



Trinity Season (Summer/autumn)

This is the longest of the Church's seasons and in reality has subtle shifts: Trinity Sunday starts us off - the key doctrine about God - and is a five star occasion with gold vestments. We then in the subsequent weeks go into green vestments using liturgy largely like that described in the leaflet "The 10am Eucharist" but during August we are prepared for a run of effectively All Age occasions with a slightly simplified version of the Eucharist as families

and Sunday School folks take holidays; For many years now the Orthodox churches have observed September as "Creation Season" and so we focus on an environmental theme leading into Harvest in early October.

Throughout this season we can either use a set series of readings in which we read our way through substantial chunks of one of the Gospels OR we can use our own theme or series.

Kingdom Season (November) first introduced as part of the liturgical changes brought in by the Church of England in the 1980's and 1990's. The Kingdom was the idea most often mentioned by Jesus so it seems good to have a season in the Calendar drawing our attention to it. Latterly it has been largely dropped by the Church of England with instead the clumsy titles of "3rd before Advent" etc. We have kept the idea of Kingdom with red vestments and a bit of a gear change in the sung parts of the Eucharist leading us towards Advent once more.

Experimental Eucharists

Some of the summer Sundays and major one off Feast days kept on Sundays such as Pentecost, Trinity or Epiphany lend themselves from time to time as suitable for some experimentation. Liquid Liturgy involves setting up areas for different actions, visuals, instructions and simply letting a congregation use each set of resources as they wish with no real structure other than explaining what is where. On fifth Sundays we are trying out a more compact (45 minutes) version of our 10 am service using Iona Community resources.



Worship throughout the Christian Year

This is a companion to the leaflet on "The 10 am Eucharist" which should be read before this one to make real sense.

Various styles of worship

10 am worship on Sunday is always a Eucharist but the form and style it takes can vary considerably. However, this is not as arbitrary as it may seem. What happens and when, on any given Sunday, is part of a carefully worked out scheme based on the overall pattern of the Church Year. Certain occasions within given seasons are marked by content (words, readings, songs), by event (processions, activities, symbolic actions) and by structure (extended Liturgy of the Word at the Easter Vigil or longer Prayers of Penitence during Lent).



We have also been experimenting with new forms of worship to help us explore our faith in ways which are not possible when we simply sit in rows facing the front. So we have tried out ways described as "liquid liturgy" and "Café Church" and we have been working seriously on achieving genuinely "all age" worship. These experimental forms have all tried to make more use of the visual and tactile to bring out the essentially multi-sensory qualities in worship. Some of what we have learnt in these more experimental forms of doing things have added extra dimensions to our other 10am Sunday Eucharists.

The Christian Year

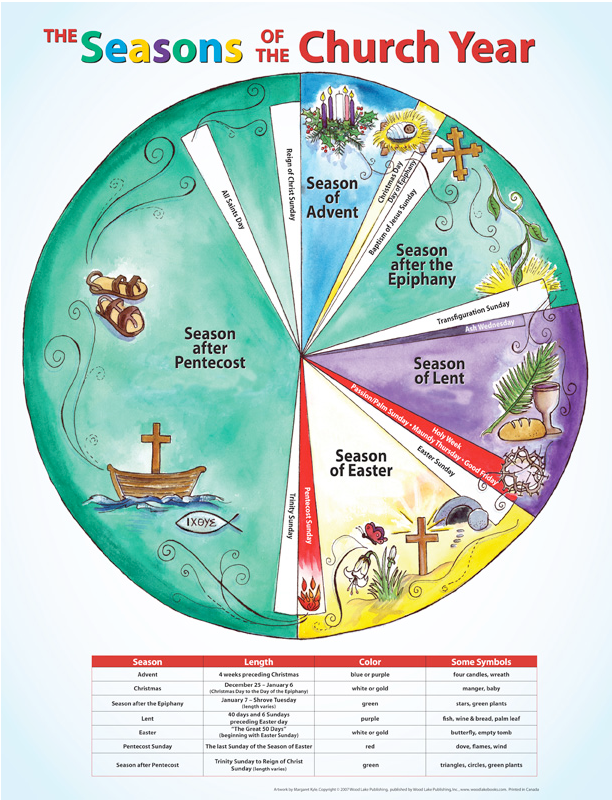
We have been left a wonderfully rich legacy by those who have gone before us in the Faith. One of the most overlooked resources we have inherited is the Christian Calendar. This was worked out over several centuries to provide a carefully balanced and healthy spiritual diet which takes us on a journey through the key parts of our Christian faith once a year. At St Michael’s we try to engage deeply with the main insights of the teaching of Jesus using the shape of the Christian Year as the foundation for our Sunday worship.

The Seasons

This brief outline lists these seasons and some of the ways we mark them out at St Michael’s:

Advent (December) is the first season of all and prepares us for the Coming of Christ. Features: singing an ancient hymn called the ‘Advent Prose’; lighting candles on the Advent Crown; purple vestments are worn. On the first Sunday incense is used and a special litany is said.

Christmas (January) begins on 24th December and ends on 2nd February with Candlemas. Gold vestments are worn. This season is about God in Humanity (incarnation in doctrine books or lectures) and God’s revelation in the Person of Jesus Christ; Devotions at the Crib; Epiphany (The Magi and the gift of Jesus to the whole world); Special Liturgy of the Baptism of Christ; Prayers for the Unity of Christians and beyond; Candlemas is All Age worship and has its own extended Dismissal with candles, ending around the font.



‘**Gesima** (Early Feb) we keep the ancient system of counting the days to Easter. Less poetic is the other official system of titles: 2nd Sunday before Lent, Next before Lent etc. Green vestments are worn. This season varies in length from one week up to 5 depending on the date of Easter. The style of Sunday liturgy is what we might call a ‘default mode’ as described in the companion leaflet “The 10am Eucharist”.

Lent (Feb/Mar - Mar/Apr) begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts for 5 Sundays. Purple vestments worn. A time of fasting, praying, study and almsgiving as a season of preparation for the celebration of Easter. We all process into church together to symbolize that we are the pilgrim people of God on a journey; the Penitential Prayers are longer than usual and we do not sing the Gloria or any Alleluias. Lent 4 is Mothering Sunday and an obvious choice for All Age worship.

Holy Week (Palm Sunday to Easter day) has the most ancient patterns for worship we have inherited from the Early Church. The ceremonies of this week take us through the events in the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry from the Entry into Jerusalem, the events of the Last Supper, Arrest, Trials, Crucifixion and on to the Empty Tomb. The Easter Vigil is celebrated at dawn on Easter day and is the most elaborate Liturgy of the whole Year. In fact it is the Liturgy which establishes the pattern of the Eucharist for the whole year. The Vicar can provide you with more detailed information about these ceremonies on request.

Easter (Easter Day to Pentecost = 50 days). The resurrection of Christ is one of the things which really marks Christianity out but it is far more than discovering the Empty Tomb. The experience of Lent and Holy Week have to be lived out in full before the full impact of resurrection faith becomes truly possible for us in the 21st century. Gold vestments are worn, many Alleluias are sung and there is a special (ancient) sung Dismissal. Ascension Day marks 40 days after Easter day and is marked by an early morning Eucharist (+breakfast) and Pentecost is often kept with an experimental Liturgy to help us understand more fully what life in the Holy Spirit might mean.