



The new Church year begins with Advent which is a season of penitence. As we come together for worship, we are connected with the knowledge of God's people throughout history. Christians within the early Church remembered events of the past that were relevant to their faith. Throughout history, the Church has embraced celebrations to promote and teach the faith given by God's grace.

The seasons of the Church year have specific purposes teaching the life and ministry of Christ and of His death and Resurrection. One part of the Church year leads to another beginning with Advent as a time of repentance while recalling the wait for the Savior, then His birth and the season of Christmas, followed by Epiphany, the Savior revealed. Lent again teaches repentance while recalling the wait for the Savior, then His birth and the season of Christmas, followed by Epiphany, the Savior revealed. Lent again teaches repentance, leading up to our Lord's Passion, suffering, death, burial, and Resurrection with Easter being the principal "feast day" in the liturgical year. Christians are identified as new creations by Christ's victory over death and the grave and the beginning of the "new creation" in us given in Holy Baptism that gives the blessings of Christ on His cross to us.

Forty days after The Resurrection of Our Lord, the Church celebrates the Ascension, the assurance that Jesus watches over all things for the good of His Church on earth. Fifty days after The Resurrection of Our Lord is Pentecost bringing to a culmination the first half of the Church year which teaches the life and ministry, death and Resurrection of Jesus and His continued reign and rule over all things for the good of His Church to proclaim the Gospel to all nations

The second half of the Church Year teaches the life of the Church, that is, what we as Christians are called to do, in Holy Baptism, in gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ and in service to Him for the proclaiming of the Gospel to all the world. As God instructed the Old Testament people to remember the Passover and how He delivered them from slavery in Egypt, so too, we in the New Testament era are encouraged to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" God's Word to strengthen faith and embrace everything Christ has done for His Church, for all believers.

Like the Old Testament people who celebrated events of their history as God took care of His people, we also in the New Testament era, celebrate the festivals of the Church year which are times for teaching about the life of Christ and all that He has done and continues to do for us even now as He governs and rules over all things so that His Kingdom would continue to be extended.

Christians are fully aware that life on this earth is only temporary, that there are much better things to come as the promises of God in Christ reveal. **Jesus says: "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to Prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going" St. John 14:1-4.**

Our lives in Christ are not simply focused on the here and now but also on eternity with our Lord. The liturgical life of the Church teaches believers to look to the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus as our way of salvation and the place of our eternal hope. The Church year and its calendar of events join us together with the faithful followers of Jesus in the past while also connecting us with believers yet to come who are made God's own by the person and work of Jesus. The ministry of the Gospel proclaimed in His Name continues to bring more souls into His Kingdom of Grace in Holy Baptism by His Word by the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus our Prophet, still proclaims His Word in His Kingdom through Word and Sacrament ministry until His return.

The seasons of the Church Year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and the Season after Pentecost teach the person and work of Jesus along with the work we are given to bring Christ to others. We come back to where we started, Advent, in anticipation of Christ's second coming giving way to celebrating once again His first coming; the fulfillment of God's promise of a Savior who would be named Jesus to "save His people from their sins" **Matthew 1:21b**. To God be all the glory both now and forever! Amen.

Donna and I thank all of you very much for your generosity, acts of kindness, prayers, support and all the help you give and provide for us throughout the year. We pray for a most blessed Advent and Christmas season for all of you and your families as we praise God for His love given in The Babe of Bethlehem, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ our Lord. God's blessings to all in this Advent and Christmas season.

In Christ, Pastor and Donna Ahrendt

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." St. Luke 2:11 The Christmas Gospel