

Church Seasons and Their Colors

The colors of paraments and other sanctuary decorations correspond to the different seasons of the Christian calendar, or liturgical year. These seasons tell the story of our faith year after year and help us structure our worship services.

ADVENT

The first season of the Christian year. It is a season of preparation for Christ's promised coming. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

Purple or blue are the colors for this season. Purple is the color of royalty as we prepare for the coming of Jesus the King. Some churches use blue for Advent because purple is also the color of another liturgical season. Blue is the color of pre-dawn light.

CHRISTMAS

Christmas celebrates Jesus' birth. This season lasts from Christmas Eve until January 5, the day before Epiphany.

White or gold are the colors for this season. These colors together signify celebrations reserved for only the most important Christian holidays.

SEASON AFTER EPIPHANY

The Season after Epiphany marks the arrival of the three wise men and is typically celebrated on the first Sunday of January but technically, it begins on January 6 and continues until the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday.

This season celebrates Christ's divinity (symbolized by frankincense), royalty (symbolized by gold), and sacrifice (symbolized by myrrh, which is used for anointing and embalming).

Green is color for this season. It symbolizes growth as we study the life of Jesus as He grows from a child to a man during this season.

LENT

Lent recalls Jesus' 40 day temptation in the wilderness and His journey toward Jerusalem and the cross. The 40 days (not including Sundays) of Lent begin with Ash Wednesday and continue through Holy Week.

Purple is the color for this season. Even though purple is the color of royalty, it is also the color of penitence.

EASTER

Easter celebrates Christ's resurrection. The Easter season goes from Easter Sunday until Pentecost.

White or gold are the colors for this season. Like Christmas, this is one of the holiest and most celebrated days of the Christian year, Christ's resurrection.

PENTECOST

Pentecost commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the church. Pentecost is the fiftieth day after Easter.

Red is the color for this season. It is the color of fire, which represents the Holy Spirit.

ORDINARY TIME (or KINGDOM TIDE)

This season is the time between Pentecost and Advent. It is a time to reflect on doing the work of God's kingdom and growing spiritually.

Green is also the color for this season. It is the color of growth and symbolizes our growth in faith and understanding in the general teachings of the church.

COMMUNION AND BAPTISM

Communion and baptism are not seasons but they are represented by the color of white. These sacraments signify the cleansing of the soul through the grace of Jesus Christ.

*Taken from Credo: Confirmation Director's Tools for Small Churches Unit 2, pp. 47-48, written by Kevin Alton et al., Cokesbury, 2010.