

Symbols and Colors used in the United Methodist Church

Advent- Is the first season in the Christian year, it always includes four Sundays. It starts Sunday November 27th or the first Sunday after November 27th to sunset December 24th. The Advent wreath with four *purple* candles is lighted on successive Sundays.

Advent wreath- The Advent wreath was first used by Protestants in Germany in the Lutheran church. Its circle represents God's love; the evergreens symbolize the hope of eternal life; the four purple or blue candles represent the four weeks of Advent; the white Christ candle, in the center of the wreath, is lighted on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. One candle is lighted each Sunday until all the candles are lighted. As the fresh candle is lighted, the ones from the previous weeks are relighted. The symbolism of the candles varies among Protestant traditions, but the purpose is the same-- to prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christmas- This season from sunset December 24th through January 6th is represented by *white or gold*. A creche or manger scene may be used throughout the season, with the Wise Men added when Epiphany is celebrated. Often the Wise Men represent the races of humanity and skin colors are used. Three crowns symbolize the Wise Men, their gifts of gold, frankincense (which may be burned as incense), and myrrh can be used.

Season after Epiphany- from January 7th through the day before Lent. First Sunday after Epiphany-- Baptism of the Lord--*white*. Second through next to last Sunday after Epiphany*--*green*.

**The number of Sundays after Christmas, Epiphany, and Pentecost varies from year to year, but the last Sundays after Epiphany and Pentecost are always Transfiguration of the Lord and Christ the King respectively. ~ Source: United Methodist Altars, Hoyt L. Hickman*

Last Sunday after Epiphany, or the Transfiguration-- *white*.

Lent- from the seventh Wednesday before Easter to sunset Easter Eve. *Purple, grey, dark earth* colors. Rough coarse textures such as burlap. From Palm Sunday through Holy Week a deep hue of *red* may be used to symbolize the blood of Christ. At the beginning of the Palm Sunday service people may process with palm fronds. All crosses may be veiled during Lent, especially during Holy Week, and definitely on Good Friday. On Maundy Thursday any of the *dark* colors or *white* may be used. At the end of the service all visuals may be stripped from the sanctuary and not replaced until after the first service of Easter. *Good Friday and Holy Saturday, no color*.

Easter- from sunset Easter Eve through the Day of Pentecost, *White or gold*- The lighting of the Paschal Candle is done the first service of Easter and for the remainder of the Easter Season the candle may be used. (this large candle, at least 2" in diameter and 2' tall, symbolizes Christ's appearances following his resurrection). Other symbols for this season are flowers, butterflies, peacocks, and the phoenix. The day of Pentecost an appropriate color is flame red to signify the Holy Spirit, and the descending dove, and rainbow.

Season after Pentecost- from the day after Pentecost through the day before Advent. The first Sunday after Pentecost is known as Trinity Sunday and its color is *white*. All Saints' Day November 1, or first Sunday in November is also *white*, as is the last Sunday of Pentecost. The second Sunday through the next to last Sunday is *green*. Combinations of colors and colors other than the basic four are considered appropriate during this season. Spring, summer and autumn can be used.