

## "Solving" Christmas in a multi-faith culture

One dreary November evening a small group of parents gathered at the local school to discuss Christmas, because children from many different religions had moved into their neighbourhood, none of whom observed Christmas as a religious holiday.

The school couldn't ditch Christmas all together because it was still a "must-do" part of the school calendar. Somebody had suggested, therefore, that the name of Christmas be changed so the season could continue, but include all the other religions too. So the parents put their heads together to come up with a new name for Christmas.

"How about a name that includes the names of all religions in it?" one parent asked. So they wrote the names of all the religions represented in their neighbourhood on the whiteboard. There were five main groups that they knew of: Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Jews. Since Christians were still the majority, they all agreed that the new name for Christmas should begin with the first three letters of Christianity: CHR.

After much playing around with letters from each of the other religions, one parent shouted, "I know, let's call it Chrindubuddlimas" - "Chr" for Christians, "indu" for Hindus, "Budd" for Buddhists, and "lim" for Muslims.

It had a nice ring to it too, they all thought, until the one Jewish parent suddenly sat up and said, "But where is the Jewish religion mentioned?"

Oh dear, she was right: Chrindubuddlimas included Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims, but that was only four of the five religions in the neighbourhood represented, and it was sure to cause problems if other Jewish families noticed.

"How about Chruddhamuslindew?" another parent offered - "Chr" for Christians, "uddha" for Buddhists, "musl" for Muslims, "ind" for Hindus, and "ew" for Jews. And to her surprise there were nods of agreement. It certainly included all five religions. So they tried attaching "Happy" and "Merry" to it, and shortening it to "Happy Chruddamas" and "Merry Muslindew." They liked it. It was fully inclusive, and with a bit of practice almost pronounceable.

So it was that the school solved the problem of Christmas in a multi-faith culture. It was nice too, because they could all indulge in the traditional Christmas festivities but have their own religious name attached to them, making the entire season their own holiday as well.

So on that happy note, the parents ended the meeting with a resounding cry of "Happy Chruddhamuslindew," and even though only two of the twenty parents pronounced it correctly, it felt like a new wave of peace and goodwill had passed through them that dreary November night.

"But," one parent suddenly blurted out, "what about the Scientologist, the Mormon family, the three new Jehovah's Witnesses and the Wiccan lady who've just moved into our neighbourhood? How do we include them too?"

That made everyone go quiet for a minute to two. "But one step at a time," one parent said, "Let's for now celebrate Chruddhamuslindew as the new culture-sensitive Christmas. We've got a whole year to figure out how to include the others."