



St Anne's Church Wandsworth

THE CHURCH'S YEAR

One thing we lose by living in London is a sense of the seasons. It gets warmer or colder, lighter or darker, but beyond that seasons are kept at arms' length. We can buy the same fruit and vegetables any day of the year. If we want the sun or the snow we can fly somewhere to get it. We rarely notice what the moon is doing. But there is something healthy for our human nature when we live within the rhythm of seasons with both their limitations and what is special in them.

Humans are built on rhythm – and not just of music! The rhythm of day and night, of weekday and weekend, structure for nearly everyone the rhythms of work and rest, waking and sleeping. We function badly and are irritable when that rhythm is upset, as when we are jet lagged. And so it is no wonder that the Christian tradition has structured the practice of our faith around these rhythms of days, weeks and seasons. It is good practice to pray at a set time every day, even if it is only the Lord's Prayer said quietly on the bus to work. Somehow it gives shape to the whole day. In the week, Sunday morning for God also dedicates the whole week to him.

Across the year, we hear the whole life of Jesus and the Christian story told against the backdrop of the seasons. Whatever day of the year Jesus was born (and we have no clue), it feels right to celebrate the coming of the Light of the World when the world is most in darkness. Historically the death and resurrection was in springtime, and that fits with the context of new life around us. (OK, this doesn't work in Australia...) And there are other church seasons and festivals which arrange themselves around Christmas and Easter: two constellations which are close in the year but never quite overlap. (And why does the date of Easter wobble? It is because its date is based on that of Jewish Passover which is held on the first full moon after the spring equinox, not obvious in street-lit London but a clear date in the old Middle East.)

The chart gives details of the Church's Year, how it is structured and what themes are celebrated.

**FOLLOWING THE STORY OF JESUS THROUGH THE YEAR
("THE LITURGICAL YEAR")**

<i>Day or season</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Colour</i>
DAYS AND SEASONS BASED AROUND CHRISTMAS			
Advent	The four Sundays before Christmas Day	Waiting, expectation, hope	Purple
Christmas	Twelve days from 25 December to 5 January	The birth of Jesus: God with us, Light in the darkness	White or gold
Epiphany	January 6	The "epiphany" (manifestation) of Jesus as Son of God: the visit of the Magi, the Baptism of Christ	White or gold
Candlemas	2 February (or nearest Sunday), 40 days after Christmas	Commemorating the presentation of Christ in the Temple as a new born infant; looking forward to when he will come to cleanse the Temple	White or gold
THEN AN ORDINARY BIT			
Sundays after Epiphany / before Lent	Sundays between Candlemas and the beginning of Lent	"Ordinary Time": the life and ministry of Jesus	Green
DAYS AND SEASONS BASED AROUND EASTER			
Ash Wednesday	First day of Lent, about seven weeks before Easter	Penitence and our mortality: in either case facing our limitations and our need for a saviour	Purple
Lent	40 days before Easter (not counting Sundays)	Penitence and self denial, preparation for Holy Week and Easter; growing close to Christ	Purple
Holy Week	Last week of Lent		
Palm Sunday	The Sunday of Holy Week	Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, hailed as a king by the crowds who soon will call for his blood.	Red
Maundy Thursday	Thursday of Holy Week	Jesus celebrates the Last Supper with the disciples and gives them the "new commandment" to love one another (<i>mandatum novum</i> from which we get "Maundy").	White or gold
Good Friday	Friday of Holy Week	Commemorating Jesus' crucifixion and death	Red
Easter vigil	Saturday evening of Holy Week	On the eve before Easter Day, anticipating the resurrection by hearing God's plan of salvation through the pages of the Old Testament.	White or gold
Easter Day	The Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox	The resurrection of Christ; the promise of new life to all his people	White or gold
Easter season	Seven weeks after Easter	The life of resurrection for us all in Christ	White or gold
Ascension Day	40th day after Easter Day	The ascension of Christ into heaven (Acts 1)	White or gold
Pentecost	The seventh Sunday (50th day) after Easter	The Holy Spirit comes on the disciples: the birth of the Church	Red
Trinity Sunday	First Sunday after Pentecost	The revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the events around Jesus Christ.	White or gold
THEN ANOTHER ORDINARY BIT			
Sundays after Trinity (<i>lots of them!</i>)	Sundays between Trinity Sunday and the beginning of Advent	"Ordinary Time": the life and ministry of Jesus	Green
Christ the King	The last Sunday after Trinity, next before Advent Sunday	Christ as Lord of all: the fulfilment of all things in him.	White or gold

(based on a website resource by Mark D Robert)

WHAT ELSE?

Some festivals are very popular but more to do with society than the Gospel story of Jesus:

Mothering Sunday	The fourth Sunday of Lent <i>Began as a half-way break in Lent, became a family-centred, and mother-centred, day. So a good time to celebrate the unique relationship we have with our mothers.</i>
Harvest	A convenient Sunday in the autumn: at St Anne's we keep the first Sunday in October <i>Remembering our dependence on creation and giving thanks for our food and the necessities of life.</i>
Remembrance Day	11 November (or the nearest Sunday): the date of the end of World War I <i>Remembering those who gave their lives in war, and reflecting on war and peace in the world.</i>

A ST ANNE'S SPECIAL

We keep the Sunday near 15 October as "Huguenot Sunday" to celebrate the French refugees who came to Wandsworth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and to remember the plight of refugees today.

WHAT THE LITURGICAL COLOURS MARK

- WHITE for joy and celebration; used at Christmas and Easter, saints' days and weddings
- RED for fire (Holy Spirit at Pentecost) or blood (the Passion of Christ, and for martyrs who died for Christ)
- PURPLE the "down" colour; for penitence at Lent and for waiting in Advent, to mark sorrow at funerals
- GREEN the "everyday" colour, marking ordinary times of the year

FOLLOWING THE STORY OF JESUS THROUGH THE BIBLE

The readings we have from the Bible generally follow a three-year cycle, so if you miss one you have to come back on that particular Sunday in three years' time! Each year of the cycle begins with Advent Sunday. Matthew is the gospel for 2013/14, Mark for 2014/15, Luke for 2015/16 then we go back to Matthew again. (John's gospel is used in bits around the other three.) Other readings from the Old and New Testament follow a similar cycle.