



THE MEANING & USE OF LITURGICAL COLORS

From <http://bit.ly/aGmRML> on the ELCA website

In the Christian tradition colors are used for vestments and paraments, but a unified system of colors developed only gradually and haphazardly until and through the Middle Ages. Today, the ELCA provides a system of colors for use by its congregations; for the most part, the same system is also used by Roman and Anglican churches, at least in the United States; and by many churches around the world, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

The colors serve to adorn the worship space, and to call attention to the nature of the season or festival being celebrated. A brief summary of their usage, according to the church year, follows.

Advent - Blue is used for its references to hope. It originated in Scandinavia, probably because purple dye was too expensive for churches to use. The alternate color for Advent is purple, the royal color of the coming King (different meaning than when it is used in Lent; see below).

Christmas - White is used as a reference to the purity of the newborn Christ, and to our light and joy in him.

Epiphany of Our Lord - White (see Christmas).

Baptism of Our Lord - White (see Christmas).

Sundays after the Epiphany - Green is used for its symbolism of our growth in Christ. Green, in a sense, is a "neutral color," used when more festive or more somber color is not appointed.

Transfiguration of Our Lord - White (see Christmas).

Ash Wednesday - Black is the preferred color, since it is the color of the ashes to which we will all return. Purple is the alternate color for this first day of Lent.

Lent - Purple is indicated, as the stark color of repentance and solemnity.

Sunday of the Passion - Scarlet is the preferred color of this first day of Holy Week, as it suggests the deep color of blood. (Scarlet is to be distinguished from the brighter color of red, which is appointed for the Day of Pentecost, martyrs' days, and certain church celebrations). If a parish does not have scarlet vestments, purple may be used.

Days of Holy Week - Scarlet or purple may be used for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday - For this fourth day of Holy Week, celebrated as the institution of the Lord's Supper, scarlet or white is used.

Good Friday - No vestments or paraments are used on this day, after the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday night.

Vigil of Easter - White as the color of joy in the Resurrection is used on this night.

Easter Day - On this one day of the church year, gold may be used. White is the alternate, perhaps with gold running through it. The gold color indicates that this day is the "queen of feasts," unique in the entire church year.

Sundays of Easter - White (see Vigil of Easter).

Day of Pentecost - Red as the color of fire is used on this day when we remember the tongues of fire descended on the crowd in Jerusalem. In contrast to the color of scarlet, Pentecost's red is a bright color.

The Holy Trinity - White is appointed, the expression of joy in the mystery of the Triune God.

Other Sundays after Pentecost - Green is used, to indicate our growth in faith as we follow the teachings and ministry of Christ.

Christ the King - The final day of the church year uses white, a festive color of light, joy, and the celebration of our Lord.

Lesser festivals and commemorations - Use white unless a martyr is celebrated, in which case use bright red.

MONTHLY BIBLE VERSE

This Bible verse was selected by Harold Usgaard, bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, for everyone in the synod to study.



"My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips." PSALM 63:5

ABOUT OUR SYNOD

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod is a faith community of 131,000 baptized people in 183 congregations as well as related institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Its geographic area includes 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

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