

## **The Christian Calendar**

Every year Christians celebrate a number of festivals and holy days and observe special seasons of the year.

Some Christians share in celebrating these festivals and observing the special seasons and some don't but nearly everyone celebrates Easter, the festival of Christ's resurrection and Christmas the festival of his birth.

It can be a little confusing because the dates of some festivals like Easter are calculated by the movements of the moon and are on a different day each year. Other festivals like Christmas which is celebrated on the 25<sup>th</sup> December happen on the same date every year. Some Christians have a different calendar, so the Orthodox Churches in the East celebrate these festivals on different days from other Christians.

This page tells you about the festivals, holy days and special seasons that we usually celebrate at New North Road Baptist Church.

### **Advent**

Advent is a waiting season that leads up to Christmas. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and during Advent we light a candle for each Sunday until all four candles are lit. Sometimes people have an Advent Calendar in which they open a small window for everyday of the Advent season. In the United Kingdom Advent is overshadowed by Christmas when people are preparing their homes, often decorating them with lights and decorating their Christmas trees too.

### **Christmas**

Christmas is the festival of Christ's birth. Christmas is a national celebration when traditionally gather together and exchange gifts. In the build up to Christmas there is usually a candlelight service when we sing traditional carols such as Hark the Herald Angels Sing and O come all ye faithful. One of the things many people do at Christmas is send Christmas cards to their friends and family. One of the things that Mark's family like to do is watch the Queen give her traditional Christmas broadcast on Christmas day.

There are twelve days in Christmas concluding with Epiphany when the stargazers from the East 'magi' who had probably come from Persia with gifts for the baby Jesus.

### **New Year's Eve**

Although it isn't something, we usually do at New North Road many Christians like to gather for a 'watchnight' service on New Year's Eve to welcome the New Year.

### **Mothering Sunday**

In the United Kingdom Mothering Sunday which is also called Mother's Day happens on the fourth Sunday of Lent. That's three weeks before Easter Sunday. It's a day when families show special appreciation and love for their mothers, sharing gifts with her, giving her flowers and often taking her for a meal.

### **Lent**

Lent is a waiting season that begins on **Ash Wednesday** about six weeks before Easter and it usually begins in late February or Early March. It is a time when Christians often fasted by giving up sweet foods. Now-days Christians may choose to do something positive instead, for example giving up complaining about things. The day before Ash Wednesday is called **Shrove Tuesday** when people traditionally used up their sweet foods in pancakes and many people still make pancakes on that day. On Ash Wednesday a solemn service of worship may happen and in some churches people are signed with Ashes on their forehead because it is the a penitential season when we people are encouraged to be aware of their sins, their need of forgiveness and personal renewal.

In many churches Lent is also a season of study when people are encouraged to meet, read and pray together in small groups, often in their homes, with Christians from other churches.

### **Holy Week**

Holy Week is the last week of Lent. It begins on Palm Sunday when we celebrate the day when Jesus entered Jerusalem and the people welcomed him, laying Palm branches in the road and shouting 'Hosanna in the highest!'

## **Maundy Thursday**

Maundy Thursday is the Thursday in Holy Week when we remember the Last Supper when Jesus shared bread and wine with his disciples before walking to the Garden of Gethsemane where he was betrayed and arrested. At New North Road there is usually a simple communion service on this day.

## **Good Friday**

Good Friday is the day when Christians remember that Jesus died on the cross. In many churches there will be a service 'at the foot of the cross; when people will sing songs like 'When I survey the wondrous cross.' In Huddersfield there is also a walk of witness through the town that many Christians share in.

## **Easter Sunday.**

This is a day of resurrection and great joy as we celebrate that Jesus who died was raised again. 'Christ is risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia' In some churches there will be a sunrise service followed by breakfast to celebrate, often in the open air in a high place where you can see the sun rising early in the morning.

## **Pentecost**

Pentecost is a festival that celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit and usually has an international dimension because in the disciples spoke in many languages when the Holy Spirit came with power. (Acts 2) Pentecost happens fifty days after Easter in May or June.

## **Harvest**

Harvest Festival usually happens in late September or Early October. It's a day for celebrating God's goodness in creation and his provision for our needs in the food that is harvested. Many churches will have beautiful harvest displays and the food that people come with is usually distributed to people who are in need of food parcels.

