

## Adult Confirmation Session 4 – Celebrating the Christian Year: Methodist Style

### The Christian Year

#### Two Cycles –

- The Christmas Cycle (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany)
- The Easter Cycle (Lent, Easter, Pentecost)

Preparatory season (purple) – Festival season (white) – “Ordinary” time (green)

What do the colors symbolize?

**Purple**, representing both royalty and penitence, is traditionally used during Advent and Lent.

**Blue** symbolizes hope and may also be used during Advent.

**White** and **gold** are used at Christmas and Easter to symbolize joy and festivities.

**Red** symbolizes the color of fire to represent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and times when the work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized. During Holy Week it represents the blood of Christ. Red is also used for ordinations, church anniversaries and civil observances such as Memorial Day and Thanksgiving.

**Green** represents growth and is used during Ordinary Time (the season after Epiphany and the season after Pentecost.)

Most every Protestant church celebrates Christmas and Easter, right? In the UMC, we celebrate what is called the Christian year. Two Cycles – The Christmas Cycle, and the Easter Cycle. The Christmas Cycle includes Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. The Easter Cycle includes Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Within both of those cycles there is a preparatory season that is represented by the color purple, and a festival season symbolized by the color white. After each cycle there is what is called “ordinary time” – a time of growth, symbolized by the color green. So, there is a sequence of seasons using purple, white and green in that order – twice each year. What we seek to do is remember not just Jesus’ birth and resurrection – but also his life and teachings.

What color are the altar cloths (paraments) now? Green. We are in the “green” part of Epiphany now, and will be until February 27, when we will have a “white” Sunday – Transfiguration Sunday, followed by Lent (purple – because it is a preparatory season)

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### The Six Seasons

1. The Christian Year begins with Advent (purple)– a preparatory season leading up to Christmas. “Advent” means coming – we prepare for the coming of Christ our Savior.
2. What comes after Advent? Christmas! (white) How long does Christmas last? Christmas isn’t just a day – it’s a season.

Christmas is a season of 13 days – from sunset Christmas Eve (Dec. 24), (or 12 days if you start on Christmas Day) through Epiphany (Jan. 6). We give gifts on one day – Dec. 25. In many places people give gifts all 13 days, from Dec. 24-Jan. 6. Song – 12 days of Christmas...

3. After Christmas come Epiphany – a time when we remember the Magi who came following a star, and bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The first two Sundays of January, our colors were white – Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus... Then we switched to green – a time of growth.

After Transfiguration Sunday, we will go to another preparatory season...

4. Lent

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word lencten, meaning “lengthen” and refers to the lengthening days of spring. The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

At the Ash Wednesday service, Pastor Andy and I will use ashes and anointing oil to put the sign of the cross on your foreheads. Ashes symbolize our mortality (ashes to ashes, dust to dust) and are also a sign of penitence (sackcloth and ashes). Where do we get the ashes from? We burn the palm fronds from Palm Sunday to make the ashes. This helps us remember that the people who shouted “Hosanna” on Palm Sunday may have been the same ones who cried, “Crucify Him” on Good Friday.

5. Easter is not just a day, but it is a season which lasts 50 days (from Easter Eve through the Day of Pentecost). Easter is a time to focus on Christ’s Resurrection! Here is a timeline:

(DAYS)	10	20	30	40	50
EASTER!				ASCENSION	PENTECOST

The color of the altar cloths during the Easter season is white – symbolizing the joy of the resurrection!

6. Pentecost – is 50 days after Easter, and it is the day we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) and the birth of the Church. The Day of Pentecost is the 50<sup>th</sup> and last day of the Easter Season. It was an Old Testament festival day celebrating the first fruits of the harvest, but it took on a new meaning for Christians as the day the Holy Spirit came to the Church.

Symbols of Pentecost are the color red (symbolizing the flames that sat on the heads of those in the upper room – Acts 2), candles, and the dove.

What makes the way United Methodists do things different?

Six Reasons Why I Choose to Be United Methodist

1. We start and end with the love and grace of God for all people.

The Great Commandment – Matt. 22: 34-40

The Parable of the Loving Father and the Prodigal Son – Luke 15: 11-32

- God demonstrates love and mercy
  - We separate ourselves from God
  - We have to make a conscious decision to return to God
  - Some of us may have stayed home, and yet we do not know the joy of a relationship with a loving God
2. United Methodists Emphasize 3 facets of Grace – John Wesley described our spiritual growth in terms of these three:
    - A. Prevenient Grace – the grace that goes before we ever make a decision for God
    - B. Justifying Grace – the grace that God gives when we say “yes”
    - C. Sanctifying Grace – the grace that God gives from the time we say “yes” until the time we go to heaven – grace to grow
  3. United Methodists join together “personal piety” with “social holiness”
  4. United Methodists observe the two sacraments that most Christians recognize (baptism and Holy Communion) but we do so in a unique way.

- A. Baptism – marks our identity in Christ. We practice all three modes of baptism:
- Immersion (put under the water – symbolizes being buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life – (Rom. 6: 3-4)
  - Pouring – another form of anointing – third-century Christian art shows John the Baptist pouring water over Jesus – (Ex. 29: 7; Psalm 133: 2)
  - Sprinkling – “washing” by sprinkling water. “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean.” (Ez. 36: 25)

We offer baptism to adults, children and infants. In adults, we celebrate God’s love and justifying grace together in one act. God’s offer of a relationship is accepted, and the person being baptized is incorporated into Christ’s body. For infants and children, we celebrate God’s unconditional love, and offer the parents a chance to promise to raise the child or baby nurtured in the Christian faith until that child is old enough to accept Christ’s grace him/herself.

B. Holy Communion – 1 Cor. 11: 23-26

A.K.A. – The Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist (which means “grateful”), Mass (for Roman Catholics and some Lutherans)

In the United Methodist Church we practice OPEN communion. Anyone who is willing to come to the Lord’s Table is welcome.

5. United Methodists celebrate the “connection.”

- We are connected to 12 million United Methodists around the world
- We connect by Holy Conferencing (General Conference, Jurisdictional Conference, Annual Conference, Charge Conference, Church Conference, District Conference)
- We are connected by the practice of itinerancy

6. The UM way of making decisions: The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

- Scripture
- Tradition
- Experience
- Reason