

CELEBRATING OUR FAITH

Midwest City Free Methodist Church

Advent and Christmas

Luke 2:1-6

I. Advent - Latin *ad venio*, to come to; coming or arrival

A. Advent Wreath

1. Green circular wreath represents God's endless mercy, eternity and life
2. Four Outer Candles
 - *400 years of waiting - the darkness and silence between Malachi & the birth of Christ
 - *colors - three purple and one pink
 - a. **Hope Candle** - expectation and anticipation of the messiah - *Luke 1:68-75*
 - b. **Peace Candle** - Jesus came to bring peace to a world in strife - *Luke 1:76-79*
 - c. **Joy Candle** - Christ came to save His people from their sins - *Luke 2:8-14*
 - d. **Love Candle** - God's love for the world came in His Son, Jesus Christ - *John 3:16*
3. Christ Candle - white - symbolizes the heart of the season - giving light to world
4. Light of the Candles - we are called to be the light to the world - *Isaiah 42:6*

B. Advent Colors - primarily purple - royal blue

1. Welcome the advent of the King - royalty
2. Reminder of Christ's birth, suffering and death - compare to Lent and Holy Week

II. Christmas

A. Christ's Mass Celebrated by Early Church

1. 4th Century - Roman pagan winter solstice festival "the birthday of the unconquered sun"
2. Colors - white, red and green - symbols of purity, eternal life and the blood of Jesus Christ
3. Christmas Trees
 - a. Dates back to Riga, Latvia in 1510
 - b. Celts decorated with apples and nuts to encourage the sun to return
 - c. Martin Luther - 16th Century decorated with lights for his children
 - d. Prince Albert (German) brought the first tree to Queen Victoria of England in 1841
4. Gift Giving - remember the magi and the gifts they brought Christ - *Matthew 2:1-12*
5. Saint Nicholas - gave gifts to the poor and needy children like food, clothes and shoes

B. Jesus Christ Coming into the World

1. The curse of sin is death - a cry of hope - for deliverance - *Romans 6:23*
2. The world would be judged - *II Corinthians 5:10*
3. Separation from God - hell - *Matthew 10:18* and *Revelation 20:7-10*
4. Reconciliation to God - heaven - free from disease and decay - *I corinthians 15:35-58*

C. The Celebration of the Birth of Christ

1. Nativity - The word was made flesh and dwelt among us - *Emmanuel*
2. Incarnation - fully God and fully man - *John 1:14* (merger of the divine and the human)
3. Crucifixion and Atonement - revealed God's great love for us
4. Resurrection - revealed life beyond death - *John 5:28-29*

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Epiphany and Lent

- I. Epiphany - Greek *epiphaneia* - manifestation or revelation
 - A. Three Epiphanies - celebrated on January 6
 1. Wise Men or Magi - God reveals His salvation to the Gentiles - *Matthew 2:1-12*
 2. Water into Wine - Christ reveals His glory to the disciples - *John 2:1-11*
 3. Baptism of Jesus - Holy Spirit reveals His anointing to the Word - *Mark 2:9-12*
 - B. Feast of Epiphany
 1. Honors the Baptism of Christ - started in 3rd century
 2. *Theophania* - alternate name for the feast - white or green
 3. Outward Sign of an Inward Grace
 - a. God coming to us - the great invasion of grace
 - b. God connecting with us - the great miracle of grace
 - c. God blessing us - the great abundance of grace
- II. Lent - Old English (Old High German) *Lencten* - springtime or lengthening of days.
 - A. The Season of Lent
 1. Ash Wednesday (black) - started in 600 AD to mark the start of Lent - *Mark 8:31-38*
 - a. Cross of ashes on head or hands
 - b. Day of repentance and humility
 2. 40 Days of Fasting (purple) - *Matthew 6:16-18*
 - a. originally abstained from meat, milk products and eggs
 - b. Time of penance and examination
 - c. Time for prayer and almsgiving - *see Matthew 6*
 3. Palm Sunday (purple) - *Luke 19:28-44*
 - a. Celebrated with palm branches and processions
 - b. Starts Holy Week
 4. Maundy Thursday (purple) - *Luke 22:7-23*
 - a. Seder Meal - celebrates the Jewish feast of Passover
 - b. Communion - celebrate the Last Supper between Jesus and His disciples
 - c. Foot Washing - celebrates the servanthood of Jesus - *see John 13*
 - d. A time for remembering our journey of faith from death to life
 5. Good Friday (black/red) - *Luke 23:26-54*
 - a. Tenebrae Service - remembering the death of Christ on the cross
 - b. Stations of the Cross - meditations on the events of Good Friday
 6. Holy Saturday (black/red) - *Luke 23:55-56*
 - a. Activities include candlelight services, communion and baptisms
 - b. A time of rest
 7. Easter or Resurrection Day (white) - *Luke 24:1-8*
 - a. Earliest celebrated Christian holy day - 130AD
 - b. Lasts from Easter to Pentecost - 50 Days
 - c. A time for new life, victory, resurrection and salvation
 - B. The Meaning of Lent
 1. Reveals our real life struggle with evil
 2. Shows us how Jesus Christ defeated evil
 3. Reminds us that we are sons/daughters of God

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Pentecost and Kingdomtide

I. Pentecost - Greek: *pentekoste* - “fiftieth day”

A. The Feast of Weeks - *Leviticus 23:15-21* (Harvest, First Fruits)

1. 50th day after Passover - first fruits from the wheat/corn harvest - *Deut. 16:9*
2. Celebration of the giving of the Law of Moses - *Exodus 19:11*
3. Coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Church - *Acts 2:1*
 - a. Second greatest feast in the Church - 4th Century
 - b. Secondary date for baptisms after Holy Saturday
 - c. Color: red for fire and light (sometimes called Whitsunday)
 - d. Reestablishes kneeling and fasting after the Easter Celebration

B. Experiencing God

1. The Holy Spirit - *Luke 11:13* - shows the gift of God
2. The Spirit of God - *I Corinthians 3:16* - shows the indwelling of God in us
3. The Spirit - *John 3:6* - shows the need to be born again
4. The Spirit of Jehovah - *Isaiah 11:1-2* - shows the prophetic coming of Christ
5. The Spirit of the Living God - *II Corinthians 3:3* - shows life - zoe in addition to bios
6. The Spirit of Christ - *Romans 8:9* - shows belonging to Christ
7. The Spirit of His Son - *Galatians 4:6* - shows relationship to the Father
8. The Spirit of Jesus Christ - *Philippians 1:9* - shows the mission of the believer
9. The Spirit of Holiness - *Romans 1:4* - shows the holiness of God
10. The Spirit of Fire - *Isaiah 4:4* - shows the purging power of God
11. The Spirit of Truth - *John 14:17* - shows the revelation of God
12. The Spirit of Life - *Romans 8:2* - shows the righteousness of life
13. The Spirit of Glory - *I Peter 4:14* - shows the suffering of God
14. The Spirit of Grace - *Hebrews 10:29* - shows the mercy of God
15. The Eternal Spirit - *Hebrews 9:14* - shows the eternal nature of God
16. The Holy Spirit of Promise - *Ephesians 1:13* - shows the fulfillment of the promise
17. The Comforter - *John 16:7* - shows the concern of God

II. Trinity Sunday is observed the Sunday after Pentecost as a reminder of the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit

III. Kingdomtide

A. Includes all ordinary Sundays outside of Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost

1. Color: green for life and growth
2. Promotes the kingdom of God

B. Six Values of the Kingdom of God - E. Stanley Jones

1. The Kingdom of God - *Romans 14:7*
2. The Person of Jesus Christ - *Acts 16:31*
3. The Possibility of New Birth - *Titus 3:5*
4. The Power of the Holy Spirit within - *Galatians 5:22-24*
5. The Fellowship of Believers - *Matthew 18:20*
6. Service to all - *Luke 10:30-37*