



# Christian Festivals

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Alongside Britain's traditional music festivals, gatherings with an unapologetically Christian ethos have grown in strength over the past few decades. A multitude of festivals and one-day events now cater for many different tastes. Below is a brief explanation of some of the most popular:

## GREENBELT

- This is surely the granddaddy of Christian festivals. It began in 1974, and has gone from strength to strength, with [20,000 now attending](#). This year it takes place at Boughton House in Northamptonshire from 24-27 August.
- Greenbelt describes itself as a festival of arts, faith and justice, which wants to bring together concepts that are sometimes kept apart – such as spirituality and politics.
- The festival often has big-name speakers and musicians to draw the crowds. This year, fresh from their surprise appearance at the World Cup (and in Russian Orthodox churches), the feminist protest group Pussy Riot are the headline act. The food and poverty writer Jack Monroe will be there, as will Michael Eavis, founder of the Glastonbury festival, the DJ Simon Mayo, and the musician and commentator Vicky Beeching.
- [Critics say](#) Greenbelt focuses too much on left-wing themes and encourages non-traditional approaches to Christianity. Past speakers have included the human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell, Gene Robinson, the first priest in an openly gay relationship to be consecrated bishop in a mainstream Christian denomination, and the singer Billy Bragg, the left-wing activist, but also Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury.

## CREATION FEST

- Rooted in the inerrancy of scripture – the belief that the Bible is free from error in science as well as faith – [Creation Fest](#) was founded by a Californian church in the Devon area in 2002. The festival, at the Royal Cornwall Events Centre in Wadebridge, runs this year from 4-10 August. Admission is free.
- Like Greenbelt, there’s a selection of music and discussion groups, but the emphasis is less on social issues, and more on the primacy of scripture and Bible teaching.
- Creation Fest is confident about what it believes when it comes to theology. A statement on its website outlines its [core beliefs](#).
- There’s a big focus on attracting young families, with not only tailor-made activities, but also a covered skate and BMX park.

## SPRING HARVEST

- [Spring Harvest](#) began in 1979 and is held every year at Butlins resorts in Minehead and Skegness. This year it was also held at Harrogate Convention Centre for a week. It is evangelical in tone, with spirit-led worship sessions, workshops and Bible study. It aims to create a space to meet God and encourage personal and community transformation.
- Its base at Butlins parks means festival-goers can use the holiday facilities.
- Every morning starts with an interactive group worship, combining music, dance and drama.
- Over the years, Spring Harvest has raised money for a variety of causes including people living with HIV or Aids, victims of the Kosovo War, and drought schemes in Burkina Faso.
- It is non-political, but the organisers did write to Margaret Thatcher during the Falklands War to express their “love and concern” and raised funds for the Church in Argentina.

## NEW WINE

- New Wine seeks to enable church leaders and members to share ideas with a bold mission: “[Our vision is to see local churches changing nations](#)”.
- 24,000 people meet at the Royal Bath and West Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, for a week-long programme filled with Bible teaching, seminars, workshops and Christian entertainment. This year it runs from 28 July to 10 August.
- It was founded in 1989 by Anglican clergymen influenced by John Wimber, a charismatic evangelical American church leader.
- Central to its vision is an emphasis on the Holy Spirit “with the expectation of seeing signs and wonders”.
- Other key values are concern for the poor and building a family of relationships among local churches.

## SOUL SURVIVOR

- Oriented towards younger adults, [Soul Survivor](#) runs events from 20 July to 28 August in Kinross, Stafford and Peterborough, attracting 25,000 people in 2017.
- However, 2019’s festival will be the last one. Its founder, Mike Pilavachi, says God has told him that [it’s time to move on](#), and he wants to “make space for others to rise up”.
- With the Soul Survivor church in Watford, the festival aims to encourage and equip young people in their relationship with Jesus. There’s a big focus on training young people to be future leaders in all walks of Christian life.
- The ‘Naturally Supernatural’ summer camp is especially focused on bringing the Holy Spirit into everyday life. As well as spirit-led prayer, teaching also focuses on issues such as prophecy, and praying for physical healing.

## KESWICK CONVENTION

- This is the oldest and perhaps one of the more traditionally minded Christian festivals. Keswick Ministries, which organises the [annual convention](#), says Christians should be Christ-like in their lifestyles, for example by being selfless in matters of money and belongings, and an acceptance that the only appropriate place for sex is in a married relationship between one man and one woman.
- The festival has a strong focus on mission work, both globally, but also in everyday lives. This dates from the founding of the movement in Cumberland – now Cumbria – 140 years ago.
- At the forefront of teaching is the primacy of scripture and the Bible as a basis for life.
- 15,000 people attend every year, but in 2018 the organisers moved the dates after a petition by local people in the town complained that attendees were booking up accommodation, but not spending much money outside the gathering, during what is the prime tourist season.