

CHURCH YEAR CALENDAR

• ADVENT • CHRISTMAS • EPIPHANY • LENT • HOLY WEEK • MAUNDY THURSDAY • GOOD FRIDAY • EASTER • PENTECOST • TRINITY SUNDAY

There is a rhythm to life. There are school calendars to follow. There is a start-up date for school, various vacation days off, and a closing day in May. And there are lots of things packed into the school year.

In our church year, there is a rhythm and a progression. There is some logic and reason for what we do as far as the seasons of the church season.

Pastor Marlene and I have been taking the children and all of you through an identifying of furniture and other things within our sanctuary. Today we look at the altar paraments, although that also includes the lectern, the pulpit and our stoles. Because this is a special color today, I decided to introduce you to some new information about the whole church year. For some of you this may be review.

A parament is a cloth hanging. On altar, pulpit & lectern. Stole. The colors and symbols on them point to a lesson or truth. That will be more obvious as we move along.

There are six basic seasons to our church year calendar. They are: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost.

There is a hymn for each season that suggests the theme. We have time to sing only a few of the hymns.

ADVENT: HOLD UP THE BLUE STOLE

Our first season of the church year is Advent. The first Sunday of Advent is either the last Sunday of November or the first Sunday of December. Our church year does not begin with January 1 as our calendar on the wall at home does. **"Advent"** means **"coming."** Who is coming? Whom are we expecting? Christ the King. The color of the paraments is "blue." Blue symbolized royalty. The King, Jesus Christ, is coming. We have the beautiful banners up on the walls. We have the Advent wreath with the four candles symbolizing the four weeks of preparation and eager anticipation of Jesus' birth.

We will sing a few hymns along the way as examples of some of the seasons. As an example of Advent, we sing verse 1 only of Hymn #34, "Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel.

CHRISTMAS: HOLD UP THE WHITE STOLE

Our next season is Christmas. This includes Christmas Eve Day with the Family Bells Service, the Candlelight Service, Christmas Day and two Sundays after Christmas. White is the color. Jesus' purity. Love's pure light. God's pure love for us in Jesus.

EPIPHANY: HOLD UP THE WHITE STOLE

"Epiphany" is a big word meaning **"to be revealed, to shed light on, to see the light in the sense of grasping it by faith."** The first Sunday is white and focuses on the Magi or Wise Men coming to the home of Jesus to give gifts to the new King. Jesus' baptism follows.

The rest of the season is the color green. HOLD UP THE GREEN STOLE

Light is shed on who this Jesus is: he is baptized, and we hear the words of God from the sky, **"Here is my beloved Son; listen to him."** Other gospel readings throw light on who Jesus is: he forgives and heals the paralytic; he heals a leper; he is changed into glory on the mountain with Peter, James, and John; Jesus talks to Moses and Elijah, clues about Jesus.

We sing verse 1 of Hymn #82 "As With Gladness Men of Old", a hymn about the Magi or Wise Men.

LENT: POINT TO THE PURPLE ON ALTAR, OR LECTERN OR PULPIT

This is the fourth major season of the church year. The season began this past Wednesday; we call the day **"Ash Wednesday."** We placed ashes on our foreheads in the shape of a cross as a reminder of the one who dies for us.

There are 40 weekdays from Ash Wednesday until Easter. We do not count Sundays in this preparation time, because every Sunday of the year is an Easter or resurrection time.

The color is purple. This is the season we are in now. **"Purple"** means **"repentance, preparation, rededication, and discipline"** as we anticipate the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross for us.

Because Jesus sacrificed his life for us, the season of Lent can be a time of sacrifice on our part. In the Middle Ages and the time of Luther in the early 1500's, Christians denied themselves certain things. My parents, for example, could not go to a movie during Lent; that was the decision of both sets of parents, and suggested by the pastor. They could not go out on a date at all during Holy Week.

Even in recent years, some Christians deny themselves certain things in Lent. A more positive way today might be to add some things: Bible reading times, a time set aside each day for reflection and prayer, helping a needy person or family, being very intentional to love, accept or forgive a person who might be for you pretty tough to love, a neighbor, classmate or co-worker.

HOLY WEEK:

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week. Palm Sunday is better named "**Passion Sunday.**" Here the word "**passion**" means "**Jesus' suffering love for the sinner.**" Palm Sunday implies victory and joy and celebration, but a major theme of the day is imminent death; Jesus rides in on a lowly beast of burden, a donkey, not a war-horse of victory from war. He enters Jerusalem to die.

We sing verse 5 of Hymn #121, "Ride On, Ride on in Majesty". Note what the hymn write suggests about Jesus' entrance.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

"**Maundy**" means "**a new commandment, a new directive.**" Jesus in that Upper Room in Jerusalem gives them a new commandment: "**Love one another.**" As an example of that, he becomes like a slave and washes the feet of the disciples. Then they celebrate the Passover. Then they go out to the Garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus is captured and hauled to court.

GOOD FRIDAY

Sometimes the day is called "**Black Friday.**" Jesus is on the cross. As he dies, the sky turned black. At the end of our Good Friday worship, the paraments are taken down; the altar, pulpit & lectern are covered with black cloth. In some churches they have no paraments at all. Or the paraments can be the color black.

A hymn that traditionally we, the congregation, do not get to sing is "Were You There?" The choir sings it at the end of the service; all is dark. We sing verse 1 of Hymn 92.

EASTER: HOLD UP THE WHITE STOLE

Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed. The color is white. Life! This is the reason for worshipping on Sundays rather than the Sabbath. Christ lives and lives within us. This was the first season that the early church celebrated as we think of the seasons of the church year. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:14, "**If Christ has**

not been raised from the dead, then we are still in our sin; we have nothing to preach, and you have nothing to believe."

PENTECOST: HOLD UP THE RED STOLE

The color is red. It is a big celebration Sunday. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the 12 apostles; it is the beginning or birthday of the Christian Church. It happens 50 days after Easter.

We sing Hymn #165, verse 4, "O Day Full of Grace"

TRINITY SUNDAY: HOLD UP THE WHITE STOLE

"Trinity" meaning "3." We come to know and experience God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The color is white, symbolizing the purity of God.

Now Part 2 of the church year. The first half of the year focuses on "Who is Jesus? What has God done in Jesus Christ for us?"

PART 2:

The second half of the year, **the Sundays after Pentecost**, focus on our response as the Church and as believers. How do we live as Christians? Possibilities: growth, discipleship and service. The color is green symbolizing **"growth."** It is the long season of the color green. We grow in faith and love and service. Gospel readings are about love to neighbor, forgiveness, using our talents and dollars, etc.

We sing Hymn #492, verse 1, "O Master, Let Me Walk with You"

In the bulletin insert, I have listed a few of the Festival or special Sundays with color and message.

On Sundays of martyrs, the color is red, a symbol of blood. These early Christians died because they loved their Lord Jesus. Just a few examples of these Sundays:

St. Peter: crucified upside down.

John the Baptist: beheaded by King Herod.

St. Bartholomew: skinned alive.

St. John: the only disciple to die of old age.

Please turn to the front part of your hymnal, page 13. Here is the beginning of

the church year, the First Sunday of Advent. Note that there are three columns of Scripture, A, B & C. A is the year of Matthew, B is the year of Mark, and C is the year of Luke. We are in the year of B or Mark. Most of the gospel readings this year are from Mark. Readings from John are occasionally read, so that over a 3-year span, the key portions of all four gospels are read.

A few words about the clothing pastors wear. The robes is called an **"alb."** It is white to symbolize the purity and righteousness of Jesus. This is called a **"stole."** It is like a yoke, and is a symbol of being a pastor. Matthew 11:29-30 are words of Jesus, **"Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light."**

NOTE: Because we dedicated new paraments on the First Sunday of Lent, we introduced the seasons of the church year. In other parishes, I have done a similar program on the first Sunday of Advent.

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The following pages were in the bulletin as a reference for the congregation.

SEASON	COLOR	MESSAGE
Part 1 (Nov. 28, 1999-June 11, 2000)		Who is Jesus? What has Jesus done for us?
Advent Hymn #34, v1: <i>"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"</i>	Blue	Prepare for Christ, the King. He has come; he is coming; he will come again.
Christmas Hymn #40, v1: <i>"What Child is This?"</i>	White	Jesus' purity, love's pure light

Epiphany Hymn #82, v1: <i>"As With Gladness"</i>	White: Epiphany Sunday Green: Season	We have seen the Light. Jesus reveals himself to us.
Lent Ash Wednesday Hymn #102, v1: <i>"On My Heart Imprint Your Image"</i>	Purple	40 days (not Sundays) before Easter; repentance, rededication, and discipline
Passion/Palm Sunday Hymn #121, v5: <i>"Ride On, Ride On in Majesty"</i>	Red or Purple	Jesus enters Jerusalem to die
Maundy Thursday Hymn #206, v1: <i>"Lord, Who the Night You Were Betrayed"</i>	Red or White	A new commandment: love one another
Good Friday Hymn #92, v1: <i>"Were You There?"</i>	Black	Jesus dies for us
Easter Hymn #145, v1: <i>"Thine is the Glory"</i>	White	Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed!
Pentecost Hymn #161, v4: <i>O Day, Full of Grace"</i>	Red	50 days after Easter. Gift of the Holy Spirit. Birthday of the Church.
Trinity Hymn #165, v1: <i>"Holy, Holy, Holy"</i>	White	God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Part 2 (June 25-November 26, 2000)		How do we respond in faith to Jesus? Growth, discipleship, and service
Sundays of Pentecost Hymn #492, v1: <i>"O, Master, Let Me Walk with You"</i>	Green	How do we live as Christians? Growth, Discipleship, and service

Festival Sundays:		
Reformation	Red	October 31, 1517. Birth of the Lutheran Church.
Congregations' Anniversaries	Red	
Martyrs	Red	Those who died for the faith.
All Saints'	White	Remembering the faithful who have died.
Christ the King	White	Christ is coming as judge. (Last Sunday of the church year, November 26, 2000)

Submitted by the Idea Bank of the South Dakota Synod, Sioux Falls, SD 57197