays to remember the story of Christmas.

EASTER GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Shrove Tuesday is the last day before the period which Christians call **Lent**. It is traditional on this day to eat pancakes. Dates vary from year to year but it usually falls in February, sometimes early March.

Lent is a time when many Christians prepare for Easter by observing a period of fasting, repentance, moderation and spiritual discipline. During some **Ash Wednesday** services, the minister will lightly rub the sign of the cross with ashes onto the foreheads of worshipers.

Ash Wednesday marks the first day, or the start of the season of **Lent**, which begins 40 days prior to Easter.

On **Palm Sunday** Christians celebrate the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, the week before his death and resurrection. For many Christian churches, Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, which concludes on Easter Sunday.

Maundy Thursday is observed during Holy Week on the Thursday before Easter. Also referred to as "Holy Thursday" or "Great Thursday" in some Christian denominations, Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper when Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples on the night before he was crucified.

Good Friday is observed on the Friday before Easter Sunday. On this day Christians commemorate the passion, or suffering, and death on the cross of the Lord, Jesus Christ. It is traditional to eat fish on Good Friday instead of meat.

On **Easter** Christians celebrate the resurrection of the Lord, Jesus Christ. It is typically the most well-attended Sunday service of the year for Christian churches. The March Equinox is used to compute the date of Easter Sunday and holidays that are related to it. These holidays do not fall on a fixed date. Orthodox Christians compute the date of Easter slightly differently, but it likewise falls on no fixed date either in the Gregorian or the Julian calendar.

Location of Christian Worshipping Spaces

St Peter's House Chaplaincy, St. Peters House, Precinct Centre, Manchester M13 9GH
www.stpeters.org.uk

Multifaith Prayer Room, Oxford Road, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M13 9WL
www.cmft.nhs.uk/royal-infirmary.aspx

B Floor, Renold Building , University of Manchester, Charles Street

Avila House RC Chaplaincy, 339 Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PG

Other Resources and Contacts

Religion & Belief at the University of Manchester:
www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/services/equality-and-diversity/equality-groups/religion-belief/

Chair of Staff & PG Christian Fellowship: christine.jinks@manchester.ac.uk
Vice-Chair: shirley.jenner@manchester.ac.uk