

What do you know about Christianity?

Followers of the teachings of Jesus Christ are called Christians. Christian staff and students form a part of the UWS community. Acknowledging and respecting Christian identities therefore requires, in part, a basic understanding of what Christianity is about.

About Christianity

Christianity is focussed on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God wisely and generously created the world so that we might live in relationship with God and with all creation. In time, the good world that God created was marred by evil. The Bible attributes this, in part, to human frailty and sin. In his life and teachings Jesus showed how humans ought to live. He summed this up as 'Loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength' and 'Loving your neighbour as yourself'. Having perfectly lived such a life, Jesus demonstrated the full extent of his love by laying down his life on the cross, thus securing our salvation. Christians believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he now forgives all those who turn from evil and turn to Jesus in faith. Christians believe that God's Spirit empowers them to live in a kind and peace-loving way. Most Christians throughout history have believed that Jesus is both fully God and fully human. Christians use the term Trinity, meaning that there is one God who exists in three persons: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Catholic

Many faiths believe in one God. Christians do and follow Jesus Christ, whose wish for us is that we experience life to the full and fullness of joy. Some distinctive characteristics of being 'Catholic' include:

- Having a realistic optimism about people and the world where we find God disclosed. Community is where we thrive and discipleship is radically communal.
- Being buoyed by the wonderful goodness of all the faithful who have gone before us, those living now and those yet to be born.
- Having a deep respect for the past, for Scripture and authentic Tradition including a reverence for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The Pope is elected by the Cardinals to be a pastoral and spiritual leader.

'Catholic' means 'according to the whole' or 'universal'.

Orthodox

The Orthodox Churches are of the oldest Christian Churches founded by the Holy Apostles. The Orthodox Church teachings and faith are built upon the person of Jesus Christ, the Holy Bible, the Seven Sacraments and the Ecumenical Councils. The life and ministry of the Orthodox Churches focus on the life of worship and prayer; the life of fellowship with the Angels and Saints; the life of service, reaching and assisting those in need and the life of witness by radiating the light of Christ to the world.

Protestant

The Protestant churches arose during the 16th century Reformation. Inspired by their reading of the Bible, these men and women sought to restore the Church to its original beliefs and practices. Characteristic of Protestant faith is the notion that salvation comes only by God's grace, through faith in Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, to God's glory. Protestantism is associated with



simplicity of style and the participation of all believers in church meetings. Today there are many different Protestant churches, some being divided by belief and others simply by geography.

Other Churches

Though not in formal dialogue with the above groups, other churches include The Jehovah's Witnesses and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Christian Religious Observance

Place and style of worship

Though Christians are free to worship in any place, they do this collectively at churches. Worship at church involves prayer, singing, and reading of the Bible, along with an explanation of the Bible passages, typically by the priest or minister. Church services in Australia are usually held on a Sunday.

Religious Text

The primary source for Christian faith and practice is the Bible. It contains stories and historical accounts about creation, the Hebrew peoples, the coming of Christ and the early church. It also includes reflections on the purpose of life and songs of praise to God. Many Christians believe that the whole Bible points to the need for Jesus and explains the wonders of his life and ministry. The majority of Christians recognise the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as expressing their key beliefs.