

Seasons of the Church Year (*a whirlwind tour*)

by Pastor Waveland King

The church year always begins with Advent - a time of watching and waiting, hoping and wondering. The traditional color of Advent is **blue or purple**, colors of anticipation and hope. The word Advent itself means “coming” or “arrival”, and Advent celebrates the times of our lives marked by waiting... longing... hoping-for and expecting the experience of God’s presence among us yet again - but in new and unexpected ways.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 **#196- Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus**

Christmas is a day, of course... but it’s also a season, a festive time of **white and gold**, signifying celebration, newness, and the dawning of hope’s fulfillment... a season of praise and thanksgiving for the gift of God in Jesus the Christ. The word **Christmas comes from “Christ Mass”**, the worship service traditionally held on December 25th. Despite the appearances of the commercial world around us, the *Season of Christmas actually begins on Christmas Day, and concludes twelve days later on Epiphany.*

Isaiah 9:2-7 **#246- Joy to the World**

The Season of Epiphany is symbolized by the color **green**, representing growth in Christ. Coming at the time of deepest darkness and cold each year, it’s a time when we *reveal the warmth and light* of God’s loving presence, much as the evergreens reveal the life hidden beneath the cloak of winter. The word epiphany means “to show”, or “to make known”, or even “to reveal.” Matthew’s *Star in the East* brings into sharp focus for us the continual coming of God’s light into the world, in the midst of the deepest darkness.

Matthew 2:1-7 **#254- We Three Kings**

The color of Lent is purple, a color both of royalty and of suffering. It’s a somber season that mingles penitence and honest self-examination with the continued hope of a royal savior... a season of reflection, of renewal, of housecleaning in our souls. Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection, each Sunday is considered a “little Easter” - so the six Sundays that occur **during** Lent aren’t counted as part of the 40 days of Lent. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday with the mark of ashes made from the victory palms of last year’s Palm Sunday, and journeys on through the darkness, toward the light...

Psalms 51:6-10 **#269- Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days**

Holy Week is a time of great passions, as shown by its colors of black and red. It's a time when we experience the heights and depths of human emotions, the peaks and valleys of life, as we journey in story from the triumphant palm victory parade, to the Last Supper in which our Holy Communion is rooted, then on to betrayal and arrest, trial and torture and the agonizing execution of crucifixion... and finally to a time of quiet emptiness and despair, on Good Friday.
John 1:1-5,9-14,19-21 #288- Were You There

Easter is a festive time of rejoicing, marked by the colors white, gold and silver. This festival is the *very center of our church year*, around which everything else turns. During this season we celebrate the resurrection mystery, and the ultimate victory of life over death! We stand in awe when life, **not** death, has the final word. White, as a mixture of all colors of the rainbow, is especially appropriate as a celebration of diversity in God's gift of new life.
John 20:1-3, 11-18 #304- Easter People

The day of Pentecost is marked by red for fire, for blood, for the harvest of martyrs. Red symbolizes the fire of the Holy Spirit that descended in Luke's Pentecost story in Acts, and it commemorates the blood of the followers of Jesus who offered their very lives, then and now, to God's holy purposes, and who in return have received God's gift of inspiration and taken that Gospel power out of the Upper Room to share with the world. The word *Pentecost means 50 days*, and is based on the Jewish holy day of "first fruits" that takes place 50 days after Passover.

Acts 2:1-6,44-47 #558- We Are The Church

The final season of the year, Kingdومتide, is colored green for growth in Christ. This is the longest season of the Church year, the second season of **ordinary** time - called "ordinary" because it travels not through the extraordinary festivals and celebrations, but through ordinary life, lived in the faith. During this time, we hear the stories of Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of God, and during All Saints we celebrate the great "cloud of witnesses" that have gone before us, and still surround us, on this great journey.

Colossians 1:11-13 Luke 17:20-21 #444- O Young and Fearless Prophet

Advent... Christmas... Lent... Easter... the holy days and ordinary times of Epiphany, and of Pentecost... These are the seasons of the Church year, which we celebrate time and again, year after year, as God makes them continually new, and renews our lives in the cycles of our faith. Thanks be to God! ...and Amen!