

CONFIRMATION CLASS SESSION 15

THE CHURCH YEAR

1. The Christian faith that we have been exploring in this class comprises many teachings. As human beings, however, we have limited attention spans and cannot process everything all at once. So, the Church assigns different themes to various times of the year. As we go through the Church's calendar year after year, we build up a cumulative knowledge and appreciation of the whole faith.
2. The Church's calendar is divided into seasons, feasts, and fasts. These are explained in more detail in the following pages.
 - A. The Easter Cycle comprises seasons and holy days that are determined by the date of Easter each year (e.g., Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week, Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday). As the date of Easter changes, so do these days.
 - B. The Christmas Cycle comprises seasons and holy days that are determined by the date of Christmas (December 25). For example: the Annunciation, on March 25, nine months before the Nativity, and the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple forty days after his birth (February 2). Most of these are on fixed dates.
 - C. The Sanctoral Cycle comprises a series of Saints' Days on fixed dates. Major Saints Days (e.g. Saint Matthew on September 21, and Saint Mark on April 25) usually commemorate saints mentioned in the Bible. Minor Saints Days usually commemorate saints from later in Christian history (e.g., Saint Francis of Assisi on October 4). A saint's day is often the anniversary of the saint's death.
3. The Church uses a scheme of liturgical colors, described in the following pages, to "color code" the seasons, feasts, and fasts of the Church Year. These help us remember "what time it is" and set the mood for worship.
4. In the Episcopal Church, the use of liturgical colors is determined by custom (and not by the Prayer Book or canon law). We loosely follow the liturgical color scheme of the Western Church, as developed by the Roman Catholic Church and now shared by some Protestant churches (e.g., Lutheran and Methodist). However, the Eastern Orthodox Churches follow a completely different color scheme. What is "right" in any given place depends on local custom and context.

SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Season	When	Colors	Themes
Advent	Begins on Fourth Sunday before Christmas	Violet (or Blue)	Hope, watching, waiting, anticipation, preparation for Christ's coming
Christmas	Twelve days beginning December 25th and ending January 5th	White (or Gold)	Celebration of Christ's Birth and Incarnation
Epiphany	From January 6th through the following Sunday	White (or Gold)	Visit of the Wise Men; Baptism of Christ on the following Sunday
Season after the Epiphany	From First Sunday after the Epiphany through Shrove Tuesday (eve of Ash Wednesday)	Green (some places continue to use Epiphany white)	Signs manifesting Jesus' identity as the Son of God during his earthly ministry
Lent	From Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday (Easter Eve)	Violet (or unbleached linen)	Repentance; prayer, fasting, and almsgiving
Holy Week (part of Lent)	From Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday (Easter Eve)	Red (but varies from place to place)	Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper, Passion, Death, and Burial
Easter Season (a.k.a. Eastertide)	Seven weeks (50 days) from Easter Day until Pentecost	White (or Gold)	Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead and Appearances to his Disciples
Ascensiontide (part of Easter Season)	Ten days from Ascension Day until Pentecost	White (or Gold)	Jesus' Ascension into Heaven; Praying for coming of the Holy Spirit
Pentecost	Week from Day of Pentecost to Trinity Sunday	Red	Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles ("the Church's Birthday")
Season after Pentecost (a.k.a. Ordinary Time)	From Trinity Sunday until Advent	Green	Life and growth; Mission, evangelism, service

PRINCIPAL FEASTS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

- 1. Easter Day**
(Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox—always falls between March 22nd and April 25th)
- 2. Ascension Day**
(Sixth Thursday—"40 days"—after Easter Day)
- 3. Pentecost** (a.k.a. Whitsunday)
(Seventh Sunday—"50 days"—after Easter Day)
- 4. Trinity Sunday**
(One week after Pentecost)
- 5. All Saints Day**
(November 1st; sometimes observed on the following Sunday)
- 6. Christmas Day**
(December 25th)
- 7. Epiphany**
(January 6th)

PRINCIPAL FASTS

- 1. Ash Wednesday**
(Wednesday 46 days before Easter Day—the beginning of Lent, which lasts 40 days, excluding Sundays, to Easter)
- 2. Good Friday**
(Friday before Easter Day)

COLORS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Principal Colors	Themes	When Used
White (or Gold or Tapestry)	Purity, holiness, celebration	Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, non-Martyr Saints
Red	a. Martyrdom (darker red)	Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Martyr Saints
	b. Fire of the Holy Spirit (brighter red)	Pentecost
Violet or Purple	Penitence, hope	Advent, Lent
Green	Life, growth	Season after Epiphany Season after Pentecost
Optional Additional Colors		
Rose	Rejoicing (in a penitential season)	Third Sunday of Advent Fourth Sunday of Lent
Blue	a. Anticipation, hope	Advent
	a. Blessed Virgin Mary	Celebrations of the B.V.M.
Black	Mourning	Good Friday, All Souls Day

COLORS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

1. **Baptisms** White, or Color of the Day / Season
2. **Weddings** White
3. **Ordinations** White or Pentecost Red
4. **Confirmations** White or Pentecost Red
5. **Funerals** White, Purple, or Black (according to local custom)

THINGS TO IDENTIFY IN CHURCH

(Note: You are not required to remember these, but knowing what things are called helps us to appreciate what's going on in church. Keep this list for future reference.)

Parts of the Church Building

Baptistery	-	Area around Baptismal Font
Chancel	-	Elevated area where Choir and Clergy sit
Narthex	-	Area between the Outside Door and the Entrance to the Church
Nave	-	Area where the Congregation Sits
Sacristy	-	Area where Altar Guild keeps vestments, linens, vessels, etc.
Sanctuary	-	Area behind Altar Rail
Vestibule	-	Narthex

Church Furnishings

Altar
Altar Candles
Altar Cross
Altar Rail
Aumbry
Baptismal Font
Choir Stalls
Credence Table
Gospel Book
Lectern
Missal
Missal Stand
Paschal Candle
Pews
Pulpit *
Stations of the Cross

Altar vessels and linens

Chalice & Paten
Burse & Veil
Ciborium
Breadbox
Cruets
Lavabo Bowl

Linens
Pall
Corporal
Purificator
Lavabo towel

Vestments

Alb
Cassock & Surplice
Chasuble
Cincture
Frontal
Stole
Tippet