

Christian Glossary

Preferred Form	Main Variant	Explanation
Baptistry		Building or pool used for baptism, particularly by immersion. Part of a church, where baptism takes place.
BC	Before Christ	Period of history before the estimated birth of Jesus Christ.
Believer's Baptism		The baptism of people who are old enough to understand the meaning of the rite.
Bishop		A clergyman set apart to oversee a number of priests and their churches forming a diocese. (Mainly Anglican, RC and Orthodox). Acts under the supervision of an Archbishop.
Chapel		Name formerly used by several non-conformist denominations, eg Baptists, Methodist for their place of worship.
Charismatic		A modern movement within the Church, emphasising spiritual gifts, such as healing or speaking with tongues.
Chrismation		A modern movement within the Church, emphasising spiritual gifts, such as healing or speaking with tongues.

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Christ	Messiah	<p><i>The anointed one.</i> Messiah is used in the Jewish tradition to refer to the expected leader sent by God, who will bring salvation to God's people. Jesus' followers applied this title to him, and its Greek equivalent, Christ, is the source of the words Christian and Christianity.</p>
Christmas		<p>Festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ (25th December, in most Churches).</p>
Chrismons		<p>Abbreviation for 'Christ Monograms'. Decorative symbols depicting aspects of Christ and the Christian faith.</p>
Church		<p>The whole community of Christians. The building in which Christians worship. A particular denomination.</p>
Citadel		<p>The building in which members of the Salvation Army meet for worship.</p>
Confession		<p>Contrition, penance. One of seven sacraments observed by some Churches whose priest confidentially hears a person's confession. An admission, by a Christian of wrong-doing. A particular official statement of Christ.</p>
Confirmation		<p>Rite by which someone is admitted to full communion and membership of the Church (principally Anglican).</p>

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Congregationalist		Member of a Christian body which believes that each local church is independent and self-governing under the authority of Christ.
Consubstantiation		Doctrine of the Eucharist associated with Luther, which holds that after consecration, the substances of the body and Blood of Jesus Christ and of the bread and wine co-exist in union with each other.
Creed		Summary statement of religious beliefs, often recited in worship, especially the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.
Crucifixion		Roman method of executing criminals and traitors by fastening them to a cross until they died of asphyxiation, used in the case of Jesus Christ and many who opposed the Romans.
Dedication		Service of dedicating babies or young children to God, used by some denominations, eg Baptists as an alternative to infant baptism.
Denomination		A group. Christianity has many denominations, eg Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics.
Easter		Central Christian festival in memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

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Ecumenicism	Oikoumene	Movement within the Church towards co-operation and eventual unity.
Eucharist		Thanksgiving. A service celebrating the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, using elements of bread and wine (see Holy Communion).
Evangelical		Group or church, placing particular emphasis on the Gospel and the scriptures as the sole authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
Font		Receptacle to hold water in baptism.
Free Churches		Non-conformist denominations, free from state control (used of 20 Churches).
Good Friday		The Friday in Holy Week. Commemorates the day Jesus died on the cross.
Gospel		Good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. An account of Jesus' life and work.
Heaven		The place, or state, in which souls will be united with God after death.
Hell		The place, or state, in which souls will be separated from God after death.
Holy Communion		Central liturgical service observed by most Churches (see Eucharist, Mass, Lord's Supper). Recalls the last meal of Jesus, and celebrates his sacrificial and saving death.

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Holy Spirit		The third person of the Holy Trinity. Active as divine presence and power in the world, and in dwelling in believers to make them like Christ and empower them to do God's will.
Holy Week		The week before Easter, when Christians recall the last week of Jesus' life on earth.
Icon	Ikon	Painting or mosaic of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, a saint, or a Church feast. Used as an aid to devotion, usually in the Orthodox tradition.
Iconostasis		Screen, covered with icons, used in Eastern Orthodox churches to separate the sanctuary from the nave.
Incarnation		The doctrine that God took human form in Jesus Christ. It is also the belief that God in Christ is active in the Church and in the world.
Jesus Christ		The central figure of Christian history and devotion. The second person of the Trinity.
Justification by Faith		The doctrine that God forgives ("treats as just") those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ.
Lectern		Stand supporting the Bible, often in the shape of an eagle.
Lent		The forty day period of abstinence and preparation leading up to Easter.

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Liturgy Lord's Supper		Service of worship according to a prescribe ritual, such as Evensong or Eucharist. Alternative term for Eucharist in some Churches (mainly Non-conformist).
Mass Maundy Thursday Methodist Minister		Term for the Eucharist, used by the Roman Catholic and other Churches. The Thursday in Holy Week. Commemorates the Last Supper. A Christian who belongs to the Methodist Church which came into existence through the work of John Wesley in the 18 th century. Servant. Used principally in the Methodist church to describe a clergyman set apart to oversee one church or a group of churches.
Non-conformist		Protestant Christian bodies which became separated from the established Church of England in the 17 th century.
Ordination Orthodox		The 'laying on of hands' on priests and deacons by a bishop. The Eastern Orthodox Church consisting of national Churches (mainly Greek of Salv) including the ancient Eastern Patriarchates.
Palm Sunday		The Sunday before Easter, commemorating the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

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Patriarch		Title for principal Eastern Orthodox bishops. Also used for early Israelite leaders such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.
Pentecost	Whitsun	The day when early Christians received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Also described as the birthday of the Christian Church.
Pope		The Bishop of Rome, head of the Roman Catholic Church.
Presbyterian		A member of a Church that is governed by elders or 'presbyters', the national Church of Scotland.
Priest		Used mainly in the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions. A man or woman set apart to be Christ's representative on earth and help bring people to God.
Protestant		That part of the Church which became distinct from the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches when their members professed the centrality of the Bible and other beliefs.
Pulpit		A raised platform from which sermons are preached.
Purgatory		In some traditions, a condition or slate in which good souls receive spiritual cleansing after death, in preparation for heaven.
Quaker		A member of the Religious Society of Friends established through the work of George Fox in the 17 th century.

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Redemption		Derived from the practice of paying the price of a slave's freedom; and so, the work of Jesus Christ in setting people free through his death.
Reformation		A 16 th century reform movement that led to the formation
Resurrection		The rising from the dead of Jesus Christ on the third day after the crucifixion. The rising from the dead of believers at the Last Day. The new, or risen, life of Christians.
Roman Catholic		That part of the Church owing loyalty to the Bishop of Rome, as distinct from Orthodox and Protestant Churches.
Sacrament		An outward sign of an inward blessing, as in baptism or the Eucharist.
Tithing		The practice of giving one tenth of one's income to the church on a regular basis.
Transubstantiation		Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the Mass, which states that at the words of consecration, the substance of the bread and wine becomes the substance of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and that he is thus present on the altar.
Trinity		Three persons in one God; doctrine of the threefold nature of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Unction	Sacrament of the sick	The anointing with oil of a sick or dying person.

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United Reformed Church		A Church formed by the union of English Congregationalists with the Presbyterian Church of England and subsequently the Reformed Association of the Churches of Christ.
Vatican Vicar		The residence of the Pope in Rome, and the administrative centre of the Roman Catholic Church. Usually used to describe an Anglican priest who is responsible for a church and its parish.