

Epiclesis

An Ancient-Future Faith Community...

Worshipping Sundays at 10:30 AM, at the Carmichael Chapel
4600 Winding Way; Sacramento, CA; 95841

For more information or to sign up for our eNewsletter:
www.Epiclesis.org

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Our Purpose and our Tasks...

purpose [pur-puhs]

-noun

Etymology: *to propose*.

1. the reason for which something exists or is done, made.
2. an intended end; aim; goal.

- This **Community** has one divine *Purpose*: Worship.

task [tahsk]

-noun

Etymology: *a service to the Sovereign*.

1. a definite piece of work assigned to, or expected of a person.
2. a piece of work to be finished within a certain time.

- **Worship** is the source of this community's spirituality and it fuels our divine *Tasks*: Making disciples and participating in God's plans for the world.

Our Vision Statement:

In line with Scripture, creed, and tradition, it is our deepest desire to embody God's purposes in the mission of the Church through our theological reflection, our worship, our spirituality, and our life in the world, all the while proclaiming that Jesus is Lord over all creation.

(From *A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future*, "Epilogue",
available from www.AEFCenter.org).

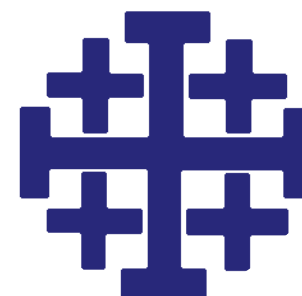


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Worship in

our



Community

*But I, when I am lifted up from the earth,
I will draw everyone to myself. —John 12:32*

Worship and You...

These days it seems as if people are busier than ever! But even in the midst of hectic schedules, we believe that Christian community, and especially worship, has a vital role to play. In fact, worship is more important than ever as so many people search for meaning and community in their lives. The Bible teaches that our highest calling and purpose is to worship God. Jesus said, "If I be lifted up...I will draw everyone to myself." Our desire is to lift up Christ in worship and honor Him as our Head. Our desire is to be a place where worship is not about us, but about God.

We believe that worship is the purpose of the church. Discipleship, missions— all vital tasks of the Church— grow out of vibrant worship. The late Dr. Robert Webber, well-known author and thinker about worship, said it this way, "Christ, the church, and its worship are the source of spirituality, while evangelism, teaching, and social action are spirituality's fruits."

Something remarkable happens when believers come together for corporate worship to tell God's story. *In fact, worship begins long before we come together!* For the ancient Hebrews, the act of sacrifice began before they set off for the Tabernacle. God calls believers by name to gather for worship. Our worship— *our sacrifice*— begins before we ever set foot in the worship gathering. What a privilege to be called by name by our Sovereign to worship. What an honor to gather with fellow believers to glorify God together. *And what unmerited grace that when we worship Him, He often chooses to bless us in return.*

Worship and the Christian Year...

How do you tell time? It's difficult not to let the world shape the way we think about time. Many Christians arrange their activities around the civic or academic calendars and think little of it. But the Bible's view of time is much different than the world's view. For the ancient Hebrews and for the early church, all of time was meant to be redeemed for the Lord. Our contemporary notion of thinking that worship is a "Sunday thing" would be foreign to the first century believer. Romans 12 reminds us, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." *It*



A Word from Pastor Chris Our heart for worship...

We believe that the road to the future runs through the past, as Robert Webber said it. Our worship and our spirituality are deeply rooted in classic Christianity, for we believe that the faith and practice of the ancient Church will engage postmodern culture more effectively and provide a way forward in a time of cultural transition and change.

But more than the latest worship fad or clever idea for church growth, our heart for worship, for our community, is simply to claim the promise that Jesus made when he said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself."

Our pastoral intention is to challenge a consumer church mentality and connect with folks who truly want to live out biblical values. We are not looking for more church members for the sake of numbers. We are seeking people who want to join God's amazing story— *the story of the redemption of all creation.*

Most especially, we believe that drinking deeply of the classic, consensual teaching of the early Church— and most especially worship that centers on Word and Table— are the way spiritual thirsts are fully quenched.

If you feel God is calling you to a similar vision and mission, we invite you to join His story along with us, faithful and seekers alike, loving each other, worshiping God, and participating in His purposes for the world.

The Lord be with you!
Pastor Chris



For Further Reading...

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality Through the Christian Year* (Baker Books, 2004).

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative* (Baker Books, 2008).

Whittemore, Carol E. *Symbols of the Church* (Abingdon Press, 1987).

Stookey, Laurence Hull. *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church* (Abingdon Press, 1996).



Α Ω **Alpha** and **Omega**, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, represent Jesus Christ who said, “I am the first and last, the Alpha and Omega.” In Him is the beginning, the end, and the entirety of all things.

 The **Triquetra** is an early symbol of the Holy Trinity. The three equal arcs express eternity in their continuous form, indivisibility in their interweaving, and their center is a triangle, an ancient Trinity symbol. The symbol sometimes includes a circle and is meant to convey our unending, timeless, and unchanging God.

The Colors of the Christian Year...

The colors associated with the Christian year have been used for centuries by churches of many denominations to help signal the seasons of the Christian year in a meaningful, visually appealing way. In general, color choices and their use are the result of many traditions—they may be slightly different from church to church. The colors we use in worship are some of the most common:



White (and sometimes gold) is meant to convey purity, holiness, and virtue, as well as reverence and respect. It is used during the Christmas and Easter seasons and on high, holy days during the seasons after Epiphany and Pentecost.

Purple (and sometime blue) symbolizes penitence and also royalty. When used during Advent, the color reminds us of the coming King. During the season of Lent, it symbolizes Christ's suffering and our own mourning.

Red, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, is used on the Day of Pentecost and at other times during the year when the Holy Spirit is emphasized. As a symbol of the blood of Christ, red is often used during Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday. You might not know that red is also considered to be “the” color of the church, since red can represent the blood of the countless martyrs of the faith.

Green, as you might suspect, symbolizes growth, renewal, and the promise of new life. Green is used mostly during Epiphany and the long season after Pentecost, except when other colors, especially white or red, are used to highlight special days.

encourages us to live all of life as a sacrifice to the Lord. Worship happens 24, 7, 12, decade, millennium, epoch, infinity!

Today, as the world demands and commands so much of our time, many Evangelicals are returning to the ages-old, traditional Christian year as a meaningful way to mark time. The Christian year was developed over the centuries to help believers order their steps and “redeem the time.” *In following the Christian year, we join with believers all over the world and across the ages in a pilgrimage toward redeeming time for the Lord.*



Redeeming the Time: A Closer Look at the Christian Year...

Walking through the Christian year means following in Christ's footsteps and learning more about discipleship, all while marking time in a spiritually disciplined way. While the concept of the Christian year is not one that you find expressly prescribed in Scripture, it is a guide to discipleship and a kind of textbook of theology that beautifully supports and illuminates the Bible's narrative. Robert Webber writes, “The Christian year is a journey that follows the life of Christ and invites the worshiper to remember and sense the significance of dozens of scriptural events, person, and images. [It] has developed over the centuries of practice...and always has challenged Christian worshipers to deepen their understanding of their faith, to marvel at the great power and love of God as shown in Jesus Christ, and to celebrate their place in the body of Christ.”

Seven Great Reasons for Following the Christian Year...

Observing the Christian Year doesn't come down to a question of *whether* to follow a calendar. All churches follow some kind of calendar. It's more a matter of *which* calendar to follow: A secular or a sacred one? *Here are seven great reasons for holding to the ancient discipline of the Christian calendar:*

1. In Christ... Following the Christian year actualizes the pattern of being in Christ. Because Christ is the source of its spirituality, and because the person and work of Christ is at the heart of it, the Christian year helps us to be formed into His image. It lifts us up into Christ so that we can say, with Paul, “For me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

2. Baptism... The discipline of the Christian year reminds us that by God's grace in baptism, we are brought into union with Christ. As we "walk out our baptism" throughout the year, we daily die to self and are raised to new life in Him (Rom. 6:4). Christian year spirituality helps us to live out the pattern of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

3. Drama... The Christian year takes believers through the drama of redemption. Advent: In exile, waiting for Christ. Christmas: He has come! Epiphany: Christ is revealed. Lent: We follow in His footsteps. Maundy Thursday: The Great High Priest makes a new covenant in the Eucharist. Good Friday: The Lamb of God is slain for the sins of the world. Easter: He is risen! Ascension: He has gone and will come again. Pentecost: The Spirit comes.

4. Roots... Following the Christian year roots us in Church history. It's important, especially these days, for Evangelicals to be rooted in the past. Why? Because an "all I need is me and my Bible" kind of Christianity can produce all kinds of heresy. Following a calendar that re-tells the big story of God's mighty saving acts and deeds, especially in the person and work of Jesus, provides a vital link to the past and a regular reminder for postmodern Christians that the "Holy Spirit has a history," as theologian Thomas Oden says it. The Christian year puts us on a road that runs from the past, through earliest years of the faith, all the way to the present day—and even across denominational boundaries around the globe—into the future.

5. Kingdom... Following the Christian year places believers first in the Kingdom of God. The worship of God, as Walter Bruggemann has said, "is a constitutive act." In other words, it declares that there is another Kingdom to which we belong—and that the kingdoms of this world pale in comparison. When Memorial Day usurps Pentecost, many churches make the decision to let the secular win the day. Churches that ignore Pentecost would probably never make that mistake with Mother's Day. Following the Christian year serves to remind believers whose Kingdom they belong to. When the rhythm of the year is dominated by Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost, there are consistent reminders that Christians belong first to God's Kingdom and that time itself is centered on Him.

6. Discipleship... The Christian year is a great resource for discipleship and teaching. In a time when Evangelicals are hungry to grow deeper, the Christian year provides a systematic,

Worship and Symbols...

Symbols have always been an important part of worship. Of course we don't worship the actual symbols, but we do allow them to do what they do best: *point us toward Someone greater than themselves.*

Did you know that you are part of one of the important symbols in worship? Christians believe that the people of the church *are* the church. When we come together for worship, we are a symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit. *Together, we are the body of Christ.*

The Lord's Table points to an especially important part of our worship. It's used during communion of course, but its central presence is a reminder of Christ's presence among His people and reflects our desire to see Him at the center of all we do.



The Eucharist, our most intense encounter with Christ in worship, is full of great meaning. We believe that when we ask in faith for the Holy Spirit to come and transform ordinary elements they become extraordinary things. This prayer for transformation, called an "Epiclesis", is where we get the name of our community. While our community of faith does not hold to the "transubstantiation" view of Communion, we do embrace the mystery of "Real Presence". We don't understand it, we don't try to

explain it, but we believe and embrace it. When we remember Him, we do more than recall Him; we "re-member" the Body of Christ, that is the church, with its Head, who is Jesus. When we come to the Table of the Lord, Jesus stands among us in His risen power.

One other important thing to note: Our practice at Table shares in the custom dating back to the very early church of praying for healing. We believe that in Communion, Jesus stands among us in His risen power—and where His presence is, healing to be found.

Other traditional Christian symbols:



The **Chi-Rho** symbol is a monogram of the first two letters of the word "Christ" in Greek. The tall letter, *Rho*, often resembles a shepherd's staff.

The second Sunday after Pentecost is when the Church traditionally observes **Trinity Sunday**, acknowledging that the mystery of the Trinity is central to the Christian faith. On Trinity Sunday we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to the early church as recorded in Acts 2. But that historic day was not the first time the Holy Spirit appears on the biblical scene. As Christians, we believe that the Holy Spirit, together with the Son, were as one and co-equal with God the Father even before the foundations of the earth were laid. On Trinity Sunday, we worship the Triune God, giving thanks and praise to the Father, His Son, and to the Holy Spirit. The color for the day is white, symbolizing purity and holiness.



The lengthy period after Pentecost and before Advent is simply called the **Season after Pentecost**. Some churches refer to this as “ordinary time”, but the term is not meant to convey that nothing extraordinary ever happens during this season! The phrase “ordinary time” is derived from word “ordinal”, or numbering. The label, then, is meant to describe the weeks after Pentecost where we count down the Sundays until a new Christian year begins with Advent. Congregations usually take this time to focus on discipleship and growing deeper in Christ. The primary color used during this season is green.

The final Sunday in “ordinary time”, the lengthy season after Pentecost, and just before Advent is called the **Christ the King** Sunday. There are many places in Scripture that refer to Christ as King and the emphasis on this particular Sunday reminds us that Jesus has complete Lordship over everything. Pausing just before the beginning of a new Christian year to reflect on Jesus’ reign over all things, including His mastery over the power and principalities, is a great way to bring the whole journey to a close. White is the traditional color for this day in the Christian year.



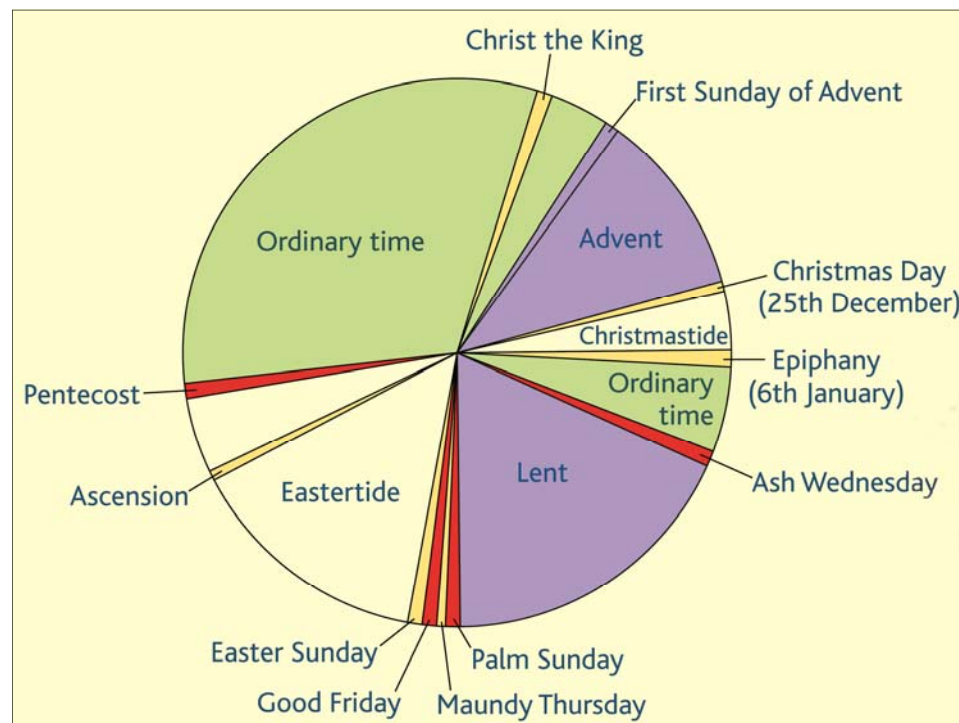
Christ-centered way for a whole congregation to grow together. It also exposes the church to the entire biblical narrative: *After following the Christian year cycle for three years, a person will have gone through the whole Bible.*

7. Accountability...

Finally, the Christian year holds pastors accountable to the whole of Scripture. Sometimes, it is pastors who are the most resistant to the Christian year citing concerns that they wouldn’t be able to preach the “whole counsel of God.” However, it is the discipline of the Christian calendar that helps keep pastors from following personal preferences for preaching and “camping out” in more familiar or pet areas of Scripture.

The next few pages feature descriptive highlights of the Christian calendar. As we move through the course of the year, these informational pieces (titled “About the church year...” often appear in our order of service and serve as a helpful reminder of the meaning of each season.

Looking at the Christian year...



The Christian year begins with **Advent**, which follows the summer long Season after Pentecost. Advent is a four-week period during which the church joyfully remembers the coming of Christ, eagerly looks forward to His coming again, and prepares for the festival of His birth. Beginning with the Sunday nearest November 30, the season is observed for the four Sundays prior to Christmas. The color most associated with Advent is purple, denoting the royalty of Christ and the season's dignity. On each of the four Sundays, a candle in the Advent wreath is lit and special Scripture is read. The candles represent hope, love, joy, and peace. The white Christ Candle, often in the center, is lit on Christmas Eve.



After the preparation time of Advent, the Church observes **Christmas**, the festival of the birth of Christ and the celebration of the incarnation. A twelve-day period from December 25 to January 5, which may include either one or two Sundays after Christmas, Christmas is traditionally signified with the colors white or gold which represent purity and joy.



The color green is used during the season of **Epiphany** which marks the revelation of God's gift of Himself to all. The Bible describes how wise men, Gentiles, from the East came to worship the Christ Child. Epiphany celebrates the glorious truth that God's Son came to earth for all humankind! Beginning with the day of Epiphany (January 6), the season continues until Ash Wednesday, and can include from four to nine Sundays. The color green denotes new life, growth, and renewal.



The season of **Lent**, a period of forty weekdays follows Epiphany (Sundays, always considered "Feast Days", are not included). Beginning on Ash Wednesday and culminating in Holy week, this season of both joy and sorrow is a time for the Church to proclaim, remember, and respond to the atoning death of Christ. The traditional violet/purple color usually associated with the season is meant to convey the reflective, penitential tones of Lent.



Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week and the triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem. It also signals that the biblical drama of the salvation of the world is now rapidly moving to a climax. Scripture tells us that as Christ drew near to the city gates, the people welcomed him with shouts of "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Others waved palm branches and spread their cloaks on the road before Him in an act of royal homage. The violet color of Lent is exchanged for red, which foreshadows the sacrifice to come at week's end.



The change in color to white from the violet of Lent and the red of Holy Week signals the triumphant arrival of **Easter**, the glorious resurrection day of our Lord. In the church year, Easter is a fifty day period of seven Sundays, beginning with Easter Day. Ascension Day, which marks that profoundly important moment when Christ ascended into heaven, comes forty days after Easter and is celebrated to affirm that Christ is Lord of all times and places.



The Sunday following the 40th day after Easter marks the day Christians traditionally commemorate the **Ascension of our Lord** (Ascension Day itself, which occurs on the fortieth day after Easter, can fall on any weekday). Though sometimes overlooked, the ascension of our Lord is an important event of the Christian faith because it signals the completion of God's saving work in Christ. The gathered witnesses saw Jesus bodily ascend into heaven, proving that He is there even now making intercession for us all. It also establishes something about His return: "In like manner as you have seen him go, he shall come again!"



After the Easter season, the Church begins the observance of **Pentecost**, the festival commemorating the gift of the Holy Spirit. An extended season for reflecting on how God's people live under the guidance of His Spirit, Pentecost extends from the seventh Sunday after Easter to the beginning of Advent. The color associated with the summer-long season after Pentecost is green, symbolizing growth. However, the color on the first Sunday of Pentecost, also called "Whitsunday," is red, representing flames of fire.

