

About the Church Year

The Church's Year centers around and focuses on the life of Jesus Christ. He is the focus of all that we do in the church, and the Church Year helps us do that as we remember His life and work each year, and what that means for us today.

Each Sunday of the Church Year has a set of assigned readings. These help to maintain our Christ-focus and also provide continuity between all of our churches. These readings include an Old Testament reading, a reading from one of the New Testament Epistles, and a reading from the Holy Gospel.

The Church Year is not a law that must be followed, but as it developed in the life of the church over the centuries it has proved both helpful and beneficial to the Church and her life, and we rejoice to keep it and use it still today, in continuity with the historic church.

The Church Year is divided into two halves: the *Festival* half, and the *non-Festival* half, each with its unique focus:

The Festival half: the life of Jesus and His work for us in His incarnation

The Season of Advent:

- + 4 Sundays before Christmas.

- + The word *advent* means "coming," for the focus of this season is on the coming of our Lord first in the flesh at Christmas, now in His Word and Sacraments, and finally His coming in glory at the end of time.

- + It is a season of repentance, for we prepare to meet our Lord by repenting of our sin and receiving His forgiveness.

- + The color of the season is either blue (color of royalty for the coming king) or purple (color of repentance).

The Christmas Season:

- + A 12 day of celebration of the Nativity of our Lord.

- + The focus of these days is that the Son of God became a son of man, so that we sons of men might become sons of God.

- + The color of the season is white (the color of holiness and perfection).

The Epiphany Season:

- + This season begins on January 6th (the 12th day of Christmas) and lasts from between four to ten weeks (depending upon the date of Easter, which moves each year).

- + The word *epiphany* means "to manifest or reveal," for the focus of this season is on the fact that this ordinary looking son of Mary is revealed to us as the Son of God in our flesh and blood. We hear of the miracles of Jesus which reveal His person and work to us.

- + The color of this season is Green (the color of growth).

The Season of Lent:

- + This season begins on Ash Wednesday (40 days + 6 Sundays before Easter) and concludes with Holy Week, which concludes with Good Friday and the crucifixion of our Lord.

- + Lent is a season of repentance in preparation to celebrate the triumph of our Lord in His resurrection. As a season of repentance, the color of the season is purple.

- + The focus of the season is on the resolute journey of our Lord to Jerusalem to lay down His life for us on the cross.

The Easter Season:

- + A 50 day celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord.

- + The focus of this season is on the victory of Jesus over sin, death, and the devil in His death and resurrection, and the new life that is given to us in Jesus today through Holy Baptism.

- + The color of the season is white.

- + Included in the Easter season is the commemoration of the Ascension of our Lord, which took place 40 days after Easter. Ascension shows us not only the enthronement of Christ, but also shows us that we too will ascend into Heaven to reign with Christ there.

The Day of Pentecost:

- + Pentecost is celebrated on the 50th day after Easter, as the church remembers and celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, in fulfillment of Christ's promise to us.
- + The color of this day is red (representing fire).

The Non-Festival half: The life and work of Jesus as it is continued in and through the Church today and until the end of time when Jesus comes again.

The Season of Pentecost:

- + This longest season of the Church Year lasts from 22 to 27 weeks (again depending upon the date of Easter) and focuses on the life and teaching of Jesus for the Church today.
- + The color is green (the color of growth and things living).
- + This season begins with the commemoration of the Holy Trinity -- that our God is one God in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and three persons in one God, for God is the foundation of our faith and the Church.
- + The last three weeks of this season (and of the entire Church Year) focus on the end of time and Jesus' coming again in glory to raise all the dead and take His own home to Heaven.

Saints Days:

- + In both Festival and non-Festival halves of the Church Year, various Saints days are celebrated. We do not worship or pray to saints, but remember the blessings of God to them and through them and take inspiration from their example.
- + The color of these days is red (the color of blood) if the saint was martyred, or white.