



Basic Principal of Beliefs

Christianity

Christians believe in the Mystery of the holy Trinity: One God.

- God the father-God the son – (Jesus) - God the Holy Spirit.

There are different branches of Christianity: Orthodox Greek church, national churches of Russia, the Catholic Orthodox Church and The Church of England, etc.

- Some of the Eastern European, African and Chinese Communities practice Christianity

The Christian scripture is known as the BIBLE, which traditionally are called the Old Testament and New Testaments.

Holy Days/Festivals:

- Lent
- Christmas
- Easter

Other inner domains of Christians are Quakers, Mormons, Jehovah's Witness and many more

Islam

Followers of Islam are called Muslim. They believe in the five Pillars of Islam:

1. **Shahadah** - declaration of faith that there is only one God (Allah) and Mohammed PBUH his last prophet.
2. **Salat** - Prayers are made five times a day facing the Ka'bah in Mecca. (Saudi Arabia)
 - Salah- Fajr-before sunrise, Zuhar- just after noon, Asar - mid/late afternoon, Magrib - just after sunset and Isha in the night.
3. **Zakat** - Giving charity
4. **Sawm** - Fasting during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar
 - Islamic calendar is lunar.
5. **Hajj** - Pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Pilgrimage can only be performed if it is affordable and women can only go with appropriate male family member: husband, brother, nephew, grandson.

Muslims do not eat pork. They eat Halal meat that is slaughtered in the Islamic way and where as much blood as possible leaves the animal's body quickly. Muslims can consume fish. Alcohol and Drugs are forbidden under Islamic law.

- Halal means 'Permissible'. Haram means 'NON – Permissible'.

The Muslim scripture is the Quran and that is written in Arabic. The Hadith are accounts and actions of the Prophet PBUH and his companions.

There are segregated domains in Islam depending on school of thought eg: Sunni, Shia, Salafi, Sufi, Wahhabi, Ahmediyya and many more.

The Pakistani and Bangladeshi community living in Newcastle are mostly Sunni Muslims. Some Africans also practice Islam.

Muslims go to Mosques to complete their obligatory prayers.

- In some cultures women do NOT attend the mosque as it isn't compulsory on women to attend the mosque.

Holy days/Festivals:

- Jum'uah (Jummah) – Friday Prayers that is prayed at the time of Zuhar.
- Eid –ul-fitr – Celebration that marks the end of Ramadan.
- Eid-ul Adha- The festival of sacrifice that remembers Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son.
- Al- Hijra- Islamic New Year.
- Ramadan – The month of fasting

There is a religious dress code for Muslims to dress modestly for both male and female. The most common is hijab the head covering for women. The hijab is covering everything apart from the face and hands but isn't compulsory and shouldn't be forced onto anyone as it is a choice and then a way of life.

Women's hair is also seen as beauty that should only be seen by the Husband.

Niqab is different from Hijab. It is the covering of the face and hands with gloves and cloth, and isn't compulsory.

Women who are Muslim prefer female professionals and also don't shake hands with Males.

Mosques in Newcastle:

- Bangladeshi Community Centre – Bengali
- Bilal Mosque – Pakistani
- Central Turkish Mosque – Turkish
- Hawar Association - Iranian/Iraqi
- Medina Mosque – Pakistani/Bengali
- Newcastle Central Mosque – Mixed
- Newcastle Muslim Centre – Bengali
- Shahjalal Mosque – Bengali

Hinduism

The Hindus believe in the universal eternal soul called Brahman, who created and is present in everything. Hindus believe in many deities:

- **Brahma** - He is regarded as the senior god and his job was creation.
- **Vishnu** - the second god in the Hindu triumvirate of Brahman, one of the most important characters in Indian belief.
- **Shiva** - is the destroyer, but also the re-creator. Shiva is the source of both good and evil who combines many contradictory elements.
- **Lakshmi** - is the consort of the god Vishnu. She is one of the most popular goddesses of Hindu mythology and is known as the goddess of wealth and purity.

There are five Ps of Hinduism:

- Parameshwara (God)
- Prarthana (Prayer)
- Punarjanma (Re-incarnation)
- Purushartha (Law of Action)
- Prani Daya (Compassion for all Living beings)

Most Hindus are vegetarian and those who eat meat normally abstain from beef. Hindu vegetarianism arises from a belief in ahimsa (non-harming) and generally means that meat, fish, eggs or animal products (food cooked in or containing animal fat) are not eaten.

Hindus go to the Temple (Mandir) for worship.

Holy Days/Festivals:

- Holi – Celebration of colour and renewal
- Diwali – festival of Lights
- Rakhsha Bandhan – celebration of brotherhood and love

(During Rakhsha Bandhan sisters tie a little thread around their brother's wrists and the brothers provide the gifts and a promise of eternal protection)

Hindu Temples in Newcastle:

- Hindu Temple – Indian/Bengali
- ISKON Temple – Indian/Bengali

Buddhism

Nirvana - Buddhism is a tradition that focuses on personal spiritual development. Buddhists strive for a deep insight into the true nature of life and do not worship gods or deities.

There are different schools of Buddhism:

- **Theraveda** - The Theravada School adheres strictly to the original teachings of Buddha as contained in the Pali cannon (scriptures) and emphasises the goal of personal salvation for the individual follower.
- **Mahanya** - The Mahayana School places great importance on cultivation of the mind. The emphasis is not only on self-salvation but on salvation of all beings as well
- **Vijrayana** - the Mahayana School but differs in that it emphasises the importance of acceptance of a personal "Guru" (teacher) who initiates his followers into what has been called "secret teachings" (Tantra). Meditation and special sayings called mantra are also characteristic of the Vajrayana tradition.

The Tripitaka is the formal term used for a Buddhist canon of scriptures.

- Regulations governing food depends on which branch of Buddhism is practiced and in what country.
- Meat and fish are generally not eaten by the Theravada and Mahayana traditions because it is considered bad karma (as animals can be reincarnated as humans and vice versa).
- Some followers of the Mahayana and Theravada tradition are also vegans.
- Buddhist monks from certain Buddhist traditions fast from all food on the new and full moon of each lunar month.
- Buddhists generally abstain from intoxicants such as alcohol.

Buddhists attend the temple where there is always a statue of the Buddha.

Holy Days/Festivals:

- Dharma day – marks the beginning of the Buddha's teaching.
- Wesak – is the most important of the Buddhist festivals and is celebrated on the full moon in May. It celebrates the Buddha's birthday, and, for some Buddhists, also marks his birth and death.

Buddhist Temples in Newcastle:

- Meditation in Newcastle – Mixed
- Newcastle Buddhist Centre – Mixed
- Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery - Mixed

Sikhism

Sikhs adhere to and can be identified by the five 'Ks'. The 5 Ks taken together symbolise that the Sikh who wears them has dedicated themselves to a life of devotion and submission to the Guru.

1. **Kesh (hair)** - Sikhs are required not to cut their hair. Sikh men cover their hair with a turban and some women also wear turbans.
2. **Kangha (comb)** - this is worn in the hair and symbolises orderly spirituality.
3. **Kara** - an iron or steel bangle, a symbol of spiritual allegiance.
4. **Kachhera** - knee length trousers which symbolise agility and modesty.
5. **Kirpan** - a curved sword, a reminder of dignity and self-respect.

The Holy Scriptures are known as the Adi Granth or the Guru Granth Sahib and have 1430 pages.

There are no strict dietary requirements, but many Sikhs are vegetarian or do not eat beef. Meat is only permitted if it is jhatka - the animal is killed instantaneously with one stroke.

- Those Sikhs who eat meat should not eat halal meat (meat from animals killed according to Muslim law).

The Gurdwara is the Sikh place of worship, literally meaning 'door to the Guru'. They are open to everyone, although Sikhs ask that shoes are removed and heads are covered before entry. Sikh men and women dress modestly and to some Sikhs any exposure can cause offence.

- The Gurdwara also houses the Langar, which is a free community kitchen. Most Gurdwaras also have a triangular flag flying outside with the Sikh emblem on.

Holy Days/Festivals:

Diwali, the Festival of Light, is a festival that Sikhs, and Hindus celebrate. For Sikhs, Diwali is particularly important because it celebrates the release from prison of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other princes with him, in 1619.

Sikh men usually wear Western dress but are advised to keep the turban and Kachera. The wearing of the Kirpan (sword) by Sikh women and men signifies that they are initiated Sikhs, and this should not be removed unless for health and safety.

Sikh Gurdwara in Newcastle:

- Gurdwara Singh Sabaha – Indian
- Gurdwara Sahib Shaheed baba deep singh ji – Indian

Judaism

Jews believe that there is a single God who not only created the universe, but with whom every Jew can have an individual and personal relationship.

Scriptures:

The Torah is the first part of the Jewish bible. It is the central and most important document of Judaism and has been used by Jews through the ages.

Torah refers to the five books of Moses. These are:

1. Bresheit (Genesis),
2. Shemot (Exodus),
3. Vayicra (Leviticus),
4. Bamidbar (Numbers),
5. Devarim (Deuteronomy).

Dietary requirements:

Judaism has a number of important dietary regulations known as Kashrut (meaning suitable). Animals, birds and fish might be either Kosher (permitted) or Treif (forbidden).

Animals that can be eaten are all those with split hooves and which chew the cud such as sheep, cows and deer. Pigs, rabbits and horses are unacceptable. Fish with fins and scales are permitted but shellfish are not.

For meat to be Kosher it must have been humanely slaughtered by a Shochet (qualified slaughterer) under the supervision of the Beth Din (religious court). The meat is then soaked and salted to remove excess blood.

The prohibition against consuming blood reflects the view that blood represents life. Jewish law prohibits the mixing of milk foods with meat foods. Separate sets of kitchen utensils are used for the two types of food and a time lapse is observed between eating one type and another.

Observance of these rules varies amongst Jews, so it is always wise to check what dietary requirements are necessary when providing food for Jewish people.

Place of Worship:

The synagogue is the Jewish place of worship, but is also used as a place to study, and often as a community centre as well. A Rabbi is the spiritual leader of the Jewish community.

Holy Days/Festivals:

Jews consider that each day starts at sunset so Saturday (the Sabbath) actually begins at sunset on Friday. Note that in winter this means that the Sabbath and other festivals start in late afternoon.

The Jewish calendar is based on lunar months, each month having 29 or 30 days - the moon takes 29.5 days to orbit the earth.

This means that Jewish festivals fall on different dates each year according to the standard western calendar.

Days of Repentance (Days of Awe) -During the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur everyone gets a chance to repent.

- Hanukkah – Jewish Festival of lights
- Passover – Commemoration of liberation by God from slavery in ancient Egypt
- Rosh Hashanah – Jewish New Year
- Yom Kippur – The day of Atonement
- Yom Hashoah – The day to remember the Holocaust
- Sabbath – Every week religious Jews observe the Sabbath, the Jewish holy day, and keep its laws and customs.

Religious dress:

It is considered a sign of respect for male to wear a head covering, either a dress hat or a kippa (skull cap, plural kipot).

Some Conservative Jews also encourage women to cover their heads. Many Orthodox men wear a head covering throughout their day, even when not attending religious services.

Jewish Synagogues in Newcastle:

- United Hebrew Congregation
- Newcastle Reform Synagogue

Humanism - non religious

Roughly speaking, the word humanist has come to mean someone who:

- Trusts to the scientific method when it comes to understanding how the universe works and rejects the idea of the supernatural (and is therefore an atheist or agnostic)
- Makes their ethical decisions based on reason, empathy, and a concern for human beings and other sentient animals.
- Believes that, in the absence of an afterlife and any discernible purpose to the universe, human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same.

Find out more

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