

COLORS FOR THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

The Christian year contains two cycles: the Christmas Cycle (Advent– Christmas–Epiphany) and the Easter Cycle (Lent–Easter–Pentecost). Within each cycle are a preparatory season symbolized by the color purple and a festival season symbolized by the color white. After each cycle there is an ordinary time of growth symbolized by the color green. Thus there is a sequence of seasons using purple, white, and green in that order twice each year.

Purple is a color of both penitence and royalty used during the preparatory seasons of Advent and Lent. Blue, a color of hope, may also be used during Advent.

White and gold are joyous and festive colors used during the Christmas and Easter Seasons (except on the Day of Pentecost) and in other seasons on festive days such as Baptism of the Lord, Transfiguration, Trinity, All Saints, and Christ the King. White may also be used at weddings and at services where the Sacrament of Baptism is central. White is recommended at services of death and resurrection because it symbolizes both death and resurrection. At services of Holy Communion white linens on top of the Lord's table are customary, but the paraments hanging over the front or sides of the table and the other visuals should reflect the day or season of the year.

Green is a color of growth, used in the Seasons After the Epiphany and After Pentecost, except when special days call for white or red.

Red is a color of fire, symbolizing the Holy Spirit. It is used on the Day of Pentecost and at other times when the work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized. Red is also the color of blood—the blood of Christ and the blood of martyrs. Because of its intensity, red is most effective when used occasionally rather than continuously for a whole season. It is appropriate for evangelistic services, for ordinations and consecrations, for church anniversaries and homecomings, and for civil observances such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day or Memorial Day. It may be used beside white and gold through the Easter Season. It may be used during Holy Week, beginning with Passion/Palm Sunday, to symbolize the blood of Christ.

Although use of these colors is based on broad ecumenical tradition, other colors have been and are being used in Christian churches. Creativity with colors and other signs for days and seasons is encouraged.

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