

Our Christmas

Community has a diverse membership with members of different faiths or of none. Our union is rightly proud of the diversity and understanding which abounds among us.

Christmas is the traditional Christian festival, celebrating the birth of Christ, but what are the main festivals of members of different faiths? And to what extent do they take part in Christmas festivities. We talked to some of them.



HINDU MEMBER

Jitu Depala is a Hindu member who is registered blind and who was employed in a sheltered workshop in north London until his work ceased.

'Our main Hindu festival is Diwali. It is the end of our calendar year and we have a great celebration, with a traditional family feast. It is also a time for doing good and a time to make sure that we resolve any disputes and are at peace with family and friends.'

'We celebrate Christmas too, with cards and gifts and are happy to join others in this festive celebration.'

JEWISH MEMBER

Neil Waldman is a Jewish member who has been working in the carpet industry for 20 years.

The biggest festivals for Jewish members are the Jewish new year, which is normally in September, followed 10 days later by Yom Kippur.

'The 10 days from our New Year to Yom Kippur is a time we seek forgiveness for the things we have done wrong,' Neil said. 'Yom Kippur is the most solemn day of the year, which we spend in the synagogue and we fast for 25 hours.'

'Our second biggest festival is Passover which is normally around Easter time when we celebrate the exodus, the time when Moses led our people out of Egypt and into the land of Israel.'

'We also have a winter festival with lights and fun, this is called Hanukkah.'

'Most Jewish people, though not Orthodox, also enjoy Christmas with presents and lots of nice food - and even a turkey!'

SIKH MEMBERS

Rajinder Sagoo is a Sikh member who is employed by Leicester City Council as a support worker.

'Our main festival, is Diwali, something we share with Hindus. We tend to go to the temple and pray and have traditional festivities.'

'After our Diwali, the Hindus celebrate their new year's day, but the Sikh new year's day is in April.'

'As well as festivities we very much believe in study as study is an important feature of our life - the word Sikh means learner.'

'We love the Christmas festival too. We give presents and celebrate just like any other family. So in a sense we have two Christmases!'



MUSLIM MEMBER

Hatimali Bharmal is a Muslim and an active retired member of our union.

'Our biggest festival is Eid - and that is our Christmas basically. Eid comes at the end of a month of fasting which we call Ramadan.'

'During this period we only eat before sunrise and after sunset. Many Muslims gather at their local mosque at the end of the day to break the fast and enjoy a meal together.'

'The dates for Ramadan vary from year to year depending on the position of the moon. This year Eid was on September 30. It is a great big family event when we party, exchange presents and have fun.'

'Eid is also the time for giving to the people less fortunate, so it is a time for charity giving.'

'Of course we honour Jesus Christ as a prophet - in the Qur'an we call him Isa Nabi. So a lot of Muslim families do celebrate Christmas with more family festivities.'
