

Why Do We Use the Liturgical Calendar?

At Christ Central Presbyterian, we observe the long-standing practice of organizing worship time around the life of Jesus Christ. As Reformed Presbyterians, we believe that sacred scripture regulates all elements of our worship. However, the circumstances of worship are left to the judgment of the church's officers. Marking time by reference to an important event in the life of Christ has roots very deep in the earliest centuries of the Christian tradition. Doing so not only connects us to Christians of the past, but it also demonstrates the catholicity of the church as we mark time with believers from other traditions.

Throughout the year, we change the paraments in the sanctuary as we move through the seasons of the liturgical calendar. The paraments come in five different colors and are marked with various symbols common to Christians from all traditions. The key seasons of the liturgical calendar are listed below.

Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year and begins the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas Day. The Advent season is marked by **Royal Blue** and is the time when we look forward to the coming of Christ, not only in His incarnation, but also at His Second Coming. The season is characterized by the sense of hope, expectation, and longing, and at Christ Central, we decorate the sanctuary with traditional greenery to mark the time.

Christmas begins on December 25 and lasts for twelve days through January 5. The Christmas season is marked by **White** and is the time that we focus on the miracle of the Incarnation in which the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Epiphany occurs on January 6 and is observed the second Sunday after Christmas Day. Epiphany, which is also marked by **White**, means "to show" or "to make known" and is often associated with the adoration of the wise men. At the conclusion of the Epiphany service, we remove the greenery until next Advent.

Ordinary Time first begins after Epiphany and runs through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The season is marked by **Green**.

Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts forty days until the Saturday before Easter, recalls the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. Lent is marked by **Purple** and is observed as a time of prayer and preparation as we reflect on the passion of the Lord Jesus culminating in His crucifixion at Calvary. The Sundays during Lent are not counted as part of the season since every Sunday is a celebration of the Lord's resurrection. At Christ Central, we do not observe any special service for Ash Wednesday since the tradition of ashes is tied to the Roman Catholic sacrament of penance. However, we usually observe a Tenebrae service held either on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday.

Palm Sunday is the final Sunday in Lent and marks the day of the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The color for this day is **Red**.

Easter begins on Easter Sunday and lasts seven weeks. The season is marked by **White** and especially celebrates the resurrection of Jesus as through that miracle God declared Him to be both Lord and Christ. The last Sunday of the season is noted as Ascension Sunday to note the day the risen Christ ascended into heaven.

Pentecost occurs on the seventh Sunday after Easter and marks the day that the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles as tongues of fire. The day is marked by **Red**.

Ordinary Time begins again after Pentecost and runs through the Saturday before Advent. The season is marked by **Green**, which indicates growth, as we turn our attention to growing in grace. During ordinary time, there are three more days that we observe.

Reformation Day is observed on the last Sunday of October. This day is marked with **Red** and recalls the day that Martin Luther published his 95 Theses, which is the symbolic event that sparked the Protestant Reformation with the goal of reforming the church and resting in the one-time sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. On this day, we particularly remember the “five solas” of the Reformation.

All Saints Day is observed on the first Sunday of November. This day is marked with **White** and emphasizes the communion of saints.

Christ the King Sunday is the last Sunday before Advent. The day is marked with **White** and emphasizes the coming consummation of Christ’s kingdom where all believers will be gathered to spend eternity.