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Educating Calvary Baptist Church, Asheville, NC, on the Value of Following the Christian Year as a Means for Spiritual Renewal Through Worship

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**EDUCATING CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NC,
ON THE VALUE OF FOLLOWING THE CHRISTIAN YEAR
AS A MEANS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THROUGH WORSHIP**

A PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF THE M. CHRISTOPHER WHITE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JEFFREY C. HAYES

MAY 12, 2017

APPROVAL FORM

**EDUCATING CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NC,
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AS A MEANS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THROUGH WORSHIP**

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Date: _____

Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.

~Jeremiah 6:16

ABSTRACT

This project introduced the spiritual value of following the Christian year in worship. Through a series of sermons and study lessons that focused on eight major seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time), participants were exposed to the history and spiritual purpose of each, respectively. Two surveys were administered, along with weekly evaluations, and interviews, to measure the project's effectiveness. The desired outcome was a greater degree of knowledge and interest in worshipping through the Christian year. According to the final analysis, increased understanding, spiritual growth, and desire to worship through the Christian year did occur.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Where does one begin to express gratitude toward the people who make such an undertaking possible? Certainly the people who have supported me in the last three years deserve high praise. But so do those who were with me twenty-four years ago when I first felt God call me to ministry during a mission trip to Panama City Beach, Florida. Without their encouragement I would not be in this position today.

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With deep gratitude for all of the above and more...

JCH

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What time is it? I ask that question every single day. The answer, however, is trickier than it first appears. If I am speaking with my wife, an educator, the answer to that question is governed by the school day. “It’s fourth period,” she will tell me. If I am speaking with my financial broker, the answer will involve the opening and closing bell of the stock exchange. A psychologist will respond, “It’s time for my ten o’clock.” An accountant in mid-April will be quick to reply, “It’s tax time!” Someone living with financial strain may mark time paycheck to paycheck. A new mother may judge time by a baby’s nap schedule. Even nature tracks a calendar from night to day and season to season. Everyone and everything, in some shape or form, marks time.

Time forms our thoughts and shapes our person. Mentally and emotionally, time can drain us. Physically, time has lasting effects on our skin as it wrinkles and our hair as it grays. Our spirituality does not escape the effects of time either. The Psalmist teaches that we should number our days in order to gain wisdom (Psalm 90:12); and the Apostle Paul encourages us to make the best use of our time, for the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16).

The way we mark time speaks volumes about how our life is organized and valued. The church is no exception. Many churches arrange their time by their programs. For example, Deacon election is marked for January, the missions offering is collected in April, the annual youth trip happens in July, Sunday School promotion takes place in August, Stewardship Sunday is always in October, and the Christmas banquet is, well, in

December! Another way churches mark time is a combination of civic and religious holidays: New Year's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Each of these holidays is celebrated by some special inclusion in worship: baby dedication is earmarked for Mother's Day, a recognition of veterans on Memorial Day, a patriotic musical on the Fourth of July, an extended prayer of gratitude on Thanksgiving, and a children's nativity pageant every Christmas Eve. Still, a third way many churches mark time is known as the Christian year. This calendar begins with Advent and includes the seasons of Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, various festival times and saint observances as well as the season known as Ordinary Time.

Given this variety of marking time in the church, the question is not, "Will we mark time?" but "How will we mark time?" What is more, Pastor Ed Shepard has noted, that how a church marks time will speak volumes about her discipleship.¹ In order to stay true to our calling as followers of Jesus, I believe the best way for the church to mark time is the Christian year. The seasons of the Christian year convey how the people of God are intricately woven into the story of God's saving work in Christ. Each season is a "historical unfolding of the life of Christ and his sure return," writes worship expert Robert Webber.² During Advent the church prepares for the coming of Christ; Christmas celebrates his birth; Epiphany recalls his manifestation to the Gentiles; Lent remembers his journey toward the cross; Easter rejoices in his resurrection; and Pentecost

1. Edward Shepard. "Observing the Christian Year as a Means of Facilitating Spiritual Growth" in *Review and Expositor*, No. 106 (May 2009): 221.

2. Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 31.

experiences life in the power of the Holy Spirit along with the birth of the church.³ Then throughout Ordinary Time the focus shifts to Jesus' public ministry and the church contemplates the intersection of Jesus' life with the life of God's people.⁴ In following this cycle of Jesus' life, we become, as Gabriel Fackre has asserted, "not only a pointer to what Christ has done and will do, but a participant."⁵ With each passing year the seasons become a point of renewal for the church, reminding us of our present position in Christ and our future place in God's kingdom.

From the outset, let it be known there are variations in how the Christian year is observed. For example, in the West there are at least five different versions of the Christian year. Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians all follow slightly different lectionaries as well as various feast and saint days. The Eastern Orthodox Church has its own version of the Christian year separate from the aforementioned; but in every case, the focus is nothing less than keeping our eyes fixed on the story of Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). For the purpose of this ministry project, I followed eight major feast seasons as represented in the majority of Western Christian year calendars: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week (Triduum), Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time, also referred to as The Season After Pentecost.

3. Ibid.

4. Joan Chittister, *The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 97.

5. Gabriel J. Fackre, *The Christian Story, a Pastoral Systematics*, vol. 5, *The Church: Signs of the Spirit and Signs of the Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 107.

Author Bobby Gross identifies three reasons why observing the Christian year is important. First, when the church follows the Christian year, she allows the story of God's work to shape how she views time. Instead of ordering our time by programs or civic holidays, our time is ordered by the life of Jesus. Second, the Christian year aids in the evangelistic mission of the church. Through the celebration of each season we are reminded of God's saving work through Jesus. By proclaiming the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we give witness to the world of God's power. Finally, by following the Christian year, the church is formed spiritually by the narrative of God. The stories, symbols, and actions of God's saving acts give meaning to the worship and work of the church.⁶

In strong agreement with Gross is the aforesaid Robert Webber. Not long before his death in 2006, Webber spent several months working with over three-hundred pastors and theologians to craft *A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future*, which set forth a vision for worship in a postmodern world. Discouraged over the current changes he witnessed in worship, Webber challenged pastors and worship leaders to return to an ancient-future faith, to celebrate the Christian year, and to remember the church is always *semper reformanda*, with one foot in the past, one foot in the present, and eyes always looking toward the future. Webber proclaims:

We call for public worship that sings, preaches and enacts God's story. We call for a renewed consideration of how God ministers to us in baptism, Eucharist, confession, the laying on of hands, marriage, healing and through the charisms of the Spirit, for these actions shape our lives and signify the meaning of the world. Thus, we call Evangelicals to turn away from forms of worship that focus on God as a mere object of the intellect or that assert the self as the source of worship. Such worship has resulted in lecture-oriented, music-driven, performance-

6. Bobby Gross. *Living the Christian Year: Time to Inhabit the Story of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 9.

centered and program-controlled models that do not adequately proclaim God's cosmic redemption. Therefore, we call Evangelicals to recover the historic substance of worship of Word and Table and to attend to the Christian year, which marks time according to God's saving acts.⁷

The Call, as it has come to be known, also stresses the importance of spiritual formation based on a Trinitarian biblical narrative that connects the story of God and baptism into the life of Christ. As Webber encourages, the *story* can be found in following the narrative of the Christian year. By celebrating the seasons, new meaning is brought to worship and the distance between past and present is narrowed. Worship becomes a recitation of God's covenantal story that we are indeed the Lord's people, called out by that story to be holy, just as God is holy. These themes will be developed in my biblical and theological reflection as a means for observing the Christian year.

In essence, following the Christian year will give meaning to every time in our lives: past, present, and future—which is exactly its intended purpose. However, marking time by the Christian year is not easy. Culture tells us the opening day of baseball season, not Easter, is the most important day of Spring. It tells us that Black Friday, not Advent, is the real preparation for Christmas. Likewise, holidays such as Memorial Day and the Fourth of July can subsequently place our focus on kingdoms of this world and not the kingdom of God. Honestly, churches who choose to follow the Christian year receive little help in doing so from modern society; but those who choose to walk the narrow road of the Christian year will find value and purpose beyond any measurement of time the world has to offer. For that reason, my ministry project centers on introducing the power of observing the Christian year in worship as a vehicle for spiritual renewal.

7. Robert Webber, "The Call to an Ancient-Evangelical Future," accessed May 3, 2016, <https://www.ancientfuturefaithnetwork.org/the-call/>.

Description of Ministry Context

Location and History of Calvary Baptist Church

The context for this ministry project was Calvary Baptist Church located in West Asheville, North Carolina. West Asheville is a segment of Asheville unto itself. In fact, it has maintained an identity so distinctive that visitors frequently ask if it is really a part of Asheville. That is not surprising given that West Asheville existed separate from Asheville during two brief periods in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century.⁸ Even in 1917 when West Asheville voted on consolidation with Asheville, the residents were evenly divided. The merger carried by a mere eight votes!⁹

Calvary's physical address is 531 Haywood Road, which is on the east end of the historic Haywood Road corridor. Over the decades Haywood Road has seen dramatic highs and devastating lows. Karen Loughmiller, coordinator of the West Asheville History Project, cites, "West Asheville has had its boom cycles, then it has had times when it was not as successful."¹⁰ In the nineteenth-century the emergence of Patton Avenue on the west end of Haywood Road drew commerce away from the area. Patton Avenue became the principal route into downtown Asheville and many businesses began to relocate closer to the west end and toward downtown. Though in the 1990's, young adults began moving into the neighborhoods off Haywood Road, taking advantage of

8. Grady Cooper, "A Shifting Identity: West Asheville's Storied Past," *Mountain Express Asheville NC*, April 3, 2014, accessed February 20, 2016, <https://mountainx.com/news/community-news/040214a-shifting-identity/>.

9. Ibid.

10. Culley Holderfield and Phyllis Lang, "The Story of Haywood Road." *The West Asheville Story*, no. 1 (2001): 1. Accessed February 20, 2016. https://archive.org/stream/haywoodroadstory00hold/haywoodroadstory00hold_djvu.txt.

lower home prices.¹¹ The past two decades have seen one of West Asheville's more successful periods of growth with an increase of 20.3% in population, many of them younger adults.

The increase in population, however, has not been evident in West Asheville churches. Whereas the 1960's saw churches as the center of West Asheville's identity—legend has it that Paul Harvey once commented there were more churches per square mile on Haywood Road than any other street in America¹²—the present influx of young adults has brought a resurgence of the bohemian aura Asheville is famous for and they have made Haywood Road their Mecca. The majority of these young adults are not church attenders. Instead, most Sunday mornings will find most of the community frequenting well-known spots such as Sunny Point Café. In my time at Calvary, congregants have often exclaimed to me: "If we could only reach the Sunny Point crowd!"

Calvary has been a part of the West Asheville community for over one-hundred years. An outgrowth of a mission Sunday School sponsored by the West End Baptist Church, Calvary was first located on the corner of Hanover Street and Haywood Road. At the time of her founding, the only other church in West Asheville was Balm Grove Methodist, now Trinity Methodist Church. In 1916 the present lot was purchased and the sanctuary was completed in 1925. Each Sunday during the building campaign for the sanctuary a special collection was taken in an old iron pot—a symbol still used today for collecting special offerings.

11. Ibid.

12. Dan Pierce, "UNCA Historian Reflects on Growing Up in West Asheville," *Citizen-Times Asheville NC*, November 10, 2015, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.citizentimes.com/story/news/2015/10/11/unca-historian-dan-pierce-reflects-growing-up-west-asheville-nascar-baseball-blue-collar-baptist-church-speedway/73507992/>.

Our church has been categorized by many as a church of “firsts.” Calvary was the first church to establish a Brotherhood organization in the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. She was the first to offer a Vacation Bible School in Asheville; the first to have a graded choir program; and, the first to have a race relations program in West Asheville, placing the church among the earliest in the region to promote justice issues.

However, like the Haywood Road community she inhabits, Calvary has changed dramatically over the years. What once was a diverse congregation that engaged in missions across the eastern coastline as well as in Belgium and Poland, has become a church primarily of senior adults over the age of sixty who are limited in physical ability and scope.

Present Statistics of Calvary Baptist Church

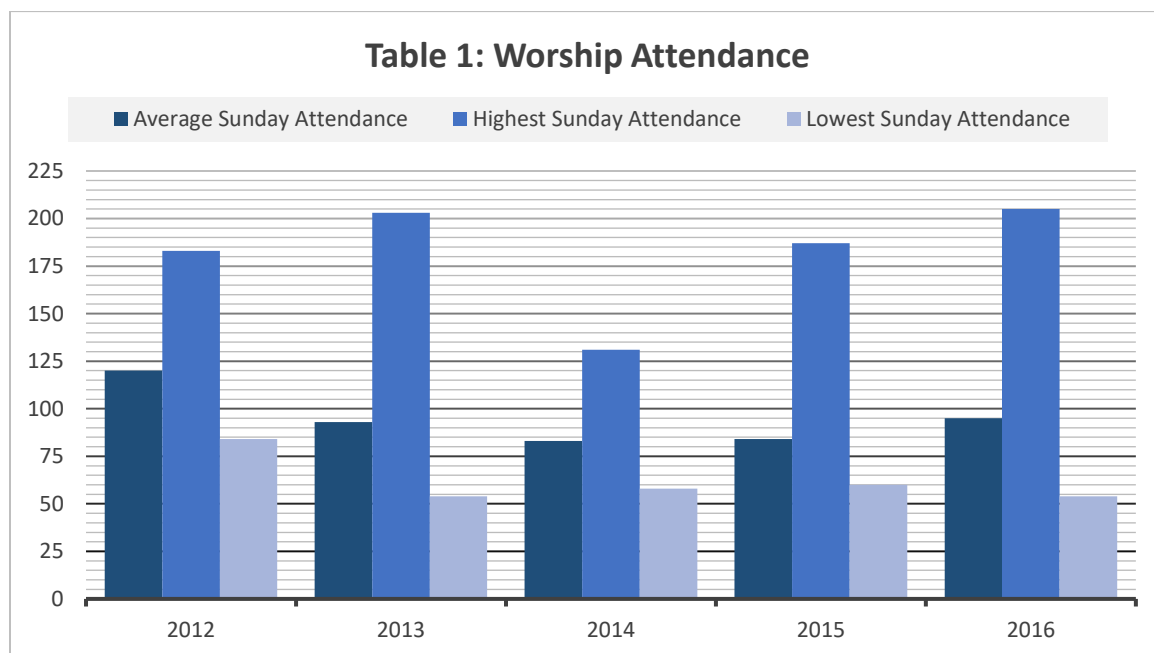
I have been the pastor of Calvary since June 2012. The church has a resident membership of 216 with most members residing outside the Haywood Road corridor. Families live as far south as Hendersonville and as far north as Mars Hill. In my time as pastor, ten people have joined the church, ten have lettered out; we have experienced six births and thirty-seven deaths. In addition, twelve senior adults have moved to different states in order to be cared for by children or grandchildren. That number will only increase as the congregation grows older and in need of physical care.

Those who fill leadership positions are comprised of male and female over the age of fifty-five. We have female deacons and in the past have employed female staff. Current paid staff includes a full-time Pastor, Office Administrator, Custodian, and Daycare Director; with part-time staff including a Minister of Music, Musician, and Building Host.

When I arrived at Calvary there were two Sunday morning worship services. The 8:30AM service took place in the basement chapel. Attendance at that service ranged from fifteen to twenty people. The 11:00AM service took place in the main sanctuary with attendance hovering around eighty-five people. Both services followed the same order of worship and were traditional in style with hymns and piano accompaniment. I preached the same sermon in both services.

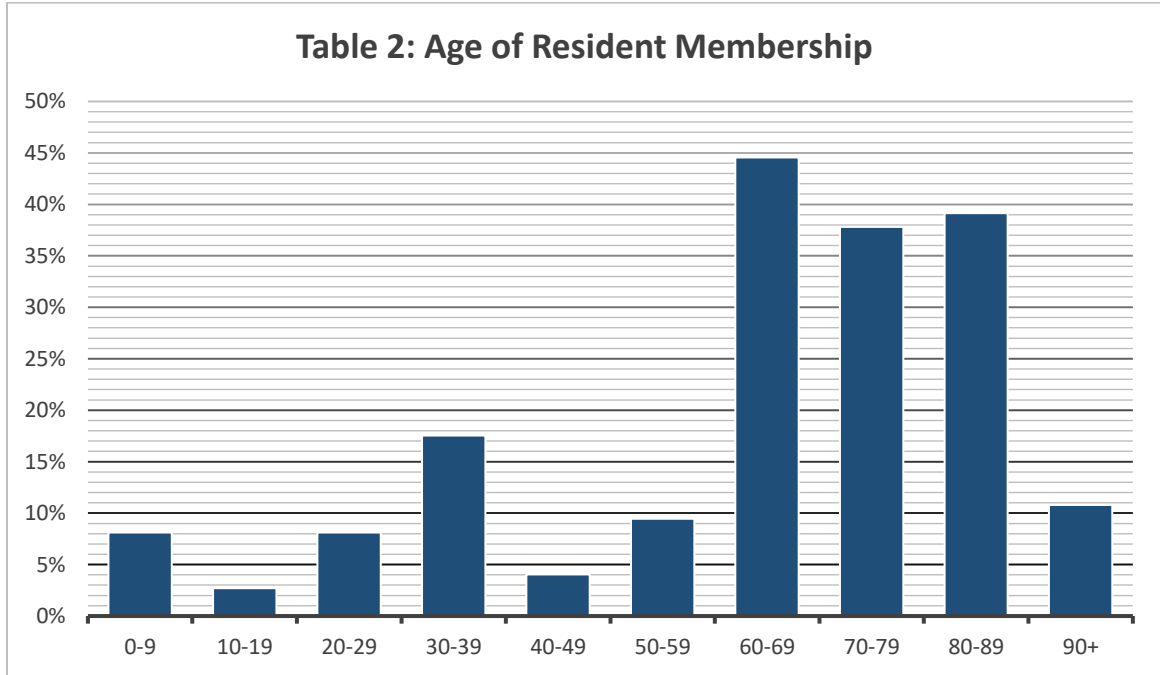
In September 2012, the Deacons voted to cease the 8:30AM service effective the first Sunday of Advent in November. Since that time, we only conduct one service at 11:00AM in the sanctuary. Our music minister describes the service as “unified worship—blended inter-generationally, musically, artistically, and theologically.”¹³ Others, including myself, would simply describe the service as “traditional.”

A recent worship study produced the following attendance results:

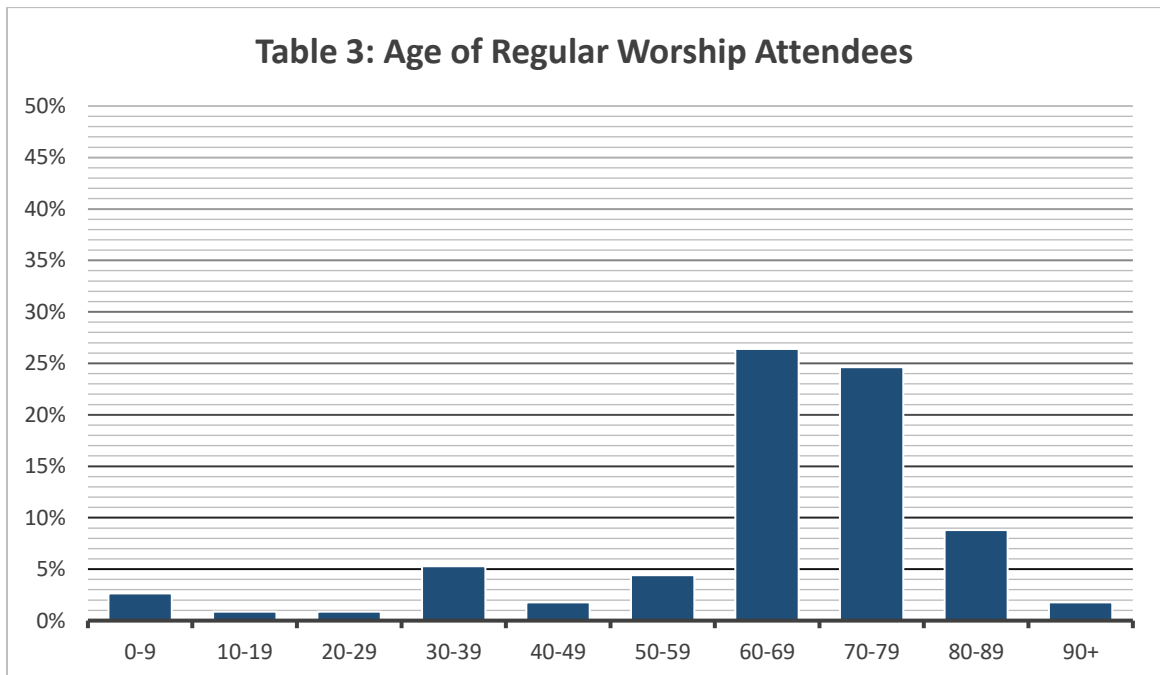


13. Jim Burnett, interviewed by author, Asheville, NC, May 4, 2016.

A demographic study of the resident membership produced the following age results:



The age of those who attend worship regularly (two or more times per month) is as follows:



More statistical information on Calvary members, including education background, employment status, spiritual history, church involvement, as well as

Christian beliefs and practices can be found in the results of the pre- and post- project surveys located in Appendix E.2.

Overview of Calvary Baptist Church

One may attribute a variety of reasons for the increase in age and decline in attendance at Calvary. Certainly the number of deaths, physical moves, and the changed demographics of the church are enormous factors. In addition, the church suffered a string of tumultuous events prior to my arrival that resulted in an identity crisis and lack of stable leadership. Factions emerged as did a severe lack of trust in pastoral authority. The church was divided on many fronts. This produced multiple church splits. During these splits the majority of young adults moved their membership. The morale of Calvary suffered and ministries the church had been involved with for decades came to a halt. For these reasons, I have ironically referred to my tenure as the “unintentional intentional interim.” My ministry at Calvary has been helping her heal from an immense period of grief, find an identity, recover a sense of spiritual formation, and forge a path for the future.

Theologically, the church identifies herself as moderate. Our denominational alignment is with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Financially, we give to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship on the local, state and national level. A minute portion of our budget—less than one percent—is given to the Buncombe Baptist Association.

Calvary has been blessed with large facilities. Currently they are being used more than at any other time in the church’s history. Our church is the home for two educational co-ops, Provision Asheville—the fastest growing food pantry in Buncombe County—a Girl Scout troop, a Zumba class, the Land of Sky Symphonic Band, the regional office

for Child Evangelism Fellowship, numerous AA and NA groups, and two church plants with whom we regularly join in worship and ministry. In addition, we have revitalized many of our mission efforts. Partnering with the Baptist Student Union of Stetson University, our Vacation Bible School has seen a revival in attendance. We have also embraced a new prison ministry that allows inmates to worship with us on Sundays, provides a meal, and assists inmates in becoming stable after their release. We have sponsored a family through Homeward Bound, helping them secure adequate housing. Finally, the church has endured a renewed interest in global missions through purchasing a house for a needy family in Honduras and travelling to Nada, Kentucky, Knoxville, Tennessee, and Bethel, Nicaragua to engage in hands-on mission projects.

Still, Sunday morning worship continues to be the central point of connection and involvement for the majority of our congregation. We no longer have a weekly Wednesday night bible study because of the growing number of senior adults who are unable to drive in the evenings. Nor do we have a Sunday evening service. Nearly all of the spiritual formation that takes place at Calvary happens on Sunday morning in the Sunday School and worship hours. This project used our Sunday School and worship to engage the congregation in what it means to follow Jesus as a church through the seasons of the Christian year.

The Ministry Question

In April 2016 I submitted a project proposal aimed at using the seasons of the Christian year as a catalyst for annual church ministry planning. When the project was conceived, I was under the impression that members of Calvary had a firm grasp of the

Christian year. After all, I had consistently preached from the lectionary and referenced the seasons in worship throughout my tenure. Moreover, one of my predecessors had utilized Christian year worship—though not to the same extent as I—by observing seasons such as Advent and Lent as well as incorporating the colors of various seasons in worship through a pulpit parament. However, my assumption in the project proposal that our church understood the Christian year proved to be false. In subsequent discussions with Calvary members following my proposal submission, I learned that many people did not comprehend why we order our worship by the Christian year or the spiritual purpose for each of its seasons. I conducted an informal poll, asking people to define the Christian year. Answers included:

- “It is a sermon series you like to preach.”
- “I don’t know much about it except what you tell us from the pulpit.”
- “All I know is we celebrate Christmas, Easter, et cetera.”
- “The progression of Jesus’ life from birth to ascension.”
- “A system of scriptures assigned to each Sunday of the year as a guide line.”
- “A certain time in the year to do things as they were done in earlier times.”
- “I’m unsure how to answer that question.”
- “It sounds like something only Lutheran and Episcopal churches do.”
- “I can’t even spell it, let alone say it! I don’t know what it means!”
(This individual was referring to the “Liturgical Year,” an alternate name given to the Christian year.)
- Multiple people responded by simply stating, “I don’t know.”

This informal poll verified my timely discovery that no one had ever explained

why our church observed the Christian year and what part it plays in telling God's story. I say "timely" because I believe it would have been a disservice to myself, our church, and my project had I proceeded with my proposal of connecting the Christian year with ministry planning given the lack of understanding most people possessed regarding the purpose of each season. Therefore, in consultation with my advisor, I proposed a new project aimed at educating Calvary on the value of following the Christian year in worship and its potential for spiritual renewal.

The component of spiritual renewal comes directly from the informal poll cited above. If congregants simply viewed our liturgy as "as sermon series you like to preach," then I am confident little formation was taking place toward understanding our place in the story of God as told through worship. Perhaps our worship had dwindled to the sad state expressed by Robert Webber concerning modern churches:

In recent years, worship and spirituality have been separated from a storied theology and moved off into a life of their own, drifting toward a self-focused narcissism. Worship, instead of being God's story sung, proclaimed, and enacted, has been grounded in the self—what "I" do for God. And spirituality, instead of being an embodiment of God's story in all of life, has turned inward into the journey to self. Only the recovery of God's story as the source of both worship and spirituality can correct the dangerous trend of self-focused worship and spirituality.¹⁴

Webber continues by stating "only the recovery of God's story" will produce true spiritual formation. Indeed, that was the focal point for this project—to recover God's story in the worship of Calvary by utilizing the Christian year. To clarify, I was not

14. Robert Webber, "What We've Learned Along the Way: Reformed Worship through Twenty Years of Liturgical Change," *Reformed Worship*, September, 2005, accessed May 5, 2016, <http://www.reformedworship.org/>.

aiming to produce spiritual growth during the eight weeks of this project. My goal was to introduce the foundational idea that spiritual renewal would take place in a church that followed the seasons of the year.

Admittedly, however, even worship patterned by the Christian year can often become stale and spiritual formation, accordingly, will not occur. This is especially true when we do the same thing Sunday after Sunday without rhyme or reason as to why. Why do we celebrate Epiphany? Why do we sing certain hymns during Advent? Why do we have an Old Testament and a New Testament lesson? Why are they called lessons? Why do we often have a time of confession and prayer? Why do the paramment colors change periodically? And why can they not be red or green during Christmas?

Most churches have traditions such as these that have been practiced for decades. For example, every year on the first Sunday evening in December, Calvary has a grandiose Hanging of the Green service; except no one knows why this service takes place, even though it has taken place for thirty years! They just know we recite the same readings about poinsettias and evergreens, listen to an orchestra play our favorite holiday tunes, decorate a tree with Chrismons (“Whatever they are!?” some might say), and enjoy cookies and coffee afterwards. Still, this service takes place every year because it has become tradition.

There is nothing inherently wrong with traditions. They are actually very important in the life of the church. Many traditions offer continuity and stability to our lives. This was certainly the case following the traumatic events of September 11, 2001. After that tragic day many churches experienced an influx of visitors; families began

eating meals together more frequently; and traditions of the season—from the World Series to Thanksgiving—took on greater meaning.

Consequently, if traditions become void of meaning—as has been the case for each of the aforementioned in the past sixteen years—and we have no understanding or reference point for *why* we practice them, then their purpose and significance quickly fade away in the routine of our day to day lives. Such can be said for Calvary’s annual Hanging of the Green service and our worship in general. It is important we know why we worship in the manner we do. It is likewise important we understand what is taking place in our worship as we recite the events of God’s story through the various seasons.

Delia Halverson has written “when someone else’s meaning of worship is forced on us and we have no understanding of it, then it is not meaningful to our lives.”¹⁵ Perhaps members of Calvary would have said my “meaning of worship” had been forced on them and they had little to no understanding of the Christian year that ordered our worship Sunday after Sunday. Personally, I believe embracing the Christian year brings enormous meaning to our worship. It connects us with the saving work of God in the past and propels us toward the future. Its impact is doubled when we consider the spiritual formation that can take place by following the Christian year. Be it Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, or Ordinary Time, we follow the life of Jesus and understand how his life patterns our lives. What better formation is there than that? Conversely, if worshippers do not know *why* we should be formed in Jesus then they will never know *how* to be formed in Jesus; and if they never understand how the Christian year leads us to be formed in

15. Delia Halverson. *Teaching and Celebrating the Christian Seasons: A Guide for Pastors, Teachers, and Worship Leaders* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 4.

Jesus, then they will never embrace it completely. However, as Halverson continues, “when we understand just why we do certain things in worship, we grow stronger in our spiritual lives.”¹⁶ Even though members of Calvary had substantial exposure to the Christian year, they had never been educated on its purpose or value. This project served as the stimulus for educating the church on the Christian year along with its spiritual benefits.

Personal Rationale for Implementing this Project

While this project emerged out of a misperception on my part as to our church’s understanding of the Christian year, there is much more to my rationale than just an egregious false assumption. I fell in love with the Christian year during divinity school when I was exposed to it by my preaching professor. When I became pastor of my first church, I followed the seasons in worship and preaching. It was not until a traumatic personal experience, however, that the Christian year became very real for me. During a very devastating time in my personal life, I felt everything begin to spiral out of control. No longer in the pastorate and dealing with a crumbling marriage, I fell into a deep depression. I began attending a church that followed the Christian year. Through the emphasis of each season I began to see myself in God’s story. Moreover, Christian year worship offered me a path toward God even when I felt I had none. Along with British theologian John Colwell, who experienced similar adversities, I could easily convey:

When you really cannot pray yourself, when every form of ‘felt’ experience has fled, when you are despairing of yourself and despairing of God, then the prayers of others become precious...[in that moment] I discovered the prayers of the

16. Ibid, 1.

Church, some ancient and some contemporary, that expressed concisely and profoundly what I would have wanted to pray myself if I had been able.¹⁷

Through the prayers, the music, the sermons, even the colors, I was able to place myself in the story of God's redemptive work. The seasons of the Christian year became very alive for me because in the stories of the seasons I found my story. I could pray with David, "create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10). I could declare with Paul, "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). And with James I could rest assured that the testing of my faith would produce endurance, so that I might be mature and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:3-4). In the darkest of times my spiritual compass became the saving work of God as told through the stories of the Christian year.

Educator Bruce Lockerbie believes the Christian year has helped many followers of Jesus find redemption and grow spiritually mature. His case for observing the Christian year includes six strong reasons which I agree with completely.¹⁸

1. *Observing the Christian year allows each Christian to fulfill one of the most basic human instincts—the chance to start all over again.* Renewal is at the heart of the gospel: new birth, new life, new hope. Throughout the Christian year we are presented with opportunities to refocus and restart our lives in light of the hope we find in Jesus.
2. *The cycle of the three years provides principles and discipline for Christians.* Because we are inherently weak creatures, we need a framework that will support our faith by providing instruction on how to live out our faith. This framework consists of many moving parts, including study, meditation, worship, confession, assurance, and a host of other spiritual disciplines, all of which can be found by diligently observing the Christian year.

17. Colwell, John. *The Rhythm of Doctrine: A Liturgical Sketch of Christian Faith and Faithfulness*. (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007), 32.

18. D. Bruce Lockerbie, D. B. "Living and Growing in the Christian Year," *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*. Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Wilhoit, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 136-139.

3. *We are allowed opportunity to walk with God's people through history, to "walk where Jesus walked" by means of observing the Christian year.* God ordained the annual celebration of Passover so that Israelites would remember God's saving act of bringing them out of Egypt. For a very similar reason of remembering God's saving act, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" when enacting the Lord's Supper. Such remembrances of sacred events help us transcend time, appropriating the meaning of those events. Holding a palm branch and shouting "Hosanna" on Palm Sunday can transport modern worshippers to the time when others shouted the same greeting over 2,000 years ago. Or dressing as a lion while reenacting the story of Daniel can help teach children the meaning of faith. In a time of great biblical illiteracy, the Christian year can serve as a textbook for learning the magnificent stories of God.
4. *Observing the entirety of the Christian year means marking seasons rather than just days.* In recent years the secular influence on Christendom has reduced festival seasons into mere days. For example, Christmas, a season of twelve days, and Easter, a season of fifty days, have been watered down to only a one Sunday observance for many churches. Some churches even fly into these observances without having given a moments glance at the preparatory seasons of Advent and Lent that precede them. But for those who choose to follow the Christian year, its cycle of extending otherwise compressed days into a long-term period of remembrance and celebration, provides substantial opportunities for growth and learning.
5. *Observing the year sets Christians apart from secularists for whom the holy-days (seasons) have become sheer holidays.* While the rest of the world resumes its normal schedule in the aftermath of a holiday such as Easter, those who follow the Christian year can declare a transformative experience that lasts long after the pomp and circumstance has ended. By proclaiming an annual observance of holy days beginning with Advent and not New Year's Day, one may openly affirm why life is dictated by Jesus and not by a civic or "Hallmark" calendar.
6. *Marking the Christian year gives time to develop a biblical and theological understanding of Jesus.* For example, before arriving at resurrection morning, those who observe Lent and Holy Week will have a deeper theological foundation and stronger biblical knowledge of the paschal mystery. This, in turn, will give rise to a greater celebration of the miraculous event of Easter.

Indeed, the Christian year is more than just a mere calendar to follow. It is a way of marking time that speaks to the desperate plea of our souls for redemption and fulfillment that can only come through Jesus. As Benedictine nun Joan Chittister has

described, the Christian year engages “the whole person, to bring the Christian life to fullness, the heart to alert, and the soul to focus.”¹⁹

I would add that observing the Christian year connects us to every believer who has gone before us and everyone who will come after us. Nevertheless, many Baptist churches, including Calvary, fail to realize this connection. A springtime shopping excursion to find materials for Pentecost made this very real to me. During a visit to the Baptist based retail store, Lifeway, I found a wealth of material on Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and even the Fourth of July, but nothing on Pentecost. When I inquired for assistance, the salesperson looked at me dumbfounded. With an inquisitive stare he said rather definitively, “I’m sorry sir. We do not carry anything like that here.” I found this to be a very sad commentary! By ignoring the radical stories of God, such as Pentecost, our worship—our very faith—is in turmoil and renders us disconnected from the global community of believers.

I am encouraged, however, that in recent years many Baptist churches have taken up the mantle of following the Christian year. Amy Butler, Pastor of the historic Riverside Church in New York City, says, “liturgy makes the church attractive because it fosters a sense of community...reciting Scripture and participating in ancient practices intentionally promotes congregational unity.”²⁰ She goes on to say “that sense of connectedness is magnified when participants remember that other congregations are following the same practices.”²¹ Steve Harmon, professor of Christian theology at

19. Chittister, 4.

20. Jim White, “A New Book Claims More Baptists Will Embrace Liturgical Forms of Worship as Inherently Missional,” November 4, 2013, accessed May 4, 2016, <https://baptistnews.com/>.

21. Ibid.

Gardner-Webb University, says the increase of Baptist churches utilizing the Christian year “represents an increasingly widespread Baptist recognition that our tradition by itself is not sufficient.”²² Rodney Kennedy, pastor and co-editor of *Gathering Together: Baptists at Work in Worship*, believes Baptists will increasingly welcome Christian year worship as they are exposed to it. “Baptist people will be receptive to it, but it just takes time,” he said.²³ My purpose in this ministry project was to walk in the footsteps of those pronouncements, educating Calvary Baptist Church about why we follow the beautiful seasons of the Christian year which speak directly to our faith and connect us to the larger traditions of the global church.

Finally, my rationale for following the Christian year is that I simply love stories. I love how they unlock new worlds and adventures. I love how they speak to mind and heart causing us to weep and laugh and think; how they speak the exact words we want to say when our words seem silent; and how they change us from the inside out. All great stories do this—and there is no greater story than the story of God through Christ Jesus. Observing the Christian year allows us to enter that story over and over and over again.

Resource and Literature Review

Human Resources

The congregation of Calvary Baptist Church served as the primary human resource for this project. Resources required from the congregation included their commitment to be a part of the project, presence in Sunday School, worship, completion

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

of the study workbook, and completion of the pre- and post- project surveys. Those choosing to be in the Positive Control Group (explained further in the Project Description) were also subject to a pre-project meeting and post-project interview.

Calvary's music minister, Jim Burnett, agreed to work closely with me in planning worship during this project. He and I met weekly during its implementation to create a worship service where all aspects were congruent with the particular season being studied on that Sunday. Vicki Sorenson and Lin Berrier (congregational lay leaders) served in Jim's absence on October 23rd and October 30th, respectively. Individuals chosen by Jim and me assisted in leading worship by reading Scripture, providing special music, collecting evaluations, and operating audio/video equipment.

All five of Calvary's adult Sunday School leaders agreed to teach the lessons from the study workbook. Their participation was invaluable. Without their involvement a large part of the project would have been excluded.

Physical Resources

The campus of Calvary provided ample meeting space for this project. Worship occurred each Sunday in the sanctuary. The Positive Control Group pre-project meeting and post-project interview took place in the conference room. The church office provided the needed resources for publishing the study workbook.

Financial Resources

Two financial burdens were associated with this project. First, the printing of the study workbook; namely paper, ink, and binding. I submitted a request to the Logan-

Lawrence Foundation, an endowment of Calvary Baptist Church, which provides funds for charitable, religious, and educational purposes with a particular emphasis on outreach and mission projects. The request was denied by the Board of Trustees, who chose instead to fund the printing of the workbook through the church's general budget. Ninety workbooks were printed before the project implementation and twenty following week four. Many people asked if they could share a copy with a neighbor. The extra books were made available for that purpose.

The second expense was the video recording and editing of each worship service to be used on YouTube. I personally gave a love offering to one of our members who donated their camera and time to make this part of the project a success.

Literature Review

The comprehensive list of primary and secondary texts, commentaries, and articles that informed my understanding of the Christian year can be found in the bibliography. These texts range across a variety of denominational backgrounds. The majority have been published in the last two decades. Particular attention was given to those texts that incorporated an educational and spiritual formation component to the Christian year.

Chief among the texts that informed this project were Robert Webber's *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year*, Bobby Gross' *Living the Christian Year: Time to Inhabit the Story of God*, Joan Chittister's *The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life*, Delia Halverson's *Teaching and Celebrating the Christian Seasons: A Guide for Pastors, Teachers, and Worship Leaders*,

and Edward Shepard's *Review and Expositor* article "Observing the Christian Year as a Means of Facilitating Spiritual Growth." Each of these texts was instrumental in my spiritual understanding of the Christian year. I drew heavily upon them in writing the study workbook and sermon series.

Notre Dame STEP Program

During the progression of my early research I discovered an online course titled "The Liturgical Year," a course offered through the University of Notre Dame Satellite Theological Education Program (STEP). Using digital technology, STEP provides theological education to pastoral ministers and lay persons across the United States. The program is part of the larger Notre Dame Institute for Church Life which offers research, faith formation, and leadership development in Catholic life.

The purpose of "The Liturgical Year" course was to make students conscious of the way liturgical time is used by God for our redemption by exploring liturgical time, its theological meaning, and its liturgical expression.²⁴ Believing the course would add value to my study of the Christian year, I enrolled and completed the six-week online class. Course content was presented each week via online video lectures and required readings. The structure for the course was as follows.

- Orientation to STEP and Reflections on the Liturgical Year
- Unit 1—Introduction to Liturgical Time
- Unit 2—The Mystery of the Incarnation: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany
- Unit 3—The Mystery of the Resurrection: Lent, Easter, Pentecost

24. For more information on STEP and "The Liturgical Year" course consult: <http://step.nd.edu/registration/complete-catalog/liturgical-year/>.

- Unit 4—Discovering God’s Presence Through the Day and the Week: Sunday and the Liturgy of the Hours
- Unit 5—Discovering God’s Presence Through Celebrations of His Holy Ones: The Feasts of Mary and The Saints

Participation requirements for the course included weekly viewing of the lecture material, reading assignments, minimum two contributions to weekly forum discussions and chat sessions, and a weekly written assignment as ascribed by the facilitator. Upon completion of all course work, I was presented with a Certificate of Completion and awarded twenty-five contact hours toward the STEP Certificate in Catholic Theology for Liturgy (Appendix G). While I will not be completing the other requirements for a degree, this course provided immense knowledge of the Christian year by allowing me to interact with persons who have been observing the year much longer than myself. In addition, I have made new colleagues across the country with whom I am still engaged in conversation.

CHAPTER TWO

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The aim of this project was to educate the congregation of Calvary Baptist on the purpose of eight seasons in the Christian year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time; and the spiritual value of following these seasons in worship. This was accomplished through Sunday School education, weekly worship, and a study workbook. The project commenced on October 2, 2016 and finished on November 20, 2016. Pre- and post- project surveys were administered on September 25th and November 27th, respectively. By design, the project came to completion the Sunday before the First Sunday of Advent and the beginning of a new Christian year. Should the congregation choose to observe the Christian year in worship, a seamless transition would take place.

Ahead of the project, participants were given a study workbook that contained educational information, worship insights, sermon outlines, and prescribed activities related to each of the eight seasons (Appendix C.3). For the purpose of relating the Christian year to the congregation, I titled the study workbook and sermon series “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: A Study in the Seasons of the Christian Year.” This title emerged from the classic hymn by Fanny Crosby, whose lyrics related well to the project objective. Each worship service during the project incorporated the lyrics of this hymn. Crosby’s formative years were spent in Methodist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches, all of which follow the Christian year. It should not be surprising, therefore, to find the words to one of her most famous hymns following the liturgical seasons.

Tell Me the Story of Jesus²⁵

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.
Tell how the angels in chorus,
Sang as they welcomed His birth,
“Glory to God in the highest!
Peace and good tidings to earth.”*

Advent
Christmas
Epiphany

Refrain:

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.*

*Fasting alone in the desert,
Tell of the days that are past,
How for our sins He was tempted,
Yet was triumphant at last.
Tell of the years of His labor,
Tell of the sorrow He bore;
He was despised and afflicted,
Homeless, rejected and poor. (Refrain)*

Lent
Holy Week

*Tell of the cross where they nailed Him,
Writhing in anguish and pain;
Tell of the grave where they laid Him,
Tell how He liveth again.
Love in that story so tender,
Clearer than ever I see;
Stay, let me weep while you whisper,
“Love paid the ransom for me.” (Refrain)*

Triduum
Good Friday
Easter

*Tell how He’s gone back to heaven,
Up to the right hand of God:
How He is there interceding
While on this earth we must trod.
Tell of the sweet Holy Spirit
He has poured out from above;
Tell how He’s coming in glory
For all the saints of His love. (Refrain)*

Ascension
Pentecost
Christ the King

25. Fanny Crosby, *Tell Me the Story of Jesus*. Baptist Hymnal. (Nashville, TN: Genovox, 1991), 122.

Project Participants

The entire congregation of Calvary participated in this project, though they were divided into two groups. The first group was the Positive Control Group (hereafter, PCG). This group completed every aspect of the project. According to the scientific definition, PCG's are control groups where the conditions guarantee a positive result.²⁶ These type groups are effective in showing the experiment functioned as planned. I chose the term because my belief was that full completion of the project would produce a positive result. The details of these results will be discussed in Chapter Five: Critical Evaluation.

The selection of the PCG began in July with an invitation letter mailed to twenty individuals of my choosing (Appendix B.1). I chose individuals whom I trusted to take the project seriously and who have shown a commitment to being present in Sunday School and worship. All five adult Sunday School teachers were invited to be a part of the group. Three responded in the affirmative. The other two taught the lessons, but chose not to be in the PCG. Ten of the other individuals who received an invitation responded in the affirmative, causing the PCG to have a total of thirteen people.

Covenanting as participants in the PCG, these individuals were present in Sunday School and worship each week and completed the study workbook and evaluations accordingly. On rare occasions, some PCG participants needed to be absent from worship. In these cases, they viewed the worship service online via the Calvary YouTube channel²⁷ and completed the evaluation form before the following Sunday.

26. Martyn Shuttleworth, "Scientific Control Group." Explorable, accessed January 21, 2017, <https://www.explorable.com/scientific-control-group>.

27. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCetyvKiSGRfW4euecwJ_Mg.

Each member of the positive control group was assigned a random number which was used for identification purposes throughout the project. All of their survey responses and interviews were strictly anonymous. The group also participated in a pre-project PCG introductory meeting on September 27th (Appendix B.3) and a post-project interview on November 29th (Appendix E.3). I provided dinner at the interview meeting as a form of gratitude for their faithfulness throughout the project.

The second group of participants was the other members of Calvary who attend Sunday School and worship. This group was exposed to the project in the same manner as the PCG, except they did not have an introductory meeting or participate in the post-project interview. They did, however, complete the pre- and post- project survey and weekly evaluations. The involvement of these individuals was purely voluntary, including completion of evaluative instruments and use of the study workbook. Unlike the PCG, no covenant was established. Though they were not given identification numbers, all of their survey responses remained anonymous. I expressed my gratitude to these individuals at the close of each worship service during the project.

Project Narrative

Communication related to the project began in early summer 2016 with a covenant between the Deacon body, Leadership Team, and myself (Appendix A). The congregation was informed about the project during the June quarterly business meeting. I also announced plans for the project multiple times from the pulpit as the implementation date drew closer. An introductory article was placed in the October

Crosspoints newsletter (Appendix F.1). Subsequent articles appeared in the November and December newsletters (Appendix F.2 and F.3).

On September 25th, the pre-project survey was distributed to the congregation at the beginning of worship (Appendix E.2). This survey measured demographics of the congregation as well as their knowledge of the Christian year, specifically the eight seasons that would be studied in the project. On the same date the congregation was given the study workbook (Appendix C.3). Also, Sunday School teachers were given notes to use in delivering each week's lesson over the course of the project (Appendix C.4).

The configuration of the project was a series of Sunday School lessons and sermons over eight weeks. Each week focused on one season in the Christian year, beginning with an introductory lesson titled Marking Time and then proceeding with Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week (Triduum), Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time. The project officially began on October 2, 2016 and continued until November 20, 2016 as illustrated below. At the conclusion of each worship service an evaluation was given to the congregation and PCG, specific to that Sunday's emphasis (Appendix E.1).

- October 2 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Marking Time”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.1)
- October 9 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Advent”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.2)
- October 16 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Christmas”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.3)
- October 23 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Epiphany”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.4)
- October 30 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Lent”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.5)

- November 6 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Holy Week (Triduum)”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.6)
- November 13 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Easter”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.7)
- November 20 “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Pentecost and Ordinary Time”
Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.8)

Each week the church office administrator designed an attractive display for the Communion table, including pulpit parament, that corresponded to the day’s lesson. On six of the eight Sundays I wore a stole that matched the liturgical color of the particular season. All worship services were video recorded and placed on YouTube the ensuing Monday.

On November 27th a post-project survey was distributed to the congregation and PCG (Appendix E.2). This survey was identical to the pre-project survey with the inclusion of questions that documented participants’ involvement over the course of the project, their desire to observe the Christian year, and their overall satisfaction with the project. The survey also included six questions related to my execution of the project.

The PCG post-project interview took place on November 29th. The questions were open-ended, asking the PCG members to evaluate the positives and negatives of the project as well as how the project could be improved (Appendix E.3).

The entire church, including the PCG, was debriefed on the results of the project during the December 11th quarterly business meeting (Appendix H).

Project Calendar

The following calendar details the timeline of this project.

June 7, 2016	Project covenant given to Deacons (Appendix A)
June 12	Project introduction at business meeting
June 13	Project covenant given to Leadership Team (Appendix A).
July 5	Requested financial support to publish workbook from the Logan-Lawrence Foundation (Request was denied and decision was made to take funds from general budget)
July 28	PCG invitation letters mailed (Appendix B.1)
August 21	Positive Control Group finalized
September 6	First day of STEP online course with Notre Dame
September 25	Pre-Project Survey completed; Project Workbook distributed
September 27	PCG Introductory Meeting (Appendix B.3)
October	Introductory article in <i>Crosspoints</i> newsletter (Appendix F.1)
October 2	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Marking Time” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.1) “Marking Time” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
October 4	Last day of STEP online course with Notre Dame
October 9	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Advent” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.2) “Advent” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
October 16	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Christmas” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.3) “Christmas” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
October 23	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Epiphany” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.4) “Epiphany” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
October 30	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Lent” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.5) “Lent” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
November	Article in <i>Crosspoints</i> newsletter (Appendix F.2)
November 6	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Holy Week (Triduum)” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.6) “Holy Week” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
November 13	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Easter” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.7) “Easter” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
November 20	“Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Pentecost and Ordinary Time” Sunday School, Worship, and Sermon (Appendix D.8) “Pentecost/OT” evaluation completed (Appendix E.1)
November 27	Post-project survey completed (Appendix E.2)
November 29	PCG post-project meeting and interviews completed (Appendix E.3)
December	Article in <i>Crosspoints</i> newsletter (Appendix F.3)
December 11	“Debriefing Statement” distributed (Appendix H)

Project Goals

The primary goal for this project was to educate the congregation of Calvary on the value of following the Christian year as a means for spiritual renewal in worship. There is great spiritual potential in observing the Christian year. First, the church is able to engage in the continuous cycle of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Such engagement prompts individuals to live out the narrative of Christ in their own lives. Second, the use of the Christian year offers opportunity for personal confession, repentance, and rededication to pattern our lives as disciples of Jesus. Third, participation in the Christian year connects the church ecumenically to the larger community of believers.

As outlined in the proposal for this project, listed below were the project's goals. Their success—or lack thereof—will be discussed in chapter five.

Theological Goals

- A. Participants will develop a deeper understanding of how the story of our church and God's story are interwoven.
- B. Participants will gain a fuller knowledge of the Christological significance associated with each of the Christian year seasons.
- C. Participants will grow spiritually in their understanding of worship.

Contextual Goals

- A. Participants will be taught eight specific seasons of the Christian year.
- B. Participants will be able to distinguish the seasons and how each one relates to the other in worship and spirituality.
- C. Participants will make a decision whether or not to follow the Christian year as a means for worship at Calvary Baptist Church.

Practical Goals

- A. Participants will be able to verbalize a clear understanding of each Christian season through their participation in the project.
- B. Participants will be able to apply the spiritual component of each season to their private devotional life.
- C. Participants will be able to apply the spiritual component of each season to their worship in the church.

In due time, I hope to complete my original proposal of connecting the Christian year to annual ministry planning. I believe this project has laid a solid foundation for accomplishing that goal.

Project Delimitations

Everyone has heard the proverb “time is money.” Certainly time is a valuable resource that must be used wisely. As was outlined in the Introduction to this paper, how we spend our time speaks volumes about our priorities. Often we find ourselves in conflicted time. For example, when our schedule is booked simultaneously for a meeting at work and family engagement, time forces us to choose between the two. The choice reveals our priorities. Furthermore, because there are a limited number of hours in the day, as well as our lives, time prevents us from accomplishing everything we desire. As we age, we are faced with this reality even more. Our bodies simply do not function in the same manner they did when we were younger. It is realizing these limitations of time that shape our focus and help us create priorities.

Why all this talk of time? Because not only is time a central focus of this project—time in the sense of the Christian year—but time also proved to be my greatest delimitation.

First, during my doctoral studies over the last three years, my wife and I have delighted in the birth of two children. Time certainly forced me to choose how much energy would be spent on this project and how much would be given to helping raise two newborns.

Second, my project changed course in April 2016. As explained in The Ministry Question, I submitted a second proposal after discovering a liability in my original proposal. Thereafter, time formed how much opportunity I had to build and implement this project.

Third, study of the Christian year is deep and wide. Centuries of literature have been written on every aspect of the year. Time limited how much of the Christian year my project could adequately handle.

Fourth, this project was limited to a certain time period of eight weeks and focused only on eight seasons. In retrospect, I believe a successful study of the Christian seasons should actually walk the church through the entire year, engaging them in each season as they occur. If time had permitted, I would have chosen to conduct this project during the course of the entire Christian year. However, time shaped by the Gardner-Webb School of Divinity prevented such a large undertaking.

On a very personal note, my father suffered a stroke during the latter half of October 2016, the prime month of this project's implementation. The stroke paralyzed his left leg, rendering him unable to walk. Much of my time, thereafter, was spent visiting my parents. It is difficult to say if the emotional stress from that ongoing event has played any part in my final report, but I have certainly felt the strain.

Finally, I believe my evaluation instruments did not provide sufficient data to judge the microscopic success of this project. While the overall success of the project can be clearly seen, there are detailed results that I feel were not adequately measured. I will discuss this more in my analysis, but, suffice to say, when my project changed course, time limited my ability to create the kind of surveys and evaluations I would have hoped to employ.

CHAPTER THREE

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

At the age of twelve I made a public decision to follow Jesus. This culminated in my baptism. I stood in the water with my pastor and he pronounced over me, “Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life.” In those words, he proclaimed Paul’s theology of baptism which defined my new position in Christ:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him (Romans 6:3-8).

Paul expounded further to the church at Colossae:

For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses (Colossians 2:9-13).

Finally, Paul wrote to the Galatians:

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:19-20).

Paul’s theology of baptism includes the words “died *with* him,” buried *with* him,”

“raised *with* him,” “united *with* him,” “live *with* him,” “together *with* him.” To put it another way, everything that happened to Jesus happens to us. We experience this through our baptism: “Buried *with* Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life.” Webber writes, “In the simple act of baptism made in faith, we enter into the profundity of the meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection. Christ enters into us and we into him.”²⁸ This connection with Jesus is what brings about our salvation, but it certainly does not end there. From that point forward we are called to live in the pattern of Christ’s life, his story becoming our story.

For Paul, baptism is not merely a means of identity with Jesus or a symbol of one’s salvific position. Baptism into Jesus, Paul insists, is inclusion in the events of Christ’s death and resurrection. “Therefore,” Paul said, “we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Accordingly, baptism functions as an initiatory rite of passage. Those who experience baptism are transformed from their existence in sin to a new people ruled by Christ.²⁹

The concept of being *in* Christ was vital for Paul. He addressed many of his letters to the saints “in Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Galatians 1:6, Ephesians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1). He also understood a spiritual transference from death to life takes place for believers when they place their faith *in* Christ: “For the death that he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the

28. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time*, 21.

29. Richard Carlson, “The Role of Baptism in Paul’s Thought,” in “Baptism.” *Interpretation* (July 1993): 258.

life that he lives, he lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:10-11). The “life that he lives” is the same life faithful believers are called to live—lives devoted to God. Of course that takes time as Paul knew very well: “Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Philippians 3:12).

This pattern of being one with Jesus, his story becoming our story, is expressed in Scripture and passed down through the centuries by worship of the church in the Christian year. By observing the seasons of the year we experience the biblical directive of being conformed to Christ. For example, during Advent we prepare for the birth of Jesus and our own renewal as his followers. At Christmas we celebrate the joy of Jesus’ birth who is God-*with-us*, born into our lives and communities. Through the season after Epiphany we are reminded of our own baptism and calling as we read of Jesus’ baptism and his call of disciples. Lent summons our need for confession, repentance, and commitment to die *with* Christ. Easter and the Great Fifty Days that follow celebrate the resurrection of Christ and our own ultimate resurrection over death. At Pentecost we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to carry out Christ’s commands. Ordinary Time, especially, teaches us how to live *in* Christ as we learn what it means to be the church—Christ’s body—continuing his redemptive work in the world. It is through all these seasons, Webber asserts, that “Christ is formed *within* us.”³⁰

The church is called to proclaim the saving message of Jesus that takes place through his life, death, and resurrection. The source of our faith and the one who gives

30. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time*, 24.

definitive meaning to our days is, indeed, Jesus in whom we are baptized. The transformation that occurs in baptism is to be lived out every hour of every day of every month of every year. This is what the spiritual purpose of the Christian year is all about. Therefore, any proper explanation of the Christian year begins with Jesus.

Biblical Foundations

The Christological Centrality of the Christian Year

Adolf Adam defined the Christian year as “the commemorative celebration, throughout the calendar year, of the saving deeds God accomplished in Jesus Christ.”³¹ As every baptized follower of Jesus knows, the “saving deeds” God accomplished through Jesus are historical events recorded in Scripture and made real in the life of God’s people. These events are not fable or myth, but concrete acts God performed in order to reconcile humanity. The supreme act of God’s reconciling deeds is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That event not only marks what it means to be *with* and *in* Christ, but actually marks time: from “before Christ” (BC) to *anno domini* (AD, “in the year of our Lord”). Even more significantly, the death and resurrection of Christ are at the heart of what constitutes being and living as the church day to day. We remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus every time we proclaim the *paschal* mystery which gives rise to our faith: “Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!”

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council declared that the Christian year unfolds the whole mystery of Christ, from the incarnation and

31. Adolf Adam, *The Liturgical Year: Its History and Its Meaning after the Reform of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), vii.

birth until the ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of blessed hope and the coming of the Lord.³² We call this the *paschal mystery*. It is the recounting of Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul uses the term to describe what took place with Jesus on the cross, his ultimate resurrection, and rationale for celebrating the Passover festival. Scholars refer to that passage as the first recording of an Easter celebration.

The paschal mystery is the point on which the annual cycles of the Christian calendar hinge. This makes every Sunday a declaration of the whole mystery of Christ. It is as if the entire story of Jesus is too great to consume in one bite. We need time to absorb every morsel and, at times, to just chew on how the mystery of Christ sustains us. It cannot be done in one sitting, but needs to marinate within us over time.

As Christians prepared to celebrate the passage of two millennia since the birth of Jesus, Pope John Paul II wrote:

In Christianity time has a fundamental importance. Within the dimension of time the world was created; within it the history of salvation unfolds, finding its culmination in the “fullness of the time” of the Incarnation, and its goal in the glorious return of the Son of God at the end of time. In Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, time becomes a dimension of God, who is himself eternal. From this relationship of God with time there arises a duty to sanctify time.³³

This uncovers one of the unique features in the Christian conception of time which is the major moment *kairos* (from which we get the word *crisis*) is the vehicle

32. “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963, The Second Vatican Council, Chapter 5, Section 102,” Vatican Archive, accessed October 25, 2016, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

33. “The Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000, Chapter 2, Section 10,” Vatican Archive, accessed October 25, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_10111994_tertio-millennio-adveniente.html.

through which all other *kairoi* moments find their meaning.³⁴ The primary *kairos* event in Scripture is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His life gives meaning to all prior and future events. God's work through Jesus becomes the central act in Christian time. Paul developed this idea in his letter to the Colossians. He declared that Christ is the creator of all things (1:6), the one in whom all things hold together (1:17), and the one through whom all things are reconciled (1:20).

From Christ, the center, three kinds of time are discerned. First, in his life the essential Old Testament expectations of a Messiah and a Messianic kingdom are fulfilled. In Christ, the *kairos* event had occurred. Jesus himself announced "the time has come; the kingdom of God is near" (Mark 1:15). Second, the coming of Jesus brings the time of salvation. His death and resurrection changed the course of human destiny where death and evil would no longer have the final word. Paul wrote, "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15). Later he wrote to Timothy, "Grace was given to us before the ages, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9b-10). Third, Jesus intensifies anticipatory time. This aspect of time is based on the resurrection, ascension, and the promise of Jesus' second coming. Because of this time humanity now lives in *chronos* time (from which we get the word *chronology*).³⁵ This is the time between the saving work of God on the cross and the "appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time" (1 Timothy 6:14-15). To be sure,

34. "What Is the Christian Year?" Worship Training, accessed October 25, 2016, <https://www.worshiptraining.com/media/what-is-the-christian-year/>.

35. Ibid.

Christ is the center of all history: everything before Christ finds its meaning in Christ, everything after Christ points back to Christ, and everything to come will be defined by Christ.

This threefold understanding of time plays an important role in the life of the church. The *kairos* event of Christ is the context in which our worship takes place and, therefore, gives meaning to what we do in worship. Time is sanctified by enacting the story of Jesus over and over again. This sanctification informs our past, transforms our present, and shapes our future. Honestly, this happens in any church that proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ, whether or not they adopt the Christian year calendar. However, for those churches that choose to follow the Christian year, the opportunity for their worship to remain centered on Jesus is intensified, as is the prospect for significant spiritual renewal as congregants pattern their lives *in, with, and through* Jesus.

The Significance of Passover as an Annual Festival

The idea that one central *kairos* event shapes the identity of a people is not confined to Christendom. Outside of the *Pascha*, a closely related event is the Jewish Passover. Similarly, the Passover event defines a people and lends credence for annual feasts and celebrations such as found in the Christian year.

Leviticus records Yahweh's command for the Israelites to commemorate a number of festivals as "holy convocations," including Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Festival of Booths (Leviticus 23:2-44). These are not

festivals intended to be celebrated only once. Yahweh instructs for these festivals to continue into the foreseeable future. Four times the phrase is repeated “this is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your settlements” (vv. 14, 21, 31, 41). The statutes Yahweh decrees are to become markers for the Israelites throughout subsequent generations in order that the stories of God’s saving deeds will be passed on.

Central to the list of festivals is Passover. The term “Passover” is a transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew *pesach*. In biblical tradition it refers to the passage in Exodus where the angel of death passed over the Hebrew houses marked with the blood of a sacrificed lamb (Exodus 12). To those whom the angel passed over their house, God delivered from Egypt and led to the Promised Land. For this reason, the remembrance of God’s redeeming act is referred to as “Pass-over” in the Old and New Testaments. Though in the New Testament, as will be discussed later, the meaning of Passover takes on greater significance in light of Jesus’ death and resurrection; as it should, given its *kairos* time.

In Exodus 12 Yahweh gives instructions to Moses and Aaron regarding the observance of Passover, including the command to remember it year to year:

This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance... You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children (Exodus 12:14, 24).

Furthermore, this ordinance is so vitally important that Yahweh declares anyone who chooses *not* to observe Passover correctly ceases to be an Israelite.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel... For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land (Exodus 12:15, 19).

William Johnstone notes that a failure to observe the festival not only forfeits an individual's identity, but also their share in God's saving act of deliverance.³⁶ In other words, something more is taking place than a mere festival. There is a sacredness to this act associated with one's identity. Similarly, when we reach the New Testament, Jesus will tie the same importance to observance of the Lord's Supper.

What we witness in Exodus, writes Walter Brueggeman, is the "transformation of a specific, concrete, remembered event into a liturgical convention that is available for replication."³⁷ What is more, the instructions Yahweh gives pertaining to how the event should be replicated comes before the initial event actually takes place, making the event itself a "liturgical event," even before its inception.

Yahweh gives several instructions on how this liturgical event should play out, most notably the use of unleavened bread and how it should be eaten. The use of unleavened bread represents the slaves who left Egypt in such haste that they did not have time to wait for the yeast to cause the bread to rise. Anyone who eats this meal with leavened bread, therefore, has time to waste and does not exhibit the urgency necessary in leaving the rule of Pharaoh. "Such a casualness," Brueggemann proposes, "may suggest being at ease in Egypt, where faithful Israel must never be at ease."³⁸ Hence, the alternative of eating unleavened bread with "loins girded, sandals on your feet, staff in hand," ready to leave at a moment's notice (Exodus 12:11). To clarify, there must be

36. William Johnstone. *Exodus 1-19*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2014), 231.

37. Walter Brueggemann, *Exodus*. The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal deuterocanonical Books (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994-2004), 776.

38. Ibid, 777.

intention to this meal! If the Israelites are to share in this festal meal, then they must eat it as one “ready to go, ready to travel, ready to depart.”³⁹ The entire meal must be consumed in a way that imitates the desperate situation of hastily leaving Egypt without time to pack or prepare. To do otherwise forfeits one’s identity as an Israelite.

The same would serve true for future generations as well. Noted scholar Thomas Mann says the repetition of the exodus story is the narrative core of what it means to be an Israelite: “when celebrants put on their hats and coats and grab their walking sticks, they are not just *pretending* to be Israelites in Egypt—they *are* those Israelites—because who they are is defined by the story they are enacting.”⁴⁰ Though they are not able to remember the exodus event because they were not physically present, through ritual they will identify themselves with the story in such a way that they “transcend the temporal and spatial boundaries” separating them from the original event.⁴¹ The Seder liturgy expresses this clearly when it reads, “*We* were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt,” denoting not only participants remembrance of the story but participation in the story just as Yahweh intended.

The Seder liturgy is taken directly from Yahweh’s instructions to Moses. When the Israelites arrived in Canaan, Moses asked Yahweh what he should say when his children asked why they should keep the Lord’s commandments, remember God’s decrees, and honor God’s ordinances. Yahweh commanded Moses to answer:

We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The Lord displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and

39. Ibid.

40. Thomas W. Mann, *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1988), 90.

41. Ibid.

wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. If we diligently observe this entire commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right (Deuteronomy 6:21-25).

To keep the festival seasons was not only a way to remember God's redeeming acts, Moses was told, but the way to remain in favor with God. All translations besides the NRSV render verse 25 to say if we keep God's commandments it will be our "righteousness" (תְּשׁוּבָה, *tsědaqah*). The idea that our righteousness is tied to communal celebration of God's ordinances will become increasingly clear in 1 Corinthians 5, which I will discuss later. It will also serve as a part of the rationale for the church's continuing celebration of the liturgical seasons.

The plan Yahweh sets forth of an annual tradition in order for events to be remembered should not sound unfamiliar to us. Consider how we pass traditions on to our children and grandchildren. For example, at Christmastime many people celebrate by decorating a tree with the same ornaments from years past, the same stories are told around the same table as people enjoy the same meal year after year. These traditions help recreate Christmases past while forging Christmases future. Such traditions give meaning to our Christmas celebrations as we become one with the season in our participation, remembrance, and foretelling. The same can be said for Easter. Many people observe the same annual traditions. Even the church's Easter proclamation, much like the Seder liturgy, is the same year after year: "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!" Our worship celebrations are a way of marking our spiritual past while proclaiming our spiritual future. With each passing season in the Christian year we make a public statement in word and deed about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and its

meaning for us past, present, and future. We acknowledge the threefold kairos time of Jesus; and we participate in a global declaration of what it means to be Christian—giving witness year after year of where our life is as a result of Jesus and where our life is leading because of Jesus. To do otherwise would forfeit our identity as Christ-followers.

The Establishment of Identity

Before God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, they were under oppression from Pharaoh. Moreover, Pharaoh was in charge of their time. He decided the cycle of their days, which certainly must have seemed like an endless repetition of wearisome toil since the Israelites slaved night and day for the Egyptian ruler. Their past was governed by their circumstance of being in Egypt as was their foreseeable future. Any tradition the Israelites held on to during their Egyptian captivity was marred by despair. Passover, however, changed all of this and transformed their traditions into expressions of hope. From that point forward the Israelites could speak of God's redemption. Their past and future were now defined by God's saving act. As commentator Gerald Janzen explains, the Passover event turned "the past into a fountain of celebration to which one can return annually in remembrance and turned the future into an open prospect that one can anticipate in hope."⁴²

Similarly, Christians can point to the saving act of God in Christ as redemption from sin and death. Just as Passover became the "beginning of months" (Exodus 12:2) for Jews, so, too, does the cross of Jesus in Christendom. His death becomes the beginning of our salvation. Both events mark a new sense of time, respectively, for Jews and

42. J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 81.

Christians. The very fact that each group observes a religious calendar that differs from the secular calendar should be a sign that Jews and Christians, in their own way, testify to a saving act of God that has changed their ongoing experience of time.⁴³

In addition, God's saving acts mark new social relationships. Prior to the institution of Passover, the book of Exodus referred to the Israelites in familiar terms, as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2:24; 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5). As such, their identity was defined by their "family and clan."⁴⁴ However, with God's saving act of redemption, rescuing the Israelites from Pharaoh and delivering them to a new land, the people came to a new self-understanding. Though they still identified with their ancestors, the Israelites took on a new persona when Yahweh pronounced them to be an *`edah* (עדה), the Hebrew form of "congregation."⁴⁵ This, consequently, is the first time the word "congregation" appears in Scripture. Through the remaining chapters of Exodus, Yahweh refers to the Israelites by the same term fifteen more times. In Leviticus and Numbers, *`edah* will become a defining term for Israel.

As Yahweh outlines in Exodus 12, those who take part in the Passover feast become the *`edah*. Even though each family may eat the Passover meal in their own homes, by virtue of their communion with one another in a desire to escape Egypt, they become joined congregants through God's actions. As the Passover develops in subsequent years, the congregation grows by the inclusion of sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters. In the same way, when we reach the New Testament,

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

those who celebrate the Lord's Supper become a congregation of people brought together by inclusion in God's redemptive act of Christ's death and resurrection. In 1 Corinthians, Paul gives instructions on the Lords Supper by using the Greek term *ekklesiáasma*, which is a transliteration of the word for "congregation" (11:18). It is also where we get our root word for "church." Essentially, through his saving acts, God forms the identity of his followers as a church.

The parallels between Passover and the Lord's Supper are palpable: both bring a people group together through their inclusion in God's saving work; both use bread as a main source of sustenance in their celebrations; and both require certain prescriptive behaviors for participation. Those who celebrate Passover must do so by placing blood on the doorposts and eating in great haste. Those who partake of the Lord's Supper must be have a clean heart and be in communion with the whole church (1 Corinthians 11:17-24). The observance of an annual festival, such as Passover, and the manner in which one must partake of the feast, such as the Lord's Supper, can be connected in our observance of the Christian year. The intent of following the seasons is to pattern our lives after Jesus; in essence, to make us holy, righteous, and a part of God's congregation—this is our spiritual growth. How we choose to follow the seasons, therefore, will determine the extent of that outcome.

Observance of Festivals as a Means for Righteousness

It is not by coincidence when we reach the New Testament that Jesus' crucifixion took place during the Passover season; or that Paul would use the festival of Passover to describe our identity in Christ. It was very significant for the first disciples of Jesus that

he was crucified during a season of remembrance and foretelling, when Jews recalled how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt, brought them safely through the Red Sea, and set them on course to being a free people.⁴⁶ These early Christians realized that they, too, had been delivered by God, no longer slaves to sin, and were made free by the sacrifice of Jesus. Where Moses instructed the elders of Israel to select and kill a Passover lamb (Exodus 12:21); Paul declared “Christ, our *paschal* (Passover) lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Because of Christ’s sacrifice, Paul called on the church to “celebrate the festival” (5:8), which, as noted earlier, is the first evidence of an Easter celebration. The idea of remembering a saving act of God had already been established. In fact, Paul certainly would have celebrated many Passovers as well as other festivals because of his ancestry as a Pharisaic Jew before encountering the risen Jesus. He knew the significance of Passover and how it related to God’s saving act in Jesus. He also knew celebrating the *Pascha* would become a natural transition for Jews who now sought to follow Jesus.

Just like the Jewish Seder liturgy where participants become one with the exodus story, Paul taught remembering the *Pascha* as more than a retelling of a historical event, but a transformative experience of dying *with* Christ and living *as* Christ: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that *in* him we might become the righteousness of God” (1 Corinthians 5:21). In addition, much like Yahweh’s instructions for Passover, Paul prescribed certain behaviors for those wanting to celebrate the festival of Christ’s resurrection.

46. Hoyt L. Hickman, *The New Handbook of the Christian Year: Based On the Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 19.

Before Paul's declaration to "celebrate the festival," he chastised the Corinthian church for their sexual immorality. Apparently a man was living with his father's wife and the church was condoning his actions (5:1). Paul labeled the situation as *porneia*, a term that typically covers a variety of sexual misconduct. What is more, Paul asserted that it was misconduct of a kind "not found even among pagans." He was extremely disheartened that the church would allow such a thing to happen.

Some scholars have suggested the man in sexual sin held some elite status in the church, making his removal tremendously difficult. The sin of the church, therefore, would not have been in condoning the man's behavior, but in their social elitism of having such a person join them in celebrating the festival. This understanding seems highly reasonable when connected with other problems Paul addressed in chapter 11 associated with the Lord's Supper. Divisiveness was present in the church, such that they were falling short of the life prescribed for God's "congregation."⁴⁷

Paul directly confronted the church for their behavior, insisting they had a moral responsibility for the conduct of their members and that the conduct of one individual affected the life of the whole church. In the same letter, Paul explained this truth by using the image of a body: "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (12:26). Paul knew well that communal responsibility had deep roots in Scripture.

For example, during the siege of Jericho, God commanded that everything be destroyed; but then, in Joshua 7 it reads, "Achan, son of Carmi, of the tribe of Judah"

47. Scott Nash. *1 Corinthians*. Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2009) 148.

kept to himself some of the sacred things in direct defiance to God. Later, when Joshua ordered men to attack the city of Ai, a place so small it should have fallen to the Israelites with ease, the assault failed miserably. Joshua immediately asked Yahweh why this happened. The Lord did not respond by revealing Achan's sin, but instead told Joshua, "Israel has sinned...Israel has stolen...Israel was deceitful...Israel has transgressed my covenant" (Joshua 7:10-11). Because of Achan's sin, the whole nation had sinned. Achan's disobedience was Israel's disobedience.

Additionally, in the Holiness Code of Leviticus, those who commit various sexual immoralities must be "cut off from the people;" otherwise the land will "vomit out" the whole people of Israel (18:24-30). Move forward in Leviticus and Yahweh connected such immoral behavior to observance of the festivals: "You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them, so that the land to which I bring you to settle in may not vomit you out" (20:22). In the context of Leviticus, Mann writes, "the holiness of Yahweh is intimately associated with the worshipping community."⁴⁸ "You must be holy, for I am holy," Yahweh declares (20:26). On the one hand, such holiness is what binds the Israelites together as a people. On the other hand, such an intimate connection to a holy God means any departure from their consecrated state will endanger their existence; the holiness of God cannot coexist with what is unholy.⁴⁹

Richard Hays notes that the covenant of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28 is applied, not to individuals, but to the nation as a whole.⁵⁰ The same is true for the

48. Mann, 117.

49. Ibid, 118.

50. Richard B. Hays. *First Corinthians*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 82.

eighty-two prayers of national confession in Ezra 9:6-15; Nehemiah 9:6-37; and Daniel 9:4-19. Each assumes the reality of corporate guilt and the hope of corporate redemption.⁵¹

Corporate responsibility is a foundational building block in the life of Israel. Maybe this helps explain why Ezra tore her tunic and cloak while mourning over the immoral actions of the priests (9:3). The Septuagint uses the same verb for Ezra that Paul employed when he said the Corinthians should have “mourned” over the sexual sin of the man in their midst.⁵² Like each of the aforementioned texts, Paul held the Corinthian church corporately responsible for the one man’s sin. Paul is adamant, until the entire church cleanses herself from sin, they could not take part in the Passover festival or the Lord’s Supper. Furthermore, their sin was not limited to just sexual immorality. Paul included greed, robbery, idolatry, slandering, and drunkenness (1 Corinthians 5:10-11). As with the Passover, keeping God’s statutes correctly results in righteousness, not immorality. For the Corinthians to celebrate the festival while still in sin of any kind would be like the Israelites failure to keep the Passover correctly; they would cease to be God’s people and would have no part in God’s redemption.

The contrast Paul makes in 1 Corinthians is similar to those he made in Ephesians 4:22-25 and Colossians 3:8-14 about what it means to be a new person in Christ.

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body (Colossians 3:1-3, 5, 7-10, 12, 14-15).

In essence, their new position in Christ requires a certain behavior. Anything hindering that behavior must be removed. This seems to be what lies behind Paul's admonition to "clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Again, just as the Israelite practice of Passover called for the removal of all leaven, Paul insisted the members of the church must purge themselves of any remnant of their old life in order they become what God has called them to be: a spiritually unleavened, new people.⁵³ In the case of the Corinthian church, it was not just the sexually immoral man that raised Paul's blood pressure, but the entire church! They were not acting in accordance with what they had been declared to be by God. The *paschal* lamb had been sacrificed, Paul said, insisting the Corinthians were no longer subject to sin. Because of their new position in Christ, immorality should be a thing of the past.

It is important to be clear, as Hays notes, about Paul's use of "Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed." Paul is not declaring a theological stance on Jesus as an atonement for sin, but rather setting the Corinthians apart as a specific people group delivered by God. In the same way that the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of houses

53. Nash, 151.

marked Israel as a distinct people whom God *would* deliver, Paul suggested the blood of Christ marked the Corinthians as a distinct people whom God *has* delivered.⁵⁴

When we reach 1 Corinthians 11 we witness Paul's theology of God's prior deliverance playing out in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Several problems had arisen when the church gathered for worship. Central was their lack of community when observing the meal. They were not living as a united people whom God *had* delivered.

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).

Instead of being a cohesive community of believers proclaiming the Lord's death until he returns (11:26), the people allowed their own wants and agendas to take priority. Paul corrected them by reciting previous instructions on how they should partake of the supper. Returning their focus to the centrality of the meal itself was Paul's main strategy for resolving the situation.⁵⁵ One might imagine Paul's salutation in chapter one echoed in the ears of the Corinthians as they listened to him chastise their behavior:

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. ¹²What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul', or 'I belong to Apollos', or 'I belong to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ.'

54. Hays, 83.

55. Nash, 347.

Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power (1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17).

Paul used the word *paradosis* (παράδοσις) which is translated “tradition,” referring to a teaching, practice, or custom that is handed down from one person or group to another.⁵⁶ The purpose of any *paradosis* is to keep alive an important belief or action. A tradition also unites later generations to former generations. We see an example of this in Exodus when Moses explained why the Israelites must keep the Sabbath:

The Lord said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: ‘You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. Therefore, the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel (Exodus 31:12-13, 16-17a).

Paul called the Corinthians back to the covenant tradition he had received from the Lord and handed over to them. He also reminded them the purpose of celebrating the supper. When Jesus gave the bread he said, “Do this in remembrance of *me*.” Paul stressed that the focus of the supper is on Jesus, not on one’s self.⁵⁷ To treat the Lord’s Supper as a means for self-indulgence detached the church from Jesus’ intended purpose. Paul closed his argument by encouraging the church to wait for one another when they came to celebrate the supper (1 Corinthians 11:33). Such tradition holds the body of Christ together, Paul would agree, much like the tradition of Passover holds the Jewish faith together.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid, 348.

In our modern tradition of worship, if we make it about anything other than God's saving act of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection then we detach ourselves from worship's intended purpose. If our worship is situated in anything but the story of God, it will become what Robert Webber alluded to in *The Call* as a "self-focused narcissism," where the story is grounded in the self of what "I" do for God versus what God has done for me. The same can be said, I believe, for worship that is governed by culture. When our worship calendar revolves around civic and secular holidays, then it shifts from a focus on God and God's story to a focus on me and my story.

Through the aforementioned biblical narratives, we see God's intention for any celebration and remembrance we undertake in worship. First, worship is about God: "You shall celebrate [this day] as a festival to the Lord," Yahweh tells the Israelites (Exodus 12:14). Second, as New Testament people, we are united with Christ through our baptism. The story of Jesus becomes our story, such that we die to self. Third, we are united to one another. By virtue of being part of the risen body of Christ, we worship with every generation before us and every generation that comes after us. There are no longer divisions for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Finally, our worship of God through annual festivals, special days, and repeated rituals should make us holy and righteous. Such practices should remind us that our old self has been put to death and we are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). I truly believe following the Christian year in worship puts our focus back on its intended purpose, allowing all of those things to happen. For in the Christian year we repeat the story of God in Christ Jesus such that it becomes our identity, our persona, our very life blood of who we are called to be as

God's chosen people. How the Christian year came to be in order to make us who we are still needs consideration. It is to that topic I now turn.

The Development of the Christian Year

The early church considered every Sunday an Easter Sunday. Each time they gathered for worship it was a reliving of Christ's Easter victory over sin and death. Christians then, as now, knew they shared this victory with others and they wanted their worship to recognize God's saving act for the entire world.

As centuries passed, the church became dependent on worship as the primary arena for teaching the story of Jesus as well as other biblical stories. Repetition of the stories in the annual liturgy of worship helped the church learn, remember, and celebrate the main teachings of the faith; and while almost every church celebrated the biblical stories of faith, they did not do so in a consistent fashion from place to place. Gradually, through the church, the Christian year emerged. The purpose was to have a biblically grounded way of teaching the faith, forming believers in Christ, and an avenue for celebrating special days in the life of the church.

The *pascal* event was the central means for marking time in the development of the Christian calendar. As illustrated in the previous section, Paul alluded to an Easter celebration in Corinthians and through the centuries we find continued celebrations of this event. Moreover, because of how formative the Christian year became in the early church, some scholars have even suggested the development of time in the Christian year has influenced the faith almost as much as the written Scripture. James F. White states:

The church shows what is most important to its life by the way it keeps its time. The priorities of the early church's faith are disclosed by the way the Christians of

the second, third, and fourth centuries organized time. The practice of organizing time...has had almost as persistent an influence in shaping Christian memories as have the written gospels.⁵⁸

Like their Jewish counterparts, early Christians followed a rhythm of time that was marked by God's saving acts. The Christian year is based on these saving acts, starting with Easter and expanding from there. As early as the second century we find an established *paschal* celebration, though research suggests such a commemoration would have started much sooner. The second and third century church added to the Pascha festival the act of baptism, laying on of hands, and first communion.⁵⁹ Just as Jewish Passover celebrated the escape from Egypt by passage through the Red Sea, so the Christian church viewed the waters of baptism as deliverance from sin and death. But in order to celebrate such a solemn act of spiritual significance properly, the early church felt the need to establish a time of preparation. Hippolytus, writing in the third century, said those desiring to be baptized would fast on Friday and Saturday before beginning the all-night vigil Saturday evening. At cockcrow on Easter morning they were baptized in the waters and rose with Christ from the dead.⁶⁰ Later, this preparation period would develop into the season of Lent.

In the fourth century, debate emerged on how to celebrate the final events of Jesus' earthly life. Several opportunities for worship were developed commemorating the time and place of all the events of Jesus' last week in Jerusalem. Around 384, a Spanish woman named Egeria kept a diary of her pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the Pascha

58. Hickman, 17.

59. Ibid, 19.

60. Ibid.

week. Her notes on worship have shaped the Christian practice of Holy Week ever since.⁶¹

Second in importance to the Pascha was the commemoration of Pentecost. Like Pascha, its roots were in Judaism. It was the name Greek-speaking Jews gave to the Day of First Fruits, a harvest festival, in Leviticus 23:16: “The day after the seventh Sabbath will make fifty days, and then you shall present to the Lord a grain-offering from the new crop.” This day also reflected in Judaism the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai.⁶² For Christians, Pentecost has been associated with the events of Acts 2: the rush of wind, speaking in tongues of flames, the giving of the Holy Spirit, and the inauguration of Christ’s church.

As more commemorative festivals were established in later centuries, the formal Christian calendar took shape. The desire to celebrate specific events in the life of Jesus gave rise to festivals such as the Annunciation, Christmas and Epiphany; and saint days were added to remember great men and women of the faith. By the end of the fourth century the Christian year was basically complete.

Only two significant additions have occurred since the fourth century: Trinity Sunday and All Saints Day. Trinity Sunday, the Sunday after Pentecost, was added around 1000. Unlike other feasts which represent events, Trinity Sunday celebrates a specific theological doctrine. All Saints Day, November 1, was added in the ninth century as a way of remembering all saints.⁶³

61. Ibid, 20.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid, 24.

Until the Reformation when Protestants abandoned much of the Catholic traditions, the Christian year was a vital part of worship. But Protestants in the Reformation claimed that nearly every single day of the year had been named after a saint. The extreme emphasis on saints overshadowed the celebration of more Christ-centered events such as Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. Consequently, many Protestants discontinued observing the Christian year and lost all of the positive formation aspects associated with the seasons. However, there now seems to be a resurgence in many Protestant churches to recover the Christian year as worship leaders discover the enormous value each season can provide in forming devoted followers of Jesus.

In all, the Christian year serves to keep our focus on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Is it perfect? Not at all. There are certainly biases represented throughout, as well as a season void of any high Christological claims about Jesus; namely the season after Pentecost, called Ordinary Time, which only focuses on Jesus' brief public ministry. But the Christian year is still the church's best method of marking time in order to follow Jesus and grow in relationship to him.

The History and Purpose of Eight Liturgical Seasons

The Christian year is divided into two halves. The first half is comprised of high holy days, beginning with Advent, which starts four Sundays before Christmas and continues until Christmas Eve. Robert Webber referred to Advent as the time "when God

breaks in on us.”⁶⁴ It is the time of year the church celebrates Jesus breaking into the world, both in his first coming and his second.⁶⁵

The development of Advent began with early Christian missionaries who found themselves surrounded by persons devoted to observing pagan festivals. True to the tradition of the early church, these missionaries sought to adopt pagan symbols and give them a Christian spin. One of the main images that early Christians seized upon was the symbol of light and emphasis on new life, both of which were important to Germanic tribes in the fourth century during the observance of winter solstice festivals. Missionaries saw a better way to use these symbols. They spoke of Christ as the light of the world and the source of all life. Still, pagan celebrations with their elaborate excesses overshadowed Christian attempts at changing the culture. Therefore, the church set aside a specific period of time to prepare for the birth of Jesus.

The first celebrations of Advent were patterned after Lent and encompassed the first six Sundays prior to Christmas. In the late sixth century Roman officials reduced the number to four Sundays. Many contemporary observances of Advent devote each of the four Sundays to a specific theme. The most widely used themes are hope, peace, joy, and love—in that order. Advent guides the church into the season of Christmas, which begins on December 25 and lasts twelve days until the Feast of Epiphany on January 6th.

The early church had no fixed date for the celebration of Jesus’ birth. In the Eastern church, Epiphany was, and still is, the most important date to celebrate his birth, marked by the showcase of the infant Jesus to the Gentile magi. These men represented

64. Webber, 37.

65. Of note, the Eastern church does not follow the Advent worship traditions found in the Western church. However, since this paper deals with the Western calendar, Advent is included here.

all nations coming to worship Jesus. The Western church, on the other hand, chose December 25th as the birth date for Jesus. This was an alternative for the pagan holiday declared by the Roman emperor for the same day, a feast for the Birth of the Unconquered Sun, commemorating the winter solstice. In the Western church, the date of December 25th as the festival day for Christmas gradually became more important than the date for Epiphany. The first known evidence for Christmas observance on December 25th occurs in 354. Similar to the pagan holiday, Christians appropriated their celebration of Christmas with merriment, feasting, and exchanging gifts. They rejoiced over the incarnation of the “Sun of Righteousness.”

Today, Christians try to reclaim Christmas from the commercial world that has infiltrated the season and made it into a secular holiday focused on materialism. This season is not about hustle and bustle, moving from one party to the next. Instead, the season of Christmas is one of quiet contemplation. The focus is incarnation; the incarnation of God-with-us in the form of a tiny baby and the incarnation of God in our lives as we seek to live an incarnational spirituality.

The twelve days following Christmas day lead into the season of Epiphany, which actually antedates observances of Christmas. References to Epiphany can be found as early as 200; however, it was not until the year 300 we find inclusion of the magi’s visit as a major part of the celebration. The Western church incorporated Epiphany into the calendar in the late fourth century. In doing so they separated the celebration of the magi, Jesus’ baptism, his first miracle in Cana, and his transfiguration into four events. Their logic was simple: the Gentile magi represented the manifestation of Christ to non-Jews—an event that deserved its own festival. The season of Epiphany leaves no doubt that this

Jesus is the Son of the Most High God and the message of the magi that Jesus is the one who deserves our true worship! Proper worship during this season will call for “Hallelujahs” in the same fashion we celebrate the resurrection on Easter. In all, the Epiphany season stretches across nine Sundays and ends on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday; the day that ushers the church into the season of Lent.

Although Easter is the oldest celebration in the church, the observance of Lent is a close second, appearing between 200-300. Lent was traditionally a time of preparation for individuals seeking baptism on Easter Sunday. Following the model of Jesus’ time in the wilderness, new converts practiced penance and prayer for forty days. However, as the church recognized the importance for *everyone* to prepare as Easter approached, they developed a more encompassing Lenten season ensuring proper observance of the resurrection event. Fasting became associated with the season for both those preparing for baptism and the church in general. New converts were instructed to fast for at least two or three weeks to demonstrate the penitence that should precede baptism.

The season of Lent became doubly important when Christianity was recognized as a legal religion in 313. Many people began to flock to the faith, but without a suitable understanding of what it meant to follow Jesus. The season of Lent became a time of instruction in the faith, development of discipline, and growth in discipleship.

By the fifth century, Lent was well established, though at the time it was called *Quadragesima* (meaning “forty days”). Repentance and preparation for the Easter celebration became the central focus, calling for a disciplined life in devotion to Jesus.

Today, Lent asks us to examine our lives in light of our baptism. Are we living out the faith we received at baptism? Are we patterning our lives after the life of Jesus?

By focusing on repentance for forty long days (minus Sundays), we ask God to cleanse us from all sin and self-righteousness.

Lent ushers the church into Holy Week, the week leading up to Easter. Holy Week begins with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, a day known as Palm Sunday, and includes Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Each of these special days are designed to remind the church of the suffering and death of Jesus.

From the middle of the third century, Christians assigned a unique spiritual significance to the week leading up to Easter. No structure existed for worship during this period; however, many Christians made pilgrimages to Jerusalem right before Easter to retrace the steps of Jesus in his last days. Church leaders in Jerusalem responded by linking the events of Jesus' final week into a continuous act of worship. Soon, the observance of Jesus' final earthly days began to spread outside of Jerusalem. Holy Week became an annual observance and a major opportunity for worship. Tenebrae services—a service of increasing darkness where congregants meditate on key events in Holy Week—began to develop as a way of observing the Great Triduum (Latin for the “the three days” of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter). Many churches also incorporated communion and foot-washing ceremonies into Maundy Thursday services. Some even held Holy Saturday vigils which lasted until Easter morning.

Maundy Thursday takes its name from the Latin *Dies Mandati*, the Day of the Commandment, referring to Jesus' commandment for disciples to love one another (John 13:34). On this evening, Christians recall the events of Jesus' final hours with his disciples: washing their feet, the institution of the Lord's Supper, Judas' betrayal, and the love commandment. Historically, this service has also included an offering given to the

poor and the stripping of the altar of all fabrics, furniture, and flowers. No decorations were appropriate come Good Friday.

Early Christians referred to Good Friday as Paschal Day. This comes directly from the sacrifice of a paschal lamb during the Jewish observance of Passover. Jesus, Paul told the Corinthians, is our Paschal lamb. The name Good Friday emerged among English Christians who judged the consequences of the day, not the crucifixion itself, as good. Eastern Christians also left their mark by carrying the adjective one step further, referring to the day as “Great Friday.”

When early church worshippers exited the sanctuary on Good or Great Friday, a sense of death and gloom filled the air. The scene remained that way when they returned on Holy Saturday for evening services. The Saturday vigil was much like a wake and conducted in a similar fashion as a memorial service. However, as the service continued, the mood began to change from somber to hopeful to expectant. As Easter morning approached, worshippers joined in a great chorus of “Hallelujahs” for the risen Lord!

Lent and Holy Week reach their conclusion on Easter Sunday. Easter is considered the most important day in the Christian year. It is also the oldest. The resurrection of Jesus is the pinnacle event that gives rise to our faith. Free of burden, free of sin, free of death, full of hope and expectation, the church throughout the world rises with Jesus.

The festival of Easter was first mentioned by name in 130. Today it is an entire season, lasting fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. In the earliest centuries Easter was the only day new believers could be baptized, and the days after Easter were given to celebrating their new life in Jesus.

Easter Day originally included both crucifixion and resurrection themes. Early Christians viewed the two events as the “new exodus” which Jesus made possible for all people. The celebration began at sundown on Saturday with a recitation of the crucifixion story. At dawn, the focus shifted to the resurrection and baptism of new believers. However, when Holy Week developed in the fourth century, the focus of Easter narrowed to the resurrection of Jesus alone.

Today, some churches are recovering the Easter vigil on Holy Saturday as it was observed in the earliest centuries. The celebration of baptism on Easter is growing as well. Baptism joins all of God’s people with the death and resurrection of Christ. Easter also allows a time for us to renew our discipleship to Jesus as the source of our faith.

As aforementioned, the Easter season ends on Pentecost day, a celebration of God’s giving the Holy Spirit to humanity. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit the church increases in number and is able to spread the gospel of Jesus to the world. The early church believed the Easter celebration should continue until Pentecost as a way of marking our receiving of God’s Spirit. By the end of the second century, fasting and kneeling in prayer were forbidden during this period. It was a time for feasting, lifting of hands, and great rejoicing.

The days after Pentecost make up the second half of the Christian year. This is known as Ordinary Time, a season spanning six months. It takes place from Pentecost until Christ the King Sunday, which is the Sunday before the beginning of Advent. During Ordinary Time, there are no festival days for the church to celebrate. However, this time is vitally important to the Christian year. Where the first half of the year celebrated the life of Christ, the second half of the year focuses on communication and

faithfulness. Ordinary Time challenges our commitment to be disciples of Jesus. We might summarize the Christian year by saying the first half teaches us the story of how we become one with Jesus and the second half calls us to live out that story. In this way we continue the saving work of God through our mission in the world.

Why Follow the Christian Year?

Christianity takes time seriously. Many have said that to answer the question, “What do Christians believe?” one could simply say, “Look how they keep time.” In the Christian way of marking time, God is made known in past, present, and future. Our salvation is accomplished through specific events in history, made real in the present lives of believers, and will be brought to completion in the eternal realm of the future.

Second, we know the story of Jesus in terms of time. In the fullness of time, God invaded our history, assumed flesh and blood, healed, taught, and walked the earth. Jesus was put to death on a specific day related to the Passover season and rose three days later. He has promised to come again, and though that day is unknown, there are signs of that day drawing closer.

The story of Jesus as told in time is reflected in our worship. How we follow the rhythms and recitations determines how we encounter God in the worship experience. The way we use our time in worship, therefore, is the best indication of what is really important to us. Marva Dawn, in her insightful text, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, writes “worship subtly influences the kind of people we are becoming.”⁶⁶ Paul

66. Marva Dawn. *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 119.

wrote about what kind of people we are becoming when he told the Romans our purpose is to be “conformed to the image of God’s son” (Romans 8:29). In Ephesians, he encouraged Christians to strive for “maturity, to the full measure of Christ” and “to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (4:13, 15). Naturally, then, if worship influences who we are becoming and the goal is to become like Christ, how we worship should reflect our attitudes about achieving that goal. Dawn continues:

Our primary source for character formation is the Word of God. As God’s people, the Christian community will continually ask how that Word guides us in seeking the truth about our humanity and God’s design for it. What is revealed by the biblical accounts of God’s people in their ethical choices, in their instructions to each other? What virtues are displayed? What commands are issued that we ignore to our peril? How does the Bible give us courage to stand against false values and idolatries in our society because it announces to us the defeat of the principalities and powers? How can the worship of the community especially pass on the narratives and the hope that form us in the faith? How does worship invite us to respond to the Word in faithfulness?⁶⁷

In an article describing her own spiritual journey, noted biblical professor Elizabeth Achtemeier describes her childhood attendance at worship each Sunday by concluding:

I did not know at the time that all those experiences were sinking into my bones—that I was learning the language of prayer and hymnody, of doctrine, scripture and liturgy. But I was. I was slowly but surely being taught the language and worldview of the Christian faith which has nourished me all my life long.⁶⁸

Christian worship is an act of supreme importance. In the act of worship, we approach the great paschal mystery of God. Such an encounter should change us from the inside out as we contemplate our lives with the life of God. Therefore, how we worship should be equally significant. Unfortunately, what has developed in many churches over

67. Ibid, 117.

68. Elizabeth Achtemeier, “An Excellent Woman,” *The Christian Century*, No. 110, August-September 1993.

the past two decades is a me-oriented worship that is not centered on the saving acts of God. In a largely futile attempt to engage non-church goers—especially young adults—many churches have instituted contemporary worship that is void of any historic methodology. By trying to be “hip” and “modern” these churches fail to incorporate worship elements that speak to our global connectivity of faith; elements such as litanies and creeds that call the church to profess their faith collectively; long Scripture readings that tell the entire biblical narrative; sermons that emerge directly from the text; colors, symbols, and smells that give meaning to faith; and ancient hymns that teach profound doctrine about God as well as focus our praise directly toward God. Dare I say the church does herself no favors when her attempts to relate to the world erase her call to be different from the world? In the name of making church relevant, we have fundamentally changed the message, deeming it irrelevant.

In a recent worship study, Lester Ruth, professor of worship at Duke Divinity School, examined the seventy-two top contemporary songs in the church over a fifteen-year period. His primary question in examining each song was, “Are the lyrics rooted in the Triune nature and activity of God?” His conclusions are alarming:

None of the songs in the corpus of seventy-two explicitly refer to the Trinity or the Triune nature of God...Only three songs refer to, or name, all three persons of the Trinity. While Jesus is named in thirty-two of the songs, the Holy Spirit is named in only two songs. With so few of the songs naming or worshipping all three persons of the Trinity, it is therefore not surprising to find little remembrance of Triune activity in the corpus.⁶⁹

The foundation for such ego-centered worship is situated in culture and not in the

69. Lester Ruth, “How Great is Our God: The Trinity in Contemporary Christian Worship Music,” *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 31.

story of God. From a biblical perspective, where sin is defined as rebellion against the ways of God, one could argue that current shifts in worship that focus on me and my story versus God and God's story are serious transgressions in need of repentance. The cure, I believe, for this narcissistic, biblically illiterate style of worship which deemphasizes the importance of God's saving acts is the Christian year, which places our focus back where it belongs.

That is not to say contemporary worship is unable to focus our attention solely on God or follow the Christian year. Indeed, such an approach would be refreshing! Regardless of style, contemporary or traditional, *all* worship should, at its core, draw us into the story of God as a means of transformation. However, if we fail to connect our worship to God's story—past, present, and future—then such transformation will never take place.

Dawn concludes, "When God is the subject of worship, our character is formed in response to his. In contrast, worship that focuses on me will nurture a character that is turned inward, thinking first of self rather than God."⁷⁰ "It is absolutely essential," she goes on to say, "that the church keep God as the subject of worship since to be Christian means to believe that the God revealed in Jesus is everything to us: Creator, Provider, and Sustainer; Deliverer, Redeemer, and Lord; Sanctifier, Inspirer, and Empowerer."⁷¹

70. Dawn, 119.

71. Ibid, 76.

Perhaps we would do well to remember the words of St. Ambrose of Milan who invites us to keep God as our focus and how that focus will change our lives:

O God, teach me to see You, and reveal Yourself to me when I seek you,
For I cannot seek You unless You first teach me,
nor find You unless You first reveal Yourself to me.
Let me seek You in longing, and long for You in seeking.
Let me find You in love, and love You in finding.⁷²

It is understandable, however, that 21st century churches, especially those seeking to be contemporary, would question the value of following such an ancient tradition such as the Christian year. The same case was made following the Reformation; yet, for those who truly desire to grow *in* Christ, the Christian year provides an opportunity for renewal like none other.

Understanding the value of worship in God's story, Stanley Hauerwas, in his coarse and irregular style, put it this way:

Being a Christian should just scare the hell out of us. It's like on Sunday we need to rush together for protection. "Oh, I'm not crazy." That we believe that God was in Christ reconciling the world is craziness. It's going to make your life really weird. And you just need to get together on Sunday to be pulled back into the reality of God's kingdom.⁷³

What I hear underlined in those words is that worship should be different from the world. Something happens in the corporate setting that sets us apart and puts us on a different path. We proclaim through our worship this "crazy" story of God reconciling the world. The method by which we make that proclamation should, as well, be set apart. For that reason, following the Christian year may appear "weird" to modern worshippers.

72. St. Ambrose of Milan, "A Prayer Seeking God," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, March 31, 2008, accessed November 11, 2016, <https://www.ccel.org/node/4512>.

73. I have read this quote in a variety of sources. It is always attributed to Hauerwas, though, despite my efforts, I cannot locate its original context.

In high school English class, students are often asked to read old stories such as *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, or *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They do not read these classic texts for sheer enjoyment, but because the teacher believes they will learn something new, interact with a culture unlike their own, discover new worldviews, and be transformed. Something similar happens in worship when we are exposed to ancient texts and rhythms. I do not believe worship renewal can take place in contemporary worship which lacks conscious grounding in the history and tradition of God's story. Conversely, diving head first—hook, line, and sinker—into the Christian year will not provide needed renewal either. The type of worship renewal I am suggesting only happens through a sufficient understanding of God's saving acts: their history, purpose, and tradition. This is where Christian year worship provides a gift to the church that contemporary worship can never replicate. Christian year worship connects us to the centuries of believers who have tried to live out what it means to be baptized *into* Jesus and focuses our attention on what it means to live like Jesus.

In his seminar “Educating the Church through Christian Spirituality,” Dr. Steven Harmon offered a functional definition of worship as “the participatory rehearsal of the biblical story of the Triune God.”⁷⁴ Acts of worship that enact this “participatory rehearsal” include celebration of the Lord's Supper every Sunday, corporate recitation of ancient creeds, patristic forms of prayer, confession of sin and declaration of pardon, the passing of the peace, telling the stories of exemplary saints, and the singing of hymns that

74. Steven Harmon, “Educating the Church through Christian Spirituality” (lecture, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC, January 10, 2014).

integrate doctrine and worship.⁷⁵ These elements, Harmon insisted, promote worship that is done for God, not the people, as the people participate in the narrative of God. As a result, the more we rehearse the story of Jesus, the more we become like Jesus.

Roots of this participatory rehearsal can be found in the early church. Dramatic elements in the early liturgy helped reinforce the Christian's union with Christ, both in his suffering and in his glory. By the mid-fourth century, Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, developed a processional liturgy for Holy Week. Earlier in the century, Constantine funded the construction of numerous memorials to the ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine. This led to large numbers of pilgrims visiting these sites, especially during Lent. Cyril developed and led liturgical services at the various sites which commemorated the events leading up to and constituting the death and resurrection of Jesus. This had a profound effect in strengthening the faith of participants, as they sensed through their own involvement the reality of God's saving acts.⁷⁶

In his book, *Growing Faith*, Campbell University professor Bruce Powers offers a model for spiritual formation through observance of the Christian year.⁷⁷ The initial stage is awareness. For example, one may realize there is a Lenten season within the Christian year. The second stage is recall. A person can recall the Lenten season, including the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and the practice of fasting. The third stage is

75. Steven R. Harmon. "Studies in Baptist History and Thought." Vol. 27, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays On Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2006), 675.

76. Craig A. Blaising, "Spiritual Formation in the Early Church," *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*. Kenneth O. Gangel and James C. Wilhoit, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 28-29.

77. Bruce Powers, *Growing Faith* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1982), 75.

understanding. In this stage a person is able to interpret what has been learned and relate it to life. Such an understanding in Lent might be the need for repentance in an area of living that is not in tune with God's design. The fourth stage is conviction. At this level, attitudes are formed and commitments are made. During the Lenten season a change in lifestyle may occur for someone who recognizes God's call to live in Christ. The final stage is application. In this stage a person takes what they have learned and applies it to an outward action. One might ask, "How can my new call in God be displayed in my life?" or "In what ways did Jesus engage those around him?" Such a call might result in a changed behavior or ministry engagement with a different people group other than one's own. There is a myriad of opportunities present when we use such a model to see how our lives can be shaped into the likeness of Jesus by reenacting his story until it becomes our story.

So why follow the Christian year? The answer is simple. Through our worship, the Christian year centers us in Jesus and keeps our focus on the saving acts of God through Jesus. By observing the seasons, we engage with the biblical narrative and follow the call to become more like Jesus. St. Ambrose, in a conversation on why we worship, asked the question, "What gain is it to celebrate unless you imitate the one whom you worship?"⁷⁸ Lesslie Newbigin offered a worthwhile answer when he said, "the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live it."⁷⁹ By following the story of Jesus day after day, month after month, year after year,

78. St. Ambrose of Milan, "Selected Quotes of the Fathers on the Resurrection of Christ," Full of Grace and Truth, April 6, 2010, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2010/04/selected-quotes-of-fathers-on.html>.

79. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 227.

through the Christian year, the church is better equipped to not only tell, but live out the story of the gospel. And, as a result, the story of Jesus ceases to be something the church does, but becomes who the church is.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Method of Evaluation

This project was evaluated using surveys that were both quantitative and qualitative. The surveys can be found in the appendix to this paper. Consultation with Gardner-Webb Professor David Carscaddon took place before finalizing the surveys and after their completion.

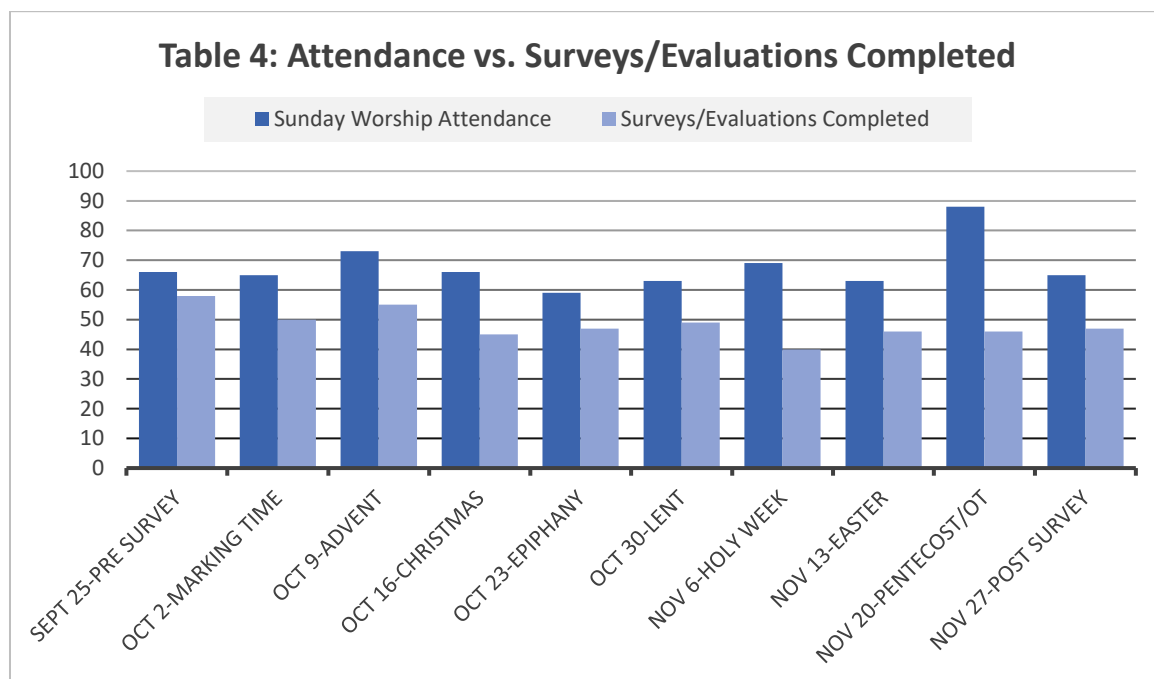
On the Sunday prior to the beginning of the project, a pre-survey was completed by the church. On the Sunday following the completion of the project a post-survey was completed by the church (Appendix E.2). Both surveys were identical except for two sections in the post-survey: 1) six questions were asked to determine my effectiveness in presenting the material; and 2) qualitative questions were added as a means for individuals to offer feedback in relation to the project's success or failure.

Second, a ten-question quantitative evaluation was distributed at the conclusion of each worship service during the sermon series (Appendix E.1). This evaluation measured attendance in Sunday School, comprehension of the lesson and sermon, and desire to follow the particular season being discussed on that specific Sunday.

Finally, the PCG was interviewed following the completion of the project using qualitative questions that were distributed in the final PCG meeting (Appendix E.3).

I was very pleased with the retention rate of surveys each week during the project. On average, 72% of individuals present in worship completed the evaluation. This

includes members of the PCG. The following graph details the number of evaluations completed in relation to those present each Sunday.



Each of the surveys/evaluations utilized a categorical scale consisting of Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree. This method proved to be only satisfactory. In retrospect, I regret not using a true Likert scale, believing it would have given me stronger statistical weight to measure the projects effectiveness. Nonetheless, the following section of this report will discuss the comprehensive results of all data from the pre- and post- surveys, weekly evaluations, and the Positive Control Group interview.

Results of Evaluation

The first section of the pre- and post- surveys measured demographics related to Calvary. As expected, our church largely consists of retired, older adults between 65-84 years of age, with a greater degree of females than males. Very few have advanced degrees beyond high school and the majority of those who do constituted participants in

the Positive Control Group. That was not intentional on my part. Honestly, I did not know the education of those individuals until reviewing the data. Nevertheless, the strong degree of covenantal participation from the PCG, including their attendance and completion of the study workbook, can likely be attributed to their being more educated.

Everyone who completed the surveys calls themselves “Christian” and over 93% have done so for sixteen years or longer. The same can be said for how many years they have been members of Calvary. Those statistics include members of the PCG, only two of which have belonged to Calvary less than sixteen years. In other words, nearly everyone involved in this project has been steeped in Christianity and the culture of Calvary Baptist Church for decades.

A subsequent finding in the first section of the surveys was increased involvement from PCG participants in the life of the church. These individuals exhibited greater attendance in Sunday School and worship, tithing, and even personal Bible Study/prayer. It is easy to attribute increased attendance to their covenant of being present every Sunday during the project. However, increased tithing and personal study are pleasant surprises. I can only deduct that the covenant agreement had positive effects on their other spiritual disciplines by their amplified presence in the life of the church.

The second section of the pre- and post- surveys measured participants’ understanding of the Christian year, including their knowledge of each seasons spiritual purpose. The data shows an increase across the board, with the PCG averaging a 386% increase in each category and the congregation averaging a 114% increase. In particular, the PCG showed a 963% increase in their overall understanding of the Christian year with the congregation showing a 200% increase. This proves my theory that the members

of the PCG, by virtue of their covenant to be involved with every aspect of the project, would display a dramatic surge in their knowledge and desire to observe the Christian year. Weekly evaluations related to specific seasons proved this as well. The majority of participants' desire continuing to observe the eight seasons presented in this project. Only Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany produced any negative responses, and they were below seven percent of the total. Overall, I can say with confidence that Calvary experienced a positive measure of understanding related to the Christian year and their desire to observe it in the future.

Conversely, PCG member #2 consistently displayed a slightly negative view of the Christian year. This individual was the only PCG member to disagree on a number of survey questions and weekly evaluations. By using the pre- and post- surveys, I can deduce this person is male, in the 75-84 age range, employed, and has been both a Christian and member of Calvary for over sixteen years. This individual also tithes regularly, prays regularly, and has a Baptist heritage. In the post-survey, this individual only answered one of the qualitative questions, intriguingly stating "Be careful this does not become a ritual." In the weekly evaluations, he disagreed/strongly disagreed with some of the sermons. In the PCG interview, he gave neutral responses to most questions. I found this individual's response to the project confusing. In question #3 of PCG interview, he expressed a frustration in "trying to learn and memorize all the terms and length of the seasons"—a task they were never asked to complete. In question #4, he suggested many individuals did not use the sermon outline in the workbook, though results dictate otherwise. In question #6, he seemed to equate responsive readings with the "style" of Christian year worship. However, in questions #1 and #5 this individual

expressed very affirmative comments, stating the project was a “spiritual blessing.” I wish this individual would have taken the opportunity to express some of his frustrations more openly in the qualitative responses.

The third section, which only appeared on the post-survey, measured my abilities in leading the project. I was very pleased with the feedback, having not one Disagree/Strongly Disagree answer for any question. I am hesitant, however, to accept those answers as a true reflection of my abilities. I believe the congregation simply desired to be encouraging toward their pastor.

The final section of the post-survey consisted of qualitative questions. One theme that appeared over and over was an anxiety on the part of both congregation and PCG members to give the “right” answer to questions in the study workbook. PCG member #10 wrote, “Some of the Scriptures used were hard to know what you were asking of us and what to write down.” In the PCG interviews, #4 wrote, “Some of the workbook questions did not always seem to lead to easily found answers.” Perhaps this was a deficiency on my part, knowing that time was of the essence. But perhaps this could have been the desire of people to give the “answer” I wanted as their pastor. Even though instruction was given to the discussion nature of the lessons, I wonder if some individuals expected the questions to always have a “right” and “wrong” answer because of the nature of the project. Future use of this project might call for a rewriting of the Sunday School lessons and a more intentional description

Other comments in the qualitative section were very positive, including how this project contributed to spiritual growth. Another theme presented throughout was the desire to have this project take place over the course of an entire year versus eight weeks.

The Christian year as a spiritual exercise is like any other spiritual discipline. In order for significant change to take place, it must prove itself over time. I agree with that assessment, but Gardner-Webb time constraints obviously restricted such an undertaking.

Analysis of Results

Was the Project Conducted as Planned?

The project was conducted exactly as planned. Unfortunately, as expressed above, I do not believe eight weeks was enough time to explore the Christian year. This project is better suited for an entire year of study. By doing such, one could really measure how participants relate to each season and how worship renewal may increase. It is nearly impossible to change worship culture in eight short weeks.

Did the Project Reach Its Intended Purpose?

The goals of this project, as presented in chapter two, were listed as Theological, Contextual, and Practical. A review of each and its effectiveness is outlined below.

Theological Goals

- A. *Participants will develop a deeper understanding of how the story of our church and God's story are interwoven.*

Questions #28 and #32 in the pre- and post- surveys demonstrate an increase in how participants perceive our church as part of the global community of faith.

- B. *Participants will gain a fuller knowledge of the Christological significance associated with each of the Christian year seasons.*

Judging by the increase in knowledge pertaining to the Christian year, I

believe this is true. Certainly this aspect of the Christian year was heavily emphasized in the sermons. In the post-survey there was a marked increase in participant's knowledge of the spiritual significance to each season. Question #34 showed a significant increase in observing the Christian year as a means of spiritual growth. However, a specific question in the evaluation method to measure whether or not this took place was lacking.

C. Participants will grow spiritually in their understanding of worship.

Both quantitative and qualitative questions indicate a renewed spirituality as a result of the project. Qualitative comments included, "great for my growth," "challenged us spiritually for greater personal commitment to live and share our faith," "helped me walk more closely with God," and "contributed much to spiritual growth."

Contextual Goals

A. Participants will be taught eight specific seasons of the Christian year.

Without question, this goal was reached through all three aspects of the project: Sunday School lessons, the study workbook, and the sermon series.

B. Participants will be able to distinguish the seasons and how each one relates to the other in worship and spirituality.

Similar to contextual goal A, this took place through all three aspects of the project. Some of the seasons were received with a greater degree of understanding than others, most notably Christmas and Easter. I did not find this to be surprising. Before the implementation of the project, many people believed they had a strong knowledge of these two significant Christian events. The weekly evaluations validate as much with these two seasons typically receiving higher numbers than the other six.

C. Participants will make a decision whether or not to follow the Christian year as a means for worship at Calvary Baptist Church.

As summarized in question #10 of the weekly evaluations, there is a strong desire to follow the seasons of the Christian year. Each of the eight seasons received an 85% or greater degree of desire to observe in our worship. The PCG expressed 100% desire to observe the seasons minus Epiphany, which had a close 92% approval. In question #35 of the pre- and post- surveys, participants were asked specifically if they desired for our church to observe the Christian year. The results were positive with the PCG showing a near 200% increase in their desire to observe the Christian year.

Practical Goals

A. Participants will be able to verbalize a clear understanding of each Christian season through their participation in the project.

I believe the increase in knowledge of each season proves this took place. In addition, qualitative remarks such as “broadened my knowledge of the Christian year, thus helping me walk more closely with God,” prove likewise.

B. Participants will be able to apply the spiritual component of each season to their private devotional life.

Again, the qualitative responses indicate this took place for many participants, as do the weekly evaluations detailing their answers to questions #3, #5, #6, #8, and #9.

C. Participants will be able to apply the spiritual component of each season to their worship in the church.

In the surveys, questions #29 and #33 hint at the answer to this goal, however, I do not believe they provide sufficient data to give a definite positive response. This goal could have been measured more effectively in the projects evaluation method.

How Might the Project be Improved for Future Use?

Any project of this magnitude is always a work in progress. I suspect if this project was conducted ten more times, I would be constantly tweaking the lessons, sermons, and evaluations. In fact, every Sunday morning found me in the office moments before worship making notes to the sermon. Nonetheless, there are two areas that stand out as in need of improvement.

First, the Sunday School lessons need to be rewritten. Many participants found the discussion section of each lesson confusing. I foresee a larger study workbook that gives more direction for each lesson. On this same note, the Teacher Guide was inadequate. More information needs to be provided for leading the lessons. I can also foresee more creative examples to use in teaching than the ones provided.

Second, as many participants expressed, this project should last an entire cycle in the Christian year. Eight weeks was simply not enough to attain the full theological scope of each season. As facilitator, I often felt my mind was drifting to the following week before completing the current week. For example, I found myself thinking about the Epiphany sermon before even preaching the Christmas sermon. I believe teaching each season as it occurs in the Christian year would provide a greater sense of what it means to observe the year and, thus, an even stronger desire from participants to utilize the Christian year and understand its spiritual purpose.

What Bearing has this Project on Future Ministry?

This project's bearing on future ministry is exponential! To begin with, I believe Calvary is now primed to observe the Christian year in a richer way through worship.

Second, any church desiring to introduce the Christian year could do so through this project. When the time comes for me to accept a different pastorate, this project could be used to introduce the Christian year to that church (if they are not already observing it). And if that church is already observing the Christian year, this project could serve to enhance their understanding. Third, I would like to move forward with my original proposal of connecting the themes of the Christian year with annual ministry planning. Many of Calvary's people in leadership positions also served as PCG members. Knowing those individuals have a strong understanding of the seasons will aid in making my original idea a reality. Finally, I would like to sponsor a seminar for Baptists that is similar to the course I took from Notre Dame. This seminar might take place over a weekend or during a pastor's school, bringing in scholars who can speak to the significance of each season in relation to Baptist life. The Notre Dame course was very informative for me and I believe the same information, with a Baptist orientation, could prove positive toward incorporating the Christian year in more Baptist churches.

Significance of Ministry Project

Personal Significance

This project proved personally significant for me in three distinct ways.

First, my own spiritual growth increased as a result of studying the Christian year. Though I have followed the seasons for some time, this project reinforced their theological tenets and provided an avenue for me to deepen my discipleship to Jesus. The refrain "live in, with, and through Jesus" has become a spiritual marker in my own faith journey—one that will guide me as the years unfold. Moreover, this project changed my

core beliefs on how to lead worship and teach spiritual formation. The creative ways each season was incorporated into worship proved significant for our church. I will continue to find imaginative ways to present the seasons of the Christian year in worship.

Second, I was very encouraged by the affirmation I received from the congregation for my leadership of this project. Responses to questions 52, 53, and 54 of the post-project survey spoke well of my overall effectiveness as a facilitator in teaching the Christian year. Many answers in the interview questions were very complimentary of my preparedness, enthusiasm, preaching style and writing ability. One individual commented, “there appeared to be an improvement in Jeff’s preaching; he spoke with much more authority.” No doubt my passion for the subject matter influenced this result, but I also attribute this result to the time I spent preparing the sermons. Instead of preparing messages Sunday to Sunday, I began the sermon process weeks in advance. This allowed more time to marinate on each text, drawing out exactly what I wanted to convey in each message. Since completing the project, I have learned from this technique. My sermon process now begins three to four weeks out from the actual preaching date.

Third, I have discovered that learning from the Christian year is best accomplished in community. While I have individually followed the seasons for many years, in the context of this project I grew to appreciate how formational the seasons can be when studied together. The congregation repeatedly expressed their excitement about this project and, even after its completion, have continued to ask questions pertaining to the Christian year. Many have continued to express their desire to practice the Christian year in our worship, as well as corporate study of each season and its meaning.

Theological Significance

The supreme theological significance of this project is the spiritual understanding of the Christian year that most participants now hold. The data indicates a positive move in every aspect of the project, with substantial moves from the Positive Control Group. This is exciting, however, the true test of this project's theological significance can only be measured over time. Will the congregation continue to observe the Christian year? Will doing so create renewal that can be measured over the years? Based on the responses to the qualitative questions, this project has birthed a new appreciation for worship that uses the Christian year. The growth of this new birth and its effects on worship and spirituality will only be seen over time.

Significance within the Ministry Context

This project showed a strong desire on the part of Calvary members to continue the practice of following the Christian year in our worship. Many of those who were affirmative in their desire to observe the year also expressed a desire to learn more about the individual seasons and how they contribute to spiritual growth and worship renewal. One of the true benefits of the Christian year comes through repetition. As each year passes, we become more encompassed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus through our covenant to be characters in God's unfolding story of salvation. Certainly, if our church continues down the path of observing the Christian year in our own narrative, we will be in a prime position to experience meaningful and sustainable renewal.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In terms of success versus failure, this project was a success in that participants exhibited a marked increase in their knowledge of the Christian year and their desire to follow the seasons therein through worship. Some even spoke of the spiritual renewal that took place as a result of their participation. Ultimately that is the end goal—that individuals would grow in their faith by observing the Christian year in worship. To the extent that goal will be accomplished for all participants—only time will tell; but that is a significant part of observing the Christian year. We are immersed *over time* in the stories of God’s saving acts and how those acts relate to our lives; and over time those stories permeate the pores of our soul to change us into more of who God created us to be. I believe the results of this project prove that the congregation of Calvary experienced how this is possible. Furthermore, I am encouraged that many of them desire to grow in their faith through observing the seasons in our church’s worship.

Part of renewal in our faith is recognizing that the story of God is present in every life situation we encounter. Progressive theologian Sean Graham has written in his blog:

God is active in every story, and as such, God is often the invisible Character. Part of being a follower of Christ is becoming more and more acutely aware that God is a part of every aspect of our lives. That God is moving, crafting us, showing us grace and mercy; that God is with us in joy and sorrows, in victories and defeats. People may doubt the claims of the Gospel, but the one thing they can’t doubt and can’t deny is its effects on your life.⁸⁰

80. Sean Graham, “God Stories,” *Emerging Voices* (blog), *Patheos*, March 13, 2013, accessed November 30, 2016, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/emergentvillage/2013/03/god-stories/>.

Observing the Christian year allows us to discover God's presence in every story and to share how Jesus completes those stories with grace and reassurance. Moreover, by actually *living* the Christian year we are freed from the petty regiments that traditional religion has taught us. One participant in this project commented, "Be careful this does not become a ritual."⁸¹ I understand the source of their sentiment, but I would ask what is wrong with being ritualized in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the hope that our life becomes more and more like his? A second participant asked how observing the Christian year would be interpreted by non-believers.⁸² As noted in the Introduction, the Christian year lends itself to the evangelistic mission of the church. By proclaiming God's saving work in Jesus we give witness to the world of God's power; and the more we become like Jesus in our words of grace and acts of love, the more we proclaim the power of the gospel.

"The sharing of our faith," Graham insists, "becomes the living of our story" by simply doing the things Jesus did. We no longer have to convince people to come to faith, but, instead, allow people to see how God is present in everything and by that presence, life is better. That is not some pie-in-the-sky, Pollyanna type of evangelistic message, but one that is deeply rooted in the knowledge of God's ability to transform any circumstance into one of hope, joy, and rebirth. Pope John Paul II's words on our position in Christ prove helpful here:

We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through his own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of his Paschal Mystery - the mystery of his Death and Resurrection. We are an Easter People

81. PCG Member #2 in Post-Project Survey, Question #53, (Appendix E.2).

82. PCG Member #3 in Post-Project PCG Interview, Question #3, (Appendix E.3).

and Alleluia is our song! We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the fundamental duty of love of neighbor, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of Joy. We realize that joy is demanding; it demands unselfishness; it demands a readiness to say with Mary: “Be it done unto me according to thy word.” We pray for God to help [all of us] see that the good things in [our] lives come from God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ.⁸³

Like all spiritual disciplines, the power of the Christian year for spiritual formation comes in its repetition. We do not grow out of unselfish behavior over night, but through time and commitment. Likewise, we do not comprehend the power of the seasons by the occasional observance. Liturgy becomes forming when year after year, and season after season, individuals participate fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus by choosing to follow him.

In Lewis Carroll’s marvelous children’s book *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, poor, lost, confused Alice asks the Cheshire Cat, “Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” The Cheshire Cat replies, “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.” “I don’t much care where,” Alice responds. “Then,” the Cat slyly says, “it doesn’t matter which way you go.”⁸⁴ Likewise, I believe following Jesus depends a good deal on where we want to go and by following Jesus through the Christian year we are actually led to a good and beautiful place. Paul believed that place to be our full transformation into God’s own son. It starts with our baptism and the call to live in, with, and through Jesus. At that moment of baptism, where we are going and who would accompany us was positively determined, and we were set on a path to holiness.

83. “The Apostolic Journey to the Far East and Oceania” by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the Feast of Saint Andrew 2006, Sections 3 and 4,” Vatican Archive, accessed November 30, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/angelus/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19861130.html.

84. Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Goodreads, accessed December 5, 2016, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/449586-alice-would-you-tell-me-please-which-way-i-ought>.

The Christian year provides a road map toward that end—not only for those of us who desperately seek to follow Jesus, but also those whom we encourage to join us on the journey. Baptized into Jesus, our lives have purpose, direction, and responsibility. The holiness we seek—and to which we are called—is brought about by the constant immersion in the stories of God’s saving acts.

Therefore, we need to keep telling the story of Jesus. We need to tell how the angels sang in chorus at his birth “Glory to God in the highest! Peace and good tidings to earth.” We need to tell how he fasted alone in the desert, about the years of his labor and the sorrow he bore; how he was despised and afflicted, rejected and poor. We need to tell of the cross where he writhed in anguish and pain, of the grave where they laid him, and, most importantly, we need to tell how he liveth again. We need to tell how he’s gone back to heaven and how he is interceding for us. We need to tell of the sweet Holy Spirit he has poured out from above, how he is coming in glory to rescue all the saints of his love. We need to tell the story of Jesus till its words are written on our hearts. Then, with any faith, through our telling the story we will begin to *live* the story so that our lives are transformed into the image of Jesus, and his mission will become our mission, and the kingdom of God will not only be in the Word, but in the world.

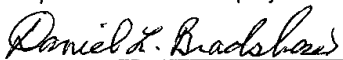
APPENDIX A

DEACON/LEADERSHIP TEAM COVENANT⁸⁵

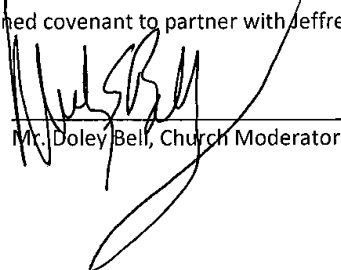
The following bullet points outline the initiative for Jeffrey C. Hayes and his Doctor of Ministry Project involving Calvary Baptist Church. Participation in this project will add value and enhance the overall ministry of our church. Gratitude is expressed in advance for all support and encouragement.

- Calvary Baptist Church (Group) covenants with Jeffrey C. Hayes (Facilitator) to fulfill in its entirety the Doctor of Ministry project set forth below.
- The title of this project is: "Educating Calvary Baptist Church, Asheville, NC, on the Value of Following the Christian Year as a Means for Spiritual Renewal Through Worship."
- The project will educate the congregation on the meaning and history of eight seasons in the Christian Year as well as their opportunity for producing worship renewal.
- The project will begin on October 9, 2016 and conclude on November 20, 2016.
- Willing participants of this project will be two named groups. 1) The "Positive Control Group," will be selected by Jeff and expected to participate in all facets of the project. 2) Members of the congregation who voluntarily choose to participate in any components of the project. A covenant for the Positive Control Group will be distributed at a later date. No covenant will be distributed to the congregation.
- Components of the project will include a six-week sermon series, Sunday School lessons, and an educational/devotional workbook. Positive Control Group participants are expected to be present and complete all components to the best of their ability. Congregational participants are invited to participate at their choosing.
- The six-week sermon component will be video and audio recorded. Per our normal operating procedure, the audio recordings will be posted to the church website.
- Information regarding the project will be distributed to the positive control group and congregation via the *Crosspoints* newsletter, worship bulletin, personal letters, and designated meetings scheduled by the facilitator.
- Surveys, evaluations, and interviews will be the tools used to measure this project.
- All information that is shared will be considered confidential, including journals, dialogues, surveys, and recordings. General age-ranges and gender may be associated with results in publication, but name and contact information will never be used.
- Once all data is compiled and analyzed, and once Jeff completes this project, all journals, recordings, surveys, and interviews associated with this project will be destroyed.
- While the facilitator promises confidentiality, and while confidentiality will be heavily stressed throughout the project, there is an understanding that the facilitator cannot promise confidentiality on the part of others outside of his control.
- This covenant is completely voluntary. At any time Calvary Baptist Church or Jeffrey C. Hayes may choose to withdraw from participation. Choosing not to participate will not affect church membership or the relationship therein for the group or facilitator.
- If questions or concerns arise about participation in this project or the initiative of the project, please contact Jeff or his project advisor, Guy Sayles, at any time.

On behalf of Calvary Baptist Church, Asheville, NC, the undersigned covenant to partner with Jeffrey C. Hayes and his doctoral project in all its scope and evaluation.



Mr. Dan Bradshaw, Deacon Chairperson



Mr. Doley Bell, Church Moderator

85. This project was scheduled for six Sundays at the time this covenant was drafted. After consultation with my advisor, the project was expanded to eight Sundays. Both Deacons and Leadership Team were informed of this change and it met with their approval.

APPENDIX B

POSITIVE CONTROL GROUP

This includes all written materials, minus evaluations and surveys, distributed to the Positive Control Group during the project.

B.1 Positive Control Group Invitation Letter

B.2 Positive Control Group Introductory Letter

B.3 Positive Control Group Introductory Meeting

B.4 Positive Control Group Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX B.1

POSITIVE CONTROL GROUP INVITATION LETTER

Dear _____,

The summer is rapidly coming to a close, the sun seems to set earlier each evening, and the smell of erasers and number 2 pencils are filling the air. The seasons certainly come and go fast don't they?

It is because of this change in seasons that I am writing you today. As you are aware, I am in the midst of completing my Doctor of Ministry degree. This Fall, the project portion of my studies will commence. My project is titled "Tell Me the Story of Jesus: A Study in the Seasons of the Christian Year." Through this project, I hope to expose people to the wonderful spiritual formation that can occur by following the seasons of the formal church calendar as well as an educational component aimed at teaching the Christian year.

If you are receiving this letter, it is because I would like you to be part of a special group in my project. The "Positive Control Group," as it will be called, will participate in all aspects of the project and anonymously complete an evaluative tool to measure how well the project was conducted. The larger congregation will be involved in the project, but it is the Positive Control Group that will help measure its success.

I am only sending this letter to a certain number of people, so I do hope you will choose to help in this phase of my ministry studies. What I am humbly asking from you is the following:

- Be present at an overview meeting on Tuesday, September 27 from 5:30-6:30PM in the Conference Room.
- Commit to being present in Sunday School and worship each Sunday between October 2-November 20. In the event that you cannot be present, view the provided online worship video before the following Sunday after your absence. (If you already know you will miss more than two Sundays during this time, please choose not to participate in the project.)
- Complete readings in a workbook that I will provide.
- Engage in dialogue with the group and myself.
- Complete the evaluative instruments that I will provide.
- Be present at a post-project dinner meeting on Monday, November 29 from 5:30-7:00PM in the Conference Room. (Dinner will be my treat as payment for your time along with my enduring appreciation!)

Please know your participation in this project is completely voluntary and your identity throughout the process will be anonymous. At the September 27th meeting you will receive a number that will serve as your identification for all future interviews and evaluations. Your name will never be published or associated with this number in any

public way. Though your responses may be published in my final analysis, your name will not be attached to your answers or appear anywhere in the final report.

If you are willing to assist me in this project, please let me know by email at jeff@xxxxx.com or by text or phone at xxx-xxxx. I would appreciate your response, either yes or no, by August 21st but I do hope the answer will be yes!

Thanks for your support and willingness to consider this invitation!

Pastor Jeff

APPENDIX B.2

POSITIVE CONTROL GROUP INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Project Participant,

You are receiving this letter because you have agreed to be a member of the “Positive Control Group” (PCG) in my Doctor of Ministry project. Let me say from the outset, you have my undying gratitude! Without your participation, my project could not take place. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

As we begin this journey together, there are a number of items you need to be aware of:

- Included in this letter is your **PCG Number**. Painstaking efforts have been made to safeguard your anonymity through this process: one person filling each envelope, a second person sealing each envelope, and a third person addressing each envelope. No one knows your number but you! Please do not share your number with anyone, especially me. Why all this trouble, you may ask? Your anonymity ensures the proper procedure for the duration of this project. [I realize my first letter indicated you would receive this number on September 27th, but the calendar dictated otherwise.]
- You will use your PCG Number to identify yourself as a member of the Positive Control Group on all surveys and evaluations. Again, this is anonymous, but it does allow me to distinguish between the PCG and other members of our congregation.
- On **Sunday, September 25th** before the morning worship service, a pre-project survey will be distributed to the congregation for completion. There will be a place on the survey for you to identify yourself as a PCG member with your PCG number. Again, only you know this number so please do not forget or lose it. If you plan to be absent on this Sunday, please contact me as soon as possible.
- On **Tuesday, September 27th from 5:30PM—6:30PM** we will have our overview meeting in the Conference Room. At that time, you will sign a required “Informed Consent Form.” I will also answer any questions you might have about the project. If you are unable to be at this meeting, please contact me as soon as possible. You must receive this information prior to the project’s start on Sunday, October 2nd.
- Workbooks will be made available to the congregation on Sunday, September 25th. If you do not receive one on that Sunday, I will have them available at our meeting on September 27th. You must have a workbook in your possession before the project begins on October 2nd.
- Please mark your calendar now for the post-project dinner meeting on **Monday, November 29 from 5:30-7:00PM**. (Dinner will be my treat as payment for your time, as well as my enduring appreciation!) This meeting will be difficult to make-up, so please make every effort to be present.

I realize that much of this sounds very “formal and structured.” That is the nature of running an “official” experiment, so please be patient with me during the next two months. There are a number of requirements I must fulfill as part of my project. Once again, thank you for participating. I would appreciate a text/call (xxx-xxxx) or email (jeff@xxxxx.com) stating you received this letter; confirming that everyone has been assigned a Positive Control Group (PCG) Number.

Thanks for your support and willingness to participate!

Pastor Jeff

APPENDIX B.3

POSITIVE CONTROL GROUP INTRODUCTORY MEETING

September 27, 2016

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: A Study in the Seasons of the Christian Year
Jeffrey C. Hayes, Facilitator

Project Initiative

The purpose of this project is to study eight specific seasons of the Christian year and their benefits for spiritual growth in relationship to Jesus Christ. A by-product of this study is the opportunity to observe the Christian year in future worship opportunities.

Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Gardner-Webb University has reviewed this project and given full approval for its completion.

Definition of a Positive Control Group (PCG)

A “Positive Control Group” is part of an experimental design. A positive control receives treatment with a known response, so that this positive response can be compared to the unknown response of the treatment to a secondary group.

Relationship of PCG to Project

The “treatment” received by the PCG is full exposure to the scope of this project compared to the secondary group (congregation) which will complete the project at will. The results of both groups will be measured beside one another to determine the value of the project initiative.

Workbook

An educational workbook has been made available to all participants. Please confirm with the facilitator that you have received a workbook.

Pre-Project Survey

A Pre-Project Survey has been distributed to all participants. Please confirm with the facilitator that you have completed this survey.

Informed Consent Form

Gardner-Webb’s Institutional Review Board requires facilitators to provide informed consent to the project participants. At the direction of the facilitator, please review the Informed Consent Form and sign in the appropriate space.

Covenant Agreement

While your participation in this project is purely voluntary, you have covenanted to participate in all aspects contained therein. Please make every effort to complete the project as presented by the facilitator.

Contact

If you have questions about this study, you may contact the facilitator, Jeff Hayes by phone, xxx-xxxx, or email, jeff@xxxxx.com

Questions about your rights as a participant

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this project, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Jeff's project advisor, Guy Sayles, by phone at xxx-xxxx, or email, guy@xxxxx.com.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!

Jeff

APPENDIX B.4

POSITIVE CONTROL GROUP INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: A Study in the Seasons of the Christian Year
Jeffrey C. Hayes, Facilitator

Thank you for assisting with this project initiative. Your participation will add value and enhance the overall ministry of our church. Please read the following covenant and agree to the statements set forth by signing the form at the bottom of this page.

I have freely chosen to participate in the doctoral project for Jeffrey C. Hayes.
 As such, I understand the following:

- As a willing participant of the Positive Control Group (PCG), I commit to complete all work to the best of my ability as assigned by the facilitator (Jeff), participate in the entirety of the Fall worship sermon series by being present each Sunday in Sunday School and Worship, utilize the educational workbook by reading and completing each assignment, engage in dialogue with the group and facilitator when necessary, and complete all surveys, interviews, and evaluations.
- As a participant of the PCG, I understand that I am expected to attend:
 - September 27—Positive Control Group introductory meeting at 5:30PM
 - October 2—Study in Marking Time Sunday School and Worship
 - October 9—Study in Advent Sunday School and Worship
 - October 16—Study in Christmas Sunday School and Worship
 - October 23—Study in Epiphany Sunday School and Worship
 - October 30—Study in Lent Sunday School and Worship
 - November 6—Study in Holy Week (Triduum) Sunday School and Worship
 - November 13—Study in Easter Sunday School and Worship
 - November 20—Study in Pentecost and OT Sunday School and Worship
 - November 27—Post-project survey
 - November 29—PCG debriefing and post-project interview at 5:30PM
- All the information I share is confidential, including dialogues, surveys, interviews, and recordings. My general age-range and gender may be associated with results in publication, but my name and contact information as a participant will never be used.
- At a given time I will be assigned a number that will serve as my identification for all future interviews and surveys. That number will only be used to associate my answers in order that my responses remain anonymous. My name will never be published or associated with this number in any public way.
- Once all the data is compiled and analyzed, and once Jeff completes this project, all evaluations, recordings, surveys, and interviews associated with this project will be destroyed.

- While the facilitator (Jeff) promises confidentiality, and while confidentiality will be heavily stressed throughout the project, I understand I share my thoughts and opinions with other group members. Group confidentiality will be clearly requested, but the facilitator cannot promise confidentiality on the part of others outside of his control.
- My participation in this project is completely voluntary, and declining to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. Choosing not to participate will not affect my church membership or my relationship with Calvary Baptist Church in any way.
- If I choose, I may withdraw from this project at any time. I also understand if I choose to participate I may decline to answer any question with which I am uncomfortable answering.
- The benefits of this project to me as a participant will be in the form of increased knowledge and spiritual formation as it pertains to the seasons of the Christian year. It would also be expected that a logical outcome would be that the larger church body will benefit in the same manner.
- At no time will I experience harm outside of the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort, in and of myself, that can be ordinarily experienced in daily life.
- I understand that if at any point in this project I choose not to participate further, by choice or circumstance, my decision will result in no penalty or loss of benefits.
- I understand that if I am unable to attend required meetings and I am unwilling to “make-up” missed sessions in a timely manner, my participation in the PCG may be terminated at the discretion of the facilitator. In this event, I may still choose to voluntarily participate as a member of the larger congregation.
- If I have any questions or concerns about my participation in this project, I can contact Jeff or his project advisor, Guy Sayles, at any time.

I, _____, covenant to partner with Jeffrey C. Hayes and his doctoral project in all its scope and evaluation. I understand the rights and privileges of participation in this project.

Participant's Signature

Date

Facilitator's Signature

Date

White Copy—Facilitator
Yellow Copy—Participant

APPENDIX C

STUDY WORKBOOK

This includes the written materials associated with the study workbook, including permission statements, “The Story of Jesus” workbook, and Sunday School teacher notes.

C.1 Graphics Approval Letter

C.2 Hartford Institute Approval Letter

C.3 “The Story of Jesus” Study Workbook

C.4 Sunday School Teaching Guide

APPENDIX C.1

GRAPHICS APPROVAL LETTER

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeff Hayes <jeff@xxxxxx.com>

To: traqair <traqair@xxxxxx.com>

Sent: Mon, Aug 22, 2016 11:06 am

Subject: Stushie Art

Hello, my name is Jeff Hayes. I am the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Asheville, NC. I am also a student working on my Doctor of Ministry degree at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. My dissertation is on using the Christian calendar in spiritual formation. I came across your website of beautiful art and I would like to use some of the pictures in my dissertation. I am asking for permission to do so, giving proper credit throughout. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jeff Hayes

-----Reply Message-----

From: traqair <traqair@xxxxxx.com>

To: Jeff Hayes <jeff@xxxxxx.com>

Sent: Mon, Aug 22, 2016 2:40 pm

Subject: Stushie Art

Thank you, Jeff, for your email. I will be delighted for you to include my art in your dissertation. If you need any special or large jpgs for printing purposes, just write me an email and I'll send them to you.

God bless all that you seek to do for Christ and His Church.

John Stuart

Heaven's Highway Daily Devotions

May God grant you the desire of your heart - Psalm 20 v 4

John's art website

www.stushieart.com

APPENDIX C.2

HARTFORD INSTITUTE APPROVAL LETTER

March 29, 2016

Pastor Jeff Hayes
Calvary Baptist Church
531 Haywood Road
Asheville, NC 28806

Dear Pastor Hayes:

Thank you for your interest in Hartford Institutes Church Planning Inventory and consideration in asking for permission to use portions of the layout template from the Hartford survey in your own Doctor of Ministry Project at Gardner-Webb School of Divinity in Boiling Springs, NC.

Jeff, you have our permission to use portions of the layout template from the Hartford survey in your Doctor of Ministry Project giving proper credit within your dissertation.

Good luck with your D.Min. Project and again, thank you for your interest in our Church Planning Inventory.

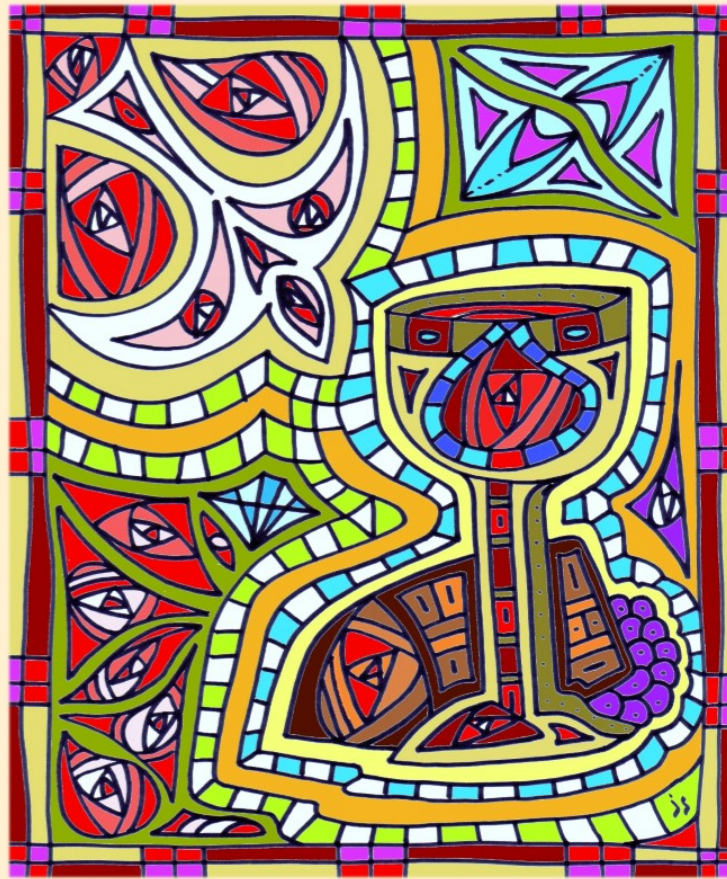
Sincerely,

Scott Thumma, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology of Religion
Director of D.Min and Hartford Institute for Religion Research
Hartford Seminary

APPENDIX C.3

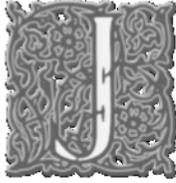
“THE STORY OF JESUS” STUDY WORKBOOK (pp 107-195)

TELL ME THE
Story of **J**esus
A STUDY IN THE SEASONS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR



Calvary Baptist Church
October 2, 2016 ~ November 20, 2016
Jeffrey C. Hayes, Pastor

TELL ME THE

 *Story of*  *Jesus*

A STUDY IN THE SEASONS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

Calvary Baptist Church
October 2, 2016 ~ November 20, 2016
Jeffrey C. Hayes, Pastor

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Acknowledgments

I am indebted to many authors who have formed my understanding of the Christian year as I have sought to piece together this workbook. They have enriched my appreciation of the seasons and infused within me a desire to follow the seasons more closely as a means of formation in the life of Jesus. Of particular note, the work of Robert E. Webber (*Rediscovering the Christian Feasts* and *Ancient Future Time: Forming Spiritually through the Christian Year*) shaped the sermons and Sunday School lessons; as did *Living the Christian Year* by Bobby Gross. Sister Joan Chittister's *The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life* was a fresh take on the intricacies of various seasons and I borrow her thoughts in the opening pages of this workbook. Two texts by Delia Halverson, *Teaching and Celebrating the Christian Year* along with *What's in Worship?* contributed to the creative ideas for celebrating each season. Much of the history pertaining to each season is drawn from Donald Nixon and Welton Gaddy's *Worship: A Symphony for the Senses*. Finally, I am grateful to Tommy Bratton of First Baptist Asheville for sharing his copy of Arden Mead and King Schoenfeld's *I Love to Live the Story: A Guide to Understanding and Celebrating the Christian Church Year*. This brief text, no longer in print, inspired my thinking throughout the following pages.

Of note, all drawings of the Christian year are used with permission by artist and pastor John Stuart from his website www.stushieart.com. All graphic images are used from online free license distributors.

How to Use This Workbook

- ♦ The initial pages offer an overview of the Christian year, including my own affinity for observing the Christian year in worship. I encourage the participant to begin with these pages before moving to the discussion of each individual season.
- ♦ While there are multiple festivals and feast days in the Christian year, this study focuses on eight major seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time). The seasons are broken down individually in the second third of the workbook. The participant should start by reading the introductory material about each season in the week that season will be discussed in Sunday School and worship.
- ♦ Sunday School lessons are provided for each week of the study. The questions therein will be discussed and completed during the Sunday School hour. However, should the participant desire, the questions may be completed prior to each lesson.
- ♦ Sermon notes are provided. These correspond with each sermon that will be preached during the study. Also provided are “think more” questions to help the participant reflect further on each season. These questions can be answered at the participant’s leisure.
- ♦ The final section of the workbook contains a list of other special days in the Christian year as well as my final thoughts in completing this project.
- ♦ The Annotated Bibliography provides references related to this workbook alongside resources for further study.

It was in those first couple months that I fell in love with liturgy, the ancient pattern of worship shared mainly in the Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, and Episcopal churches. It felt like a gift that had been caretaken by generations of the faithful and handed to us to live out and caretake and hand off. Like a stream that has flowed long before us and will continue long after us. A stream that we got to swim in, so that we, like those who came before us, can be immersed in language of truth and promise and grace. Something about the liturgy was simultaneously destabilizing and centering; my individualism subverted by being joined to other people through God to find who I was.

Nadia Bolz-Weber

Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint

Preface

What time is it? I ask that question everyday. The answer, however, is trickier than it first appears. If I am speaking with my wife, an educator, then the answer to that question is governed by the school day. "It's fourth period," she will tell me. If the question is posed to a stock broker, the answer will involve opening and closing bells. A psychologist will respond, "It's time for my ten o'clock." And an accountant in mid-April will be quick to say, "It's tax time!" In the church we determine time by many factors. Sunday mornings have very distinctive times: 9:45AM is Sunday School and 11:00AM is worship. Then there is the church calendar. Some churches govern their time by civic holidays such as Mother's Day and the Fourth of July. Others use the activities of the church such as Promotion Sunday and Stewardship Sunday. And then there's the Christian year—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, et cetera.

One of my goals in life is to fully live the Christian year so that when I am asked, "What time is it?" I can answer, "It's Lent" or "It's Pentecost." Why, you ask, would I desire to do such a strange thing? Well simply put, the Christian year tells the story of Jesus over and over again. And as a follower of Jesus, I want my life to become his life. By living the Christian year, I want Jesus to shape everything I do, even how I tell time.

Second, living the Christian year can be extremely evangelistic. For example, if you choose to live the days of Advent versus jumping right into Christmas the day after Thanksgiving—and if you journey the fifty days of Easter rather than limiting your celebration to one morning, you will be doing something countercultural that others will notice. And when they ask why you live in that manner, the opportunity will exist for you to say something about Jesus.

Third, nothing you will ever do in the life of the church will form you more consistently into the pattern of Jesus than worship that follows the Christian year. By repeating the story year after year after year, you will glean the full picture of God's saving work and your focus will remain fixed there as you grow in spiritual maturity.

In essence, living the Christian year will give meaning to every "time" in your life: past, present, and future—which is exactly it's intended purpose. But living this time is not easy. Culture tells us the opening day of baseball season, not Easter, is the most important day of the spring. It tells us that Black Friday, not Advent, is the real preparation for Christmas. Honestly, we receive little help living the Christian year. That is why I am excited to present this series of sermons and lessons. I pray they will help you find your place in God's story by living into the great time of God's year.

Why I Love the Christian Year in Worship

"Tell me the story of Jesus." I can still remember singing that classic hymn as a child in the church we attended. As I grew older and started ministry, I recall Sunday night hymn sings at the little country church where I served as pastor. No doubt those times proved formational in my understanding of the faith. Most hymns were written to teach lessons. This was the case with the beloved children's carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas." The same can be said of the Christian year. By journeying through the Christian year, I am formed in the faith and become one with Jesus.

Moreover, I recall a very difficult personal time in my life when I needed guidance. The Christian year became the vehicle for bringing me back to a fulfilled life in Christ. Through hymns, the familiar stories, even the colors and symbols, I began to see myself in the story of God's redeeming work. That experience ignited within me a love affair with the seasons of the Christian year.

There are a number of benefits to following the year. One, the Christian year is participatory. Early Christians knew worship was not a passive event. The word "liturgy," which forms the Liturgical Year (Christian year), literally means "the work of the people." Corporate prayers, litanies, songs, and responses all add action to our worship.

Second, the year is thoroughly biblical. Whereas many churches these days have made Scripture a lesson in "pop-psychology," the Christian year doubles down on our engagement with Scripture and our need to hear the entirety of God's written word. Christian year worship puts our focus exactly where it need be: Jesus.

Third, we are connected to Christians throughout the ages. I find it reassuring to know the content of worship has not changed much since the beginning stages of the church. This reminds me that we do not worship God in a vacuum, but as God's people throughout time.

Finally, Christian year worship is holistic. We are invited to participate in God's story with mind, body, soul, and spirit. The senses are engaged through art, music, the lighting of candles, prayer, taste, smell, and the hearing of the word.

Christian year worship does all of these things and more. It is why I look forward to what this study has in store for us as a church. And whether this is your first encounter with the year or you've been following it as long as you can remember, may the Spirit of God be made anew in your life as you follow the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes all the way to an empty tomb and beyond. After all, each of us can never be told the story of Jesus too often.

Introduction to the Christian Year



Christianity takes time seriously. God is made known in past, present, and future. Our salvation is accomplished through specific events in history, made real in the present lives of believers, and will be brought to completion in the eternal realm of the future. We know the story of Jesus in terms of time. In the fullness of time, God invaded our history, assumed flesh and blood, healed, taught, and walked the earth. Jesus was put to death on a specific day related to the Passover season and rose three days later. He has promised to come again, and though that day is unknown, there are signs in the times of that day drawing closer and closer.

The story of Jesus as told in time is reflected in our worship. Like the other arenas of our lives—such as a recurring family meal and familiar blessing—worship is structured around rhythms and recitations. How we follow those rhythms determines how we encounter God in the worship experience. The way we use our time in worship—or any area of life for that matter—is the best indication of what is really important to us. If the story of Jesus is pinnacle, then it will be reflected in how we conduct our worship and keep our time. One answer to the question, “What do Christians believe?” could certainly be “Look how they keep time.” This will become clear as we discover the rhythms and recitations of each season in the Christian year.

Developing directly from Scripture, the Christian year has been a way of recalling and proclaiming the story of God through an annual cycle of festivals and seasons. For centuries, followers of Christ have shaped their faith and marked time by the days and events of the Christian year.

Why Follow the Christian Year?

It is understandable that 21st century churches, especially those seeking to be contemporary, would question the value of following such an ancient tradition. But for those who truly desire to grow into Christ, the Christian year provides an opportunity like none other.

First, the Christian year allows us to look back by connecting us with all of Scripture through a planned series of readings. These readings share some of the best loved stories of the faith as well as themes of what it means to walk with Jesus.

Second, the year allows us to look ahead along with the entire community of

Christians. Jesus promised his sure return. Living the Christian year keeps us focused on that coming day.

Third, we are shaped more into the likeness of Jesus. Roughly speaking, the first half of the Christian year (Advent to Pentecost Day) recalls the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The second half of the year (Pentecost season to Christ the King Sunday) focuses on Jesus' teaching and discipleship—and what it means for us to follow his teaching in our daily lives.

How the Christian Year Came to Be

The early church considered every Sunday an Easter Sunday. Each time they gathered for worship it was a reliving of Christ's Easter victory over sin and death. Christians then, as now, knew they shared this victory with others and they wanted their worship to recognize God's saving act for the entire world.

As centuries passed, the church became dependent on worship as the primary arena for teaching the story of Jesus along with other special days. Repetition of the biblical stories, the liturgy of worship, and special days year after year helped the church learn, remember, and celebrate the main teachings of the faith.

During the Middle Ages the leaders of the church sought to unify worship. While most churches celebrated the special days, they did not do so in a consistent fashion from place to place. So the church came together and created the Christian year (also known as the Liturgical Year or Church Year). The purpose was to have a biblically grounded way of teaching the faith, forming believers in Christ, and an avenue for celebrating special days in the life of the church.

Learning from the Christian Year

Utilizing the Christian year can add new meaning to our worship and removes the distance between past, present, and future. That, in and of itself, would be a worthy reason to follow the Christian year. But more importantly, the seasons of the year provide us opportunity to review the life of Jesus and how his life gives meaning to us today.

As early as the book of Exodus we find the concept of sacred time as a vehicle for teaching faith (Ex. 12-13). In Nehemiah there is a story of the gathering community to hear a word and respond by celebrating (Nh. 8). Luke informs us that this practice continued as he illustrates Jesus delivering the word in the synagogue (4:14-21). In the last chapter of Matthew Jesus instructs his followers to "Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded" (28:19). Indeed, there is Scriptural precedence for teaching the faith through time spent in worship.

Today, many churches translate “the word” in a worship service as identical with “the sermon.” In actuality, however, we experience the word of God in a myriad of ways beyond just listening to a sermon. Just as Jesus emphasized teaching by a variety of methods, so does the Christian year teach the faith by employing various learning styles.

- ♦ **Verbal**—having to do with language and words, both written and spoken
Jesus told stories and parables and also read from the Scriptures
 The life of Jesus in the Christian year is explained through stories, sermons, and the reading of Scripture
- ♦ **Logical**—having to do with inductive thinking and reasoning
Jesus used questions and answers to help his listeners learn
 Sermons often pose questions to listeners intended to help them reflect on how the life of Jesus intersects with their own lives
- ♦ **Visual**—having to do with visualizing objects and creating pictures
Jesus used common objects, such as a bucket, cup, and coin, to explain meanings
 Individual seasons have particular colors and symbols which relate to the stories being told about the life of Jesus
- ♦ **Kinesthetic**—having to do with physical activity and motion
Jesus went fishing with his disciples, washed their feet, and healed with his hands
 We reenact the last days of Jesus’ earthly life by eating and drinking the last supper; we also use drama as a means of interpreting Jesus’ story, such as Christmas or Easter pageants
- ♦ **Musical**—having to do with hearing rhythms as well as reading notes
Jesus sang hymns and other music with his followers
 Worship hymns and choruses tell the story of Jesus as do rhythmic litanies and responsive readings
- ♦ **Interpersonal**—having to do with relationships between persons
Jesus developed small groups such as the twelve disciples
 Simply being the church united in celebratory worship of the various seasons builds community
- ♦ **Intrapersonal**—having to do with self-reflection and awareness
Jesus often left the disciples to experience times of solitude
 We spend moments of silent contemplation when we pray and read the Scriptures about the life of Jesus
- ♦ **Nature**—having to do with creation and the use of outdoors
Jesus used nature to teach and most of his teaching occurred in the outdoors
 The use of live flowers, such as poinsettias, palm branches, or lilies, remind us of the stories surrounding Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection

By employing the Christian year in worship, followers of Christ are able to connect with the story in a variety of ways that speak to each person’s learning style and,

consequently, attune every sense to the truth of God's story. Sensitive worshippers will be alert for opportunities to engage God's story in creative and exciting ways. To be true, the Christian year is living history, ancient events brought to life each time the church gathers for worship. It is history that is as alive as the church itself!

Colors of the Christian Year

The colors of the year began in the earliest centuries simply as white and, later, red for all occasions. During the Middle Ages as the church developed the entirety of the Christian year, a set of specific colors and meanings came to be attached to each season. Obviously, the meaning of each color came from a culture different than our own, but their context can still be replicated today.



Green: life. Green appears during the seasons of Epiphany and Pentecost.



White: purity, holiness. White appears on Christmas day and the brief season following until Epiphany Day; Easter and the entire fifty days following, Trinity Sunday, other special saint days, weddings, and funerals.



Red: blood, fire, the Holy Spirit. Red appears on Pentecost Day. It is also the color for ordination.



Purple: royalty, repentance. Purple appears throughout Lent and in some churches Advent.



Blue: hope. Blue appears in some churches for the season of Advent.



Black: death, mourning. Black is used only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

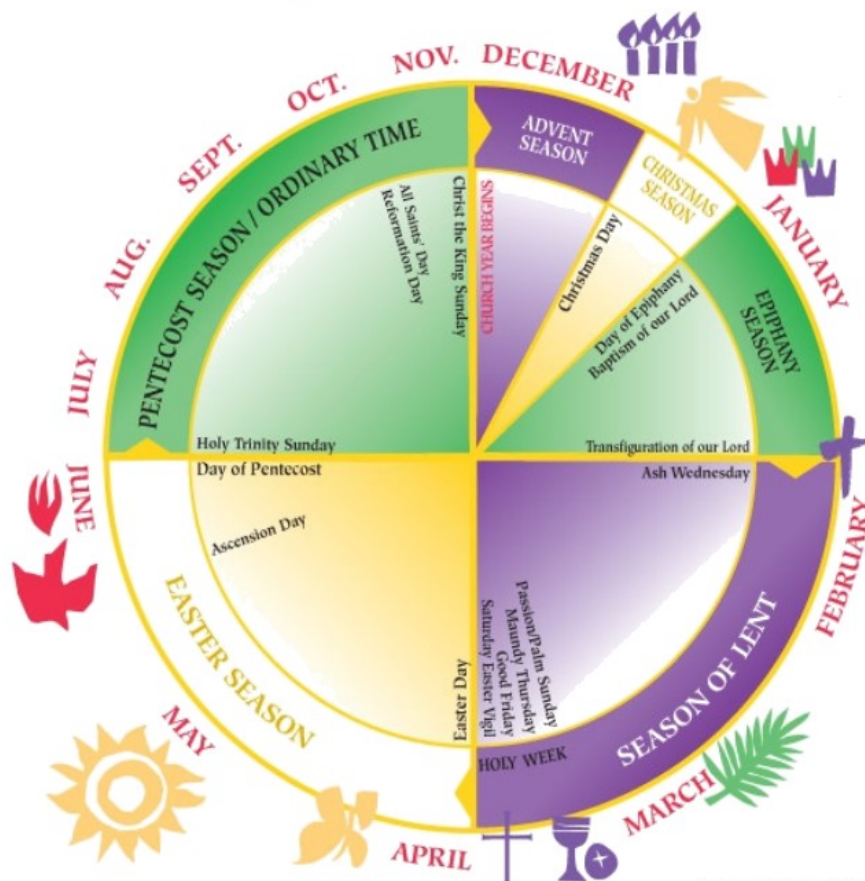


Gold: royalty, kingly. Gold normally appears alongside white on Christmas and Easter or as a substitute for other special days.



Rose: joy. Rose appears in some churches on the third Sunday of Advent and the fourth Sunday in Lent, both of which are considered days of joy.

The Cycle of the Christian Year



<http://www.oxfordcommunication.com/products/2016/the-year-of-our-lord-the-church-year-poster.aspx>

The Christian year revolves around three great festival seasons—Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost—and the seasons that connect them throughout the year.

Advent—4 weeks in preparation for Christ's coming both as a baby and in the future

Christmas—12 days of celebrating the birth of Christ leading to Epiphany

Epiphany—4 to 9 weeks of thanksgiving for Christ's revelation to the world

Lent—Ash Wednesday followed by 40 days (minus Sundays) of preparation concluding with Holy Week

Holy Week—Palm/Passion Sunday followed by the Great Triduum (the three days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and ending Easter Sunday)

Easter—Easter Day followed by 50 days of rejoicing, leading to the climax of Pentecost

Pentecost/Ordinary Time—Pentecost and the 24 weeks after from Holy Trinity Sunday to Christ the King Sunday

Christian Year Spirituality at a Glance

Season	Theme	Christological Emphasis	Spiritual Challenge
Advent	Preparation	Readiness for the coming of the Christ-child at Bethlehem and the return of Christ at the end of the age.	Prepare for the coming of Christ; repent and be ready for the second coming of Christ.
Christmas	Incarnation	The fulfillment of Israel in that the Messiah has come; prophecies are fulfilled and the Savior of the world is born.	Let Christ be born in a new way; embrace an incarnational spirituality.
Epiphany	Missional	The manifestation of Jesus as Savior not only for Jews, but for the world.	Make a new commitment to follow Jesus and share his Gospel in and through your life.
Lent	Repentance	A journey with Jesus toward his death.	Conduct a self-examination and time of repentance through prayer and fasting.
Holy Week (Great Triduum)	Death	Recalling the events that led to the death of Jesus, including his last supper, trial, and crucifixion.	Recommitment of our baptism to die and be raised with Christ.
Easter	New Life	A celebration of the saving event of the resurrection of Jesus; the most important event in Christendom and the source of all Christian year spirituality.	Connecting the resurrection with hope for ourselves and the church knowing God is as interested in us as he is with Christ.
Pentecost	Communication	The receiving of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the church and the growth of the early church.	Embrace the teaching of the church and renew the mission of the church to carry on the saving deeds of God.
Ordinary Time	Faithfulness	The public ministry of Jesus and the church.	Commitment to pattern our lives after the life of Jesus.

Forgetting Everything You Thought You Knew

Professor of Preaching and Worship, Laurence Stookey, has written an incredible book on understanding the Christian seasons entitled *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church*. In this book he debunks some of the common assumptions made concerning the Christian year. He also challenges the way many worship leaders (and pastors!) have always presented the year. While borrowing some of Stookey's premise, let this chart serve as a primer before exploring the seasons in the coming weeks.

If you assumed...

Christmas was the most important day in the Christian year.

Advent is primarily about the past expectation of a coming Messiah.

Christmas is primarily about a baby born in Bethlehem.

Christmas is only one day.

Epiphany is primarily about the coming of the Magi.

Lent is a sustained consideration of Jesus' suffering and death.

The Holy Week services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter morning are separate observances.

Easter day begins with a "sunrise service."

Easter is a day.

Consider this...

Easter is the oldest Christian season and the pinnacle of the Christian faith.

Advent is primarily about the future coming of Jesus, with present implications.

Christmas is primarily about the intersection of divinity and humanity.

Christmas is a season that lasts 12 days.

Epiphany is the celebration of God's gift of Jesus to the entire world.

Lent is a time for self-examination to know if we are being transformed by God.

The three great days constitute a single, continuous service of worship known as the Great Triduum.

Easter begins with a Saturday night vigil, begun in darkness and ending in light.

Easter is a season consisting of 50 days to rejoice, feast, and worship.

If you assumed...

"Resurrection" refers to the resuscitation of the corpse of Jesus.

The Day of Pentecost marks the beginning of a new season.

The Day of Pentecost marks the birth of the Holy Spirit.

"Ordinary Time" means that this portion of the year is uneventful.

The colors of the Christian year are of great spiritual importance.

The Christian year is well established and firmly fixed by tradition, without any margin for change.

The Christian year is not about Jesus.

Consider this...

The resurrection of Jesus is about far more than his resurrection alone. It is about our resurrection as well.

The Day of Pentecost closes the season of Easter and extends to Ordinary Time.

The Spirit has always been at work, even before Creation itself. The Day of Pentecost marks the birth of the church.

"Ordinary" simply refers to the lack of high festival days. This season offers us the opportunity to live like Jesus.

While playing an important role, colors are of secondary value in relation to the spiritual importance of seeing Jesus in each season.

Great variety exists between Eastern and Western traditions, denominations, and church leaders.

The entirety of the Christian year is about Jesus. Every element that makes up each season is meant to draw us closer and closer to Christ.

THE IMPORTANCE OF

Marking Time



OCTOBER 2, 2016

The Importance of Marking Time

My mother has always said that I am not one to tell a lie. I can remember as a child hearing her comment, "If I ask Jeff for the truth, he will tell me the truth." Those words still ring in my ears today. By no means do I claim to walk in the footsteps of George Washington who said "I cannot tell a lie," but every time I consider distancing myself from the truth, my mother's words resonate in my mind. In the Christian life, the voice of Jesus does the same thing for us. Every time we consider venturing away from our baptism—our call to live in Jesus and live like Jesus—his voice can be heard ringing in our ears. Nowhere more than in the Christian year have I found that voice to be audibly heard. It calls us to the intersection of divinity and humanity in Advent and Christmas, calls us to make known the good news in Epiphany; to repent and put to death our selfish ways in Lent and Holy Week; to be raised to a new life in Easter; to be empowered at Pentecost; and in Ordinary Time to realize our ordinary lives are meant to be lived extraordinarily well through Christ.

I believe the Christian year is the best means the church has for hearing the voice of Jesus over and over again. In the Christian year we walk with Jesus through all the details of his life and he, in return, walks with us in ours.

Early Christians knew the source of their faith was in Jesus. And it was Jesus who gave purpose and direction to how they should live. In particular, it was the death and resurrection of Jesus that led to the fullness of life. The early church claimed Paul's theology that in our baptism we die with Jesus and are raised to new life. In fact, baptism in the early church only took place on Easter—after a long and arduous time of study and self-reflection. The preparation for baptism was almost as important as the act of baptism itself because to live in Christ meant to live as Christ.

As the church grew, so did the importance of instilling the teaching of Scripture to new converts while reminding old believers what it means to follow Jesus. Therefore the Christian year, a daily immersion of what it means to live with, through, and in Jesus, came to be. To follow the Christian year is to no longer pattern our lives by the ways of the world, but to allow God to transform us into a new person, spiritually mature, able to test and approve God's good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

A Brief History of Marking Time

Jesus is the source of our faith and the one who gives meaning to time. The saving deeds of God through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection give rise to the *pascal mystery* (the oldest term for Easter) which is the foundation for the Christian year.

Without Jesus, there would be no Christian spirituality and no need for the Christian year. Adolf Adam has defined the Christian year as, “the commemorative celebration, throughout a calendar year; of the saving deeds God accomplished in Jesus Christ.” The very cycle of time is located in God’s saving deeds.

This understanding of God’s saving acts reaches back to the very beginnings of the Old Testament and Jewish tradition. Though Jewish spirituality is marked by multiple events celebrating God’s saving acts, the pinnacle festival is the Passover feast that recalls God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. In this event God acted decisively to deliver his people out of oppression and lead them to the Promised Land.

Later, when the Lord established the Passover festival, Moses asked how he should instruct his children as to its meaning. The Lord replied, “Then you shall say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand’” (Deut 6:21). The later development of the Passover Seder was a way of recalling God’s actions toward Israel. But it was also an opportunity to *experience* God’s saving acts. The liturgy calls for participants to speak the words of Moses to his son, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt.” It is not just recollection, but participation. By reliving the words, the tastes, and the actions of the Israelites, worshippers are called to live in an Exodus spirituality, fueled by their sharing in the Israelite journey.

It is not by accident that Jesus was crucified during Passover. Consequently, early Christians saw the redemption of Israel give way to the new redemption in Christ. Paul spoke of “Christ, our Passover lamb” (1 Cor. 5:7). But like the Jewish Seder, the Easter celebration is not just a recollection of a historical event. By celebrating the resurrection of Jesus through our baptism, we are called to *live* a spiritual life formed by Jesus.

How can our worship express this spirituality? How can our days be ordered by the life of Christ? How can we—people living over two-thousand years after the resurrection—participate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? The answer to those questions is how we are shaped spiritually by Christ in the church through a worship that continually puts before us God’s saving acts and his ultimate rule over all creation. The marking of time that allows for that formation is what we call the Christian year.



The Importance of Marking Time: Sunday School Lesson

October 2, 2016

In Wiltshire, England stands one of the most mysterious sites on the face of the earth. Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument built around 2500 BC and contains huge stones—some of them up to one ton in weight—arranged in concentric circles. Historians argue that the site was once home to a prehistoric civilization, but their use of the stones is still up for debate. One interesting explanation is that the stones mark time. The placement of the stones allows the sunlight to move around the circle at different intervals that correspond to each month of the year.

Whether or not the primary purpose of the stones was marking time is anyone's guess. But their very existence points to the fact people throughout the ages have had ways to mark time. Each of us lives by a calendar that runs from January to December. Moreover, we live by days in each of those months, hours, minutes, and even seconds that make up each day. Many people organize those days by special events, such as a birthday or anniversary. Or you may mark your days by an occupation. For example, an educator will mark time from August to June. Everyone, in some fashion, marks time.

lifeconnect

- ♦ In what ways do you mark time? Is there a significant event in your life that governs how you view time (marriage, birthday, crisis, death)? How does this event interpret your view of time?

bibleconnect

The biblical method of marking time is by God's saving events. An event time is called *kairos* (from which we get the word *crisis*). The time between *kairos* events is called *chronos* (from which we get the word *chronology*). The primary *kairos* event in

Scripture is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That event gives meaning to all prior events and future events. The following three ways show how this is true:

- ♦ Jesus' life is fulfilled time. In his life, all the Old Testament expectations of a Messiah are fulfilled. Jesus himself said, "The time has come...The Kingdom of God is near" (Mark 1:15).
- ♦ Jesus' life is the time of salvation. His death and resurrection changed the course of human destiny. No longer would death and evil have the final word.
- ♦ Jesus' life introduced anticipatory time. We live in the time between the saving work of God on the cross and the second coming of Jesus. For Christians, this is hopeful time, awaiting the return of our Lord.

The Christian year has its foundation in the understanding of the *kairos* time that is Jesus. Before studying any of the seasons, we need to remember the way our Christian calendar is marked in *kairos* time:

- ♦ The birth of Jesus is related through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany.
- ♦ The death and resurrection of Jesus is related through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.
- ♦ The second coming of Jesus is related through Pentecost and Ordinary Time.

The cycle of the Christian year (see page 20) remembers and proclaims the events of Jesus and anticipates the events to come. Any use of the Christian year, therefore, places our focus exactly where it should be—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

- ♦ Read Exodus 12:1-28. How does this passage illustrate the marking of time for Israel?

- ♦ Read Luke 23:44-49. How does this passage illustrate the *kairos* marking of time for Christians?

- ♦ Read John 1:1-14. How does this passage illustrate how Christians should mark time now?

- ♦ In your own words, describe how the Christ event shapes your way of marking time?

worshipconnect

The Christian year allows for many opportunities of spiritual growth in worship. From the various readings, colors and symbols, to the prayers and sermons, we are exposed to the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in multiple ways. It is a process of slow immersion into the life of Jesus that, in the end, claims us, too, as part of that life. Joan Chittister says the Christian year does two things for us in worship: one of them communal and the other very personal. First, the Christian year reminds us as the church what kind of community we are meant to be. It convicts us when we do not use our communal voice to speak out against injustice or to protect God's children. In those times we must repent and begin again. Second, the Christian year implants within us the very substance of our faith. We are called to be "followers of Jesus." And that means we do what Jesus did. It calls us to private and personal reflection on the place of Jesus in our daily lives and our intent on living as he lived. The Christian year presents us with the standard of participation in the spirituality of Christian life: who we are, who we are called to be, and how we are making that identity and call a reality. In essence, the Christian year is Jesus—with us, for us, and in us—as we strive to make his life our own.

- ♦ Evaluate the way our church marks time. What is the dominant approach: an academic calendar, civil holidays, or Christian year model?

- ♦ It has been said that the Christian year has the power to spiritually shape a church and individuals into the likeness of Jesus. How would you describe that happening?

application

- ♦ How would you like to allow the Christian year to organize your spiritual life? What personal things will you do in the course of this study to make that a reality?

The Importance of Marking Time: Sermon

October 2, 2016

Exodus 12:1-28; Romans 6:3-8

The simple, straightforward purpose of the Christian year is to proclaim the saving acts of God in a way that transforms us more into the image of Christ, specifically in his death and resurrection through our baptism. The roots of the Christian year are in Jewish spirituality, but take on new meaning in Jesus. He is the ultimate source of our spiritual growth and maturity. To embrace the Christian year is to commune together in worship, allowing our lives to be patterned after the life of Jesus.

The way we define our _____ determines how we think and live.

The Christian year has the power to form us _____.

The saving work of God in our lives begins with our _____.

The Christian year is about putting down our _____ and _____ more into our calling to be one with Jesus.

The celebration of Passover became a _____ of God's saving act for the Israelites, delivering them from captivity in Egypt.

Paul said Christ is our _____.

Show me how you _____ and I'll tell you what you believe and what kind of _____ you are becoming.

thinkmore _____

- ♦ Recall your baptism. What does it mean to have Jesus living in, with, and through you?
- ♦ What difference would it make in your spiritual life to practice a Christian year spirituality?
- ♦ Does the way you worship suggest you are growing spiritually in Jesus?
- ♦ What steps do you need to take to practice a Christian year spirituality?

TELL ME THE STORY OF

A_dvent



OCTOBER 9, 2016

The Season of Advent

The word advent means “coming.” That is an excellent word to begin the Christian year. We might ask, “What’s coming?” or more correctly, “Who’s coming?” Of course, for those of us accustomed to the Christian faith, we know the answer to that question is “Jesus.”

The Old Testament points to the coming of Jesus. For centuries the Old Testament prophets announced his coming as God’s Messiah, the one sent from God to save people from their sins. The Old Testament readings during Advent quote those ancient promises. And as the four weeks of Advent progress, the specific meaning of those readings become clear. We learn, for example, about Jesus’ mother, Mary, and the angel, Gabriel, who announced the coming of Jesus in Mary’s womb. We learn about John the Baptist, Joseph, Caesar Augustus, and shepherds in the fields.

A second message of the Advent season is that Jesus is coming again. The first Sunday of Advent always points us beyond the manger to the coming of Christ at the end of the age to “judge the living and the dead.” So the Advent season actually deals with two comings of Jesus: as a babe born in the town of Bethlehem and as the King who will reign over all creation.

But there is also a third coming of Jesus that we must acknowledge during this season: has Jesus come into our hearts and lives so that we will believe in him? All three of these comings find their way into the Scripture readings during Advent.

Many churches use an Advent wreath to mark the four weeks of the season, lighting a candle each Sunday. By the fourth Sunday all four candles have been lit. As Christmas draws closer, the light shines brighter as the church prays, “Come, Lord Jesus, come.”

A Brief History of Advent

Early Christian missionaries found themselves surrounded by persons devoted to observing pagan festivals. True to the tradition of the early church, Christians living among non-Christians sought to adopt secular symbols and give them a Christian spin. One of the main images that early Christians seized upon was the symbol of light and emphasis on new life, both of which were important to Germanic tribes in the fourth century during the observance of winter solstice festivals. The church saw a better way to use these symbols. They spoke of Christ as the light of the world and the source of all life. Still, pagan celebrations with their elaborate excesses overshadowed Christian attempts at changing the culture. Therefore, the church set aside a specific

period of preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

The first celebrations of Advent were patterned after Lent and encompassed the first six Sundays prior to Christmas. In the late sixth century Roman officials reduced the number to four Sundays. Many contemporary observances of Advent devote each of the four Sundays to a specific theme. The most widely used themes are hope, peace, joy, and love—in that order. Eastern Christians do not follow the Advent worship traditions found in the Western church.

Advent Colors, Symbols, and Words

Advent—a Latin word meaning “coming” or “arrival.”

Advent Calendars—a method of counting the days of Advent until Christmas. Typically designed for children, each day opens a new window revealing something about the coming Christ child.

Advent Wreath—A circle, representing the unending love of God, constructed out of evergreens, symbolic of eternal life. The wreath contains four candles within the circle and a larger candle in the middle of the circle. The outer candles represent the four Sundays of Advent and the middle candle represents Christ. Three of the outer candles vary from purple or blue depending on the tradition of the church, with the fourth being pink or rose. The Christ candle is always white.

Antiphons—The Great O Antiphons are ancient verses that are usually spoken or sung during the week before Christmas. These verses name Jesus with great titles: O Wisdom, O Sacred Lord, O Radiant Dawn, O King of All Nations, and O Emmanuel.

Bells—the joy of Jesus’ coming which can be heard across the world.

Blue—a color for Advent more recently used among Protestants to symbolize the hope of God’s people who wait for the coming King (*see also Purple*).

Candles—celebration of the Light of the World, God’s Son, who overcomes darkness.

Chrismons—a contraction for “Christ Monograms,” these are ornaments in the shape of Christian symbols.

Emmanuel—A Hebrew word for “God with us.”



Jesse Tree—a small tree, commonly an evergreen, that represents the genealogy of Jesus who descended from Jesse, the father of David. The prophecy of Isaiah 11:2 is the inspiration for the Jesse Tree, which frequently is displayed with an offshoot growing from its trunk.

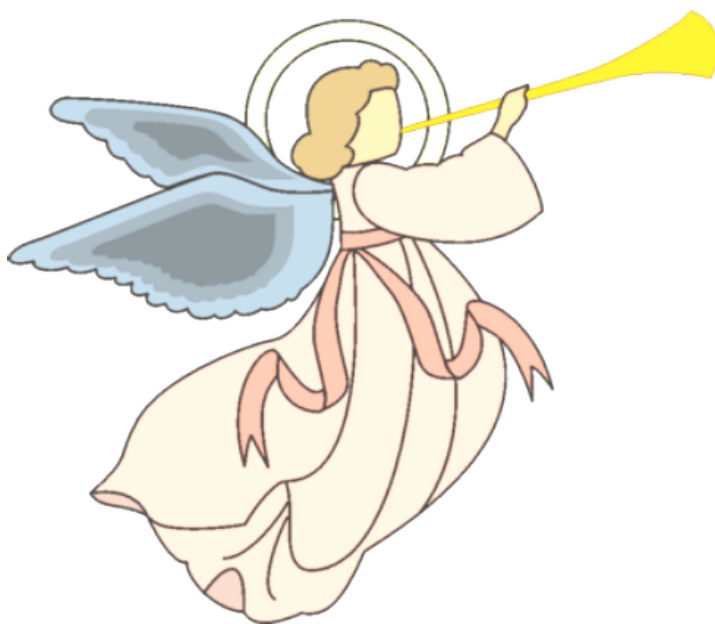
Messiah—is the Hebrew word meaning “anointed one.” The Greek name “Christ” means the same.

Prepare the Way—This is the message of the Old Testament prophets who called God’s people to repentance and of John the Baptizer who announced Jesus’ arrival.

Poinsettias—the deep red color is a symbol of Jesus’ blood spilled for the forgiveness of sin.

Purple—the ancient color for royalty (as well as penitence), signaling the coming of the King in Jesus.

Trumpet—a traditional symbol representing the prophets and their message concerning the coming of God’s Messiah.



Tell Me the Story of Advent: Sunday School Lesson

October 9, 2016

After a recent fierce storm, the roof on our house suffered damage and needed repair. I called a local roofing company as well as our insurance company. Due to the number of houses in our neighborhood that also suffered damage and had called the same company, the contractor informed me, “We can’t get to your house for at least a month!”

That wasn’t the answer I wanted to hear. I am not a person who likes to wait. As most people who know me well can attest, I want everything done yesterday. I believe many people are like me in that they do not like to wait. Maybe you are not a “have it done yesterday” person, but neither do you enjoy waiting for a month!

The Christian year begins with a time of waiting. We call this time Advent. In Advent we wait for the Messiah to come and we wait for the fulfillment of Jesus’ work in the new heaven and new earth—a kind of double waiting.

lifeconnect

- ◆ Do you remember a time when you waited and waited for something to happen? Describe your feelings of anticipation and the process of waiting.

bibleconnect

The Advent season is associated with many themes of waiting:

- ◆ We wait for the Messiah. Over 400 years passed between the prophets of Israel who announced the birth of the Messiah and the actual birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The Old Testament is filled with passages of prophetic utterance that express the longing for a new day (Isaiah 2:1-5; 7:10-16; 11:1-10; 35:1-10).
- ◆ We wait for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and in our hearts. Christian theology lets us know that Jesus was not only born in history, but he also is

born in our lives and takes up residence within our hearts. Advent is a time to examine whether or not the presence of Jesus is real in our lives.

- ◆ We wait for Jesus' second coming. The first Sunday of Advent points us to Jesus' coming at the end of the age, not as a baby in a manger.

The weeks of Advent present an opportunity for the church to make a spiritual journey toward the birth of Jesus, his entrance into our lives, and his second coming. This journey is ordered by our worship.

We begin at a distance from the manger of Bethlehem by focusing on the second coming of Christ and our need to prepare for his return. These preparations are very similar to the preparations Israel made for the coming of the Messiah. Themes such as hope, longing, and anticipation fill our worship and capture our feelings as we await the consummation of all time and the redemption of all things.

But our preparations must constitute more than just warm feelings. It includes a spiritual challenge to be, as Peter wrote, the sort of people who lead lives of holiness and godliness (2 Peter 3:11). Consequently, the Lectionary includes Scripture readings on the first two weeks of Advent that emphasize godly conduct.

By the time we reach the third week of Advent we shift our focus to the actual birth of Jesus. Because both his first and second comings are related to our salvation and redemption, the theme of worship becomes exuberant joy! In the fourth week we are drawn into the events that surrounded Jesus' birth, including the spiritual knowledge that this is indeed Emmanuel, God-with-us.

- ◆ Use the following Advent texts and discuss the theme of waiting in each.

The coming of the Messiah, Isaiah 9:1-7

The birth of Jesus in our hearts, John 3:1-17

The coming of Jesus at the end of the age, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

- ◆ How do you personally encounter Jesus in these Scriptures?

worshipconnect

Advent presents many opportunities for creative worship. Candles, banners, familiar carols, and the smell of evergreen and balsam all contribute to our seasonal celebrations. The expectancy of our Messiah demands such high praise.

- ♦ What three Advent worship ideas would you most like to see included in the worship of our church?

application

Worship during Advent should point us to all three themes of Jesus' coming and a commitment to spiritual renewal through Jesus.

- ♦ How is the message of Isaiah applicable to us today?

- ♦ Of the three themes of waiting found in Advent, which one is most difficult for you to comprehend?

- ♦ How can you use Advent to prepare for the comings of Jesus?

Close by contemplating this traditional Advent prayer taken from the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer*:

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Tell Me the Story of Advent: Sermon

October 9, 2016

Isaiah 64:1-9; Revelation 22:16-17, 20

Advent is the first season in the Christian year, though it was not the first one established by the church. We celebrate Advent on the four Sundays prior to Christmas. It is a time of waiting and preparation. The word “advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming” or “arrival.”

The color purple is used during Advent as a sign of royalty. Purple helps us recognize Christ as our coming King. Some churches use blue during Advent as a color of hope. Some of the symbols we use during this season include an Advent wreath (God’s unending love), evergreens (eternal life), candles (the Light of the World), poinsettias (blood of Jesus), trumpets (prophecy), and bells (joy of Jesus’ coming).

Learning to _____ is an essential component of our spiritual growth.

Advent encourages us to wait for three comings of Jesus:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The real theme of this season is _____.

The spiritual challenge of Advent is to ask where we _____ with God.

thinkmore _____

- ♦ How can you prepare for the coming of Christ, both in Bethlehem and at the end of the age?
- ♦ Which character in the Advent story (Isaiah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph, etc) describes your Advent faith? If you are not familiar with each character, consider reading their stories in Scripture.
- ♦ What areas of your life do you need to “repent and prepare the way” for Christ’s coming?

Creative Ways for Personally Celebrating Advent

- ♦ Instead of decorating your crèche (nativity) all at once, consider placing a different character of the nativity story in your crèche each Sunday during Advent. Then leave the crèche up and include Jesus and the Magi at the appropriate time.
 - 1st Sunday – an empty crèche and manger
 - 2nd Sunday – Animals and accessories
 - 3rd Sunday – Mary and Joseph (This is traditionally Mary's Sunday)
 - 4th Sunday – Angels
 - Christmas Eve/Day – the baby Jesus and shepherds
 - Epiphany – Magi (remove the manger; see reference to house in Mt. 2:11)
- ♦ Include an Advent wreath and candles in your home. Light them on the appropriate Sundays by conducting your own personal time of worship.
- ♦ Decorate your tree with Chrismon ornaments instead of secular ones.
For instructions: <http://www.umcs.org/chrismons/making.htm>
- ♦ Decorate a Jesse tree.
For instructions: <http://www.myjessestree.com/p/the-ultimate-guide-to-making-jesse-tree.html>
- ♦ To focus on the theme of preparation, make a spiritual “to-do” list at the beginning of Advent detailing all of the ways you will prepare yourself for Christ's coming at Christmas. Ideas might include a daily prayer time, purchasing an Advent devotional, saying “no” to the secular ways of preparing for Christmas, et cetera.
- ♦ Instead of gifts void of meaning, give gifts that represent the Advent themes of hope, peace, love, and joy.
- ♦ Use the Christmas carols we sing every year as a devotional guide. Assign a carol to each day throughout the season. Learn its history and explore how its words speak to the coming of Jesus as a babe and as the eternal King.
- ♦ Study Advent celebrations from other countries using the theme: Christ Came For All.

TELL ME THE STORY OF

Christmas



OCTOBER 16, 2016

The Season of Christmas

Andy Williams was correct when he described Christmas as “the most wonderful time of the year.” Indeed, the message “the Lord is come” is one that should be celebrated with great jubilation. The angels announced his coming to shepherds near Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph experienced his coming first hand. Others, like Simeon and Anna in the temple, visited the newborn. Even magi (wise men) came from afar to see the child when he was approximately two years old.

The celebration of the Christmas season moves from the birth of Jesus to the visit of the magi (which is the beginning of Epiphany). These twelve days are an opportunity to celebrate God’s greatest gift to humankind and the hope that is birthed in the midst of a troubled world.

Today, Christians try to reclaim Christmas from the commercial world that has infiltrated the season and made it into a secular holiday focused on materialism. This season is not about hustle and bustle, moving from one party to the next. Instead, the season of Christmas is one of quiet contemplation. The focus is incarnation. The incarnation of God-with-us in the form of a tiny baby and the incarnation of God in our lives as we seek to live an incarnational spirituality.

A Brief History of Christmas

The early church had no fixed date for the celebration of Jesus’ birth. In the Eastern church, January 6 (Epiphany) was the most important date to celebrate his birth, marked by the showing off of the infant to the magi who represented all nations coming to worship Jesus. The Western church, on the other hand, chose December 25 as the birth date for Jesus. This was an alternative for the pagan holiday declared by the Roman emperor for that same day—a feast for the Birth of the Unconquered Sun, commemorating the winter solstice. The date of December 25 as the festival day for Christmas gradually became more important than the date for Epiphany. The first known evidence for Christmas observance on December 25 arose in 354. Similar to the pagan holiday, Christians appropriated their celebration of Christmas with merriment, feasting, and exchanging gifts associated with joy over the incarnation of the “Sun of Righteousness.” Christmas day begins the season and extends for twelve days, ending with Epiphany.

Christmas Colors, Symbols, and Words

Candles—typically white during the season, signifying the Light of the World has come in Jesus.

Christmas—a shortened form of the old English term “Christ’s Mass.”

Gold—this color often appears with white on the altar paraments and pastor’s vestments.

Manger—long considered the humble birth place of Jesus.

Nativity—a visual representation of Jesus’ surroundings at his birth. Also referred to as a “manger” or “crèche.” Recreating nativity scenes has been a tradition among Christians since the days of Francis of Assisi in 1223.

Star—the traditional understanding of light that shown to the magi, shepherds and over the birthplace of Jesus. Scripture associates the Star with the magi, but does not record a star at the manger or with the shepherds.

Trees—evergreens symbolic of the eternal life which Jesus brings to us. Tree lights and ornaments remind us of the gifts brought to the infant Jesus by the magi.

Twelve Days—the length of the Christmas season stretching from Christmas Day to the eve of Epiphany.

White—the usual color for celebration in the church, it is the color for the entire Christmas season. (*see also Gold*).



Tell Me the Story of Christmas: Sunday School Lesson

October 16, 2016

As I expressed in last week's lesson, I do not like waiting. That was very important as a little boy when Christmas morning arrived. I could not wait to dive into all the presents under the tree! I still love Christmas morning (and diving into presents!). Though now I can reflect on the true celebration of Christmas and find great joy in its spiritual meaning.

As my family grows (two children in two years!) we have begun making Christmas traditions of our own. My wife and I want our children to enjoy the "mystery" that the Christmas season brings, as well as pass along some of our favorite traditions from when we were kids. But more importantly, we want our boys to know the spiritual significance of this season: this is the intersection of divinity and humanity; the fulfillment of Israel in that the Messiah has come, prophecies are fulfilled, and the Savior of the world is born. I realize that is a lot for a little child to comprehend, but if we fail to teach the significance of Jesus' birth, then we have very little reason for rejoicing.

lifeconnect

- ♦ In this lesson we want to connect with our experience of Christmas. Start by describing the traditions your family kept when you were a child.

bibleconnect

Matthew and Luke share the biblical basis for Christmas in their infancy narratives. Each provides us with different perspectives and themes. Matthew is the narrative that describes Joseph's dream and explains the meaning of the name Jesus: "He will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Luke shapes his narrative around the political environment of Jesus coming to the world for the poor and oppressed. Joseph and Mary must travel to Bethlehem to pay government taxes and upon their arrival they find no room in the inn (Luke 2:1-7). Luke also shares the angelic announcement to the poor shepherds watching their flock, not the rich and famous. The verbal response to the good news is expressed by Mary in the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), the song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79), and the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* of the angels (Luke

2:14). Luke's Gospel describes the great hope that accompanies Jesus' birth and the world's salvation.

- ♦ Read Mary's *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46-55. How does her song express Luke's theme of Christmas?

- ♦ Which Christmas account, Matthew or Luke, do you most resonate with? Why?

worshipconnect

Our time of waiting in Advent quickly turns to fulfillment in Christmas. From the very beginnings of Christmas celebrations in the early fourth century, the theme of the Christmas season has always been the arrival of light—light that dispels darkness. The prologue to John's Gospel says it succinctly, "In [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

The heart of our Christmas worship, therefore, is receiving the light of Jesus in both his first and second comings. This is represented in a Christmas prayer that states, "Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, so may we with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our judge."

Moreover, our Christmas worship is not limited to a single day. We are all familiar with the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas." The season of Christmas begins on December 25 and lasts until January 6—twelve days. In these days we are challenged to contemplate this intersection of a holy God into our world. All services of worship in these days should focus primarily on the incarnation of Jesus.

- ♦ Read Titus 2:11-14. How does this text capture the essence of Christmas worship?

- ♦ Does our church celebrate Christmas according to Matthew's or Luke's approach?

application

Christmas is considered one of the most joyful times of the year. However, this joy is often misconstrued by people who do not know the real “reason for the season.” Like children on Christmas morning who find everything they want under the tree, we have found everything we need in the baby born in Bethlehem.

- ◆ Give an example of how you celebrate Christmas for all the right reasons.

- ◆ Use your own words to express the theme of Christmas.

- ◆ Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year. Plan a worship service for that day. How will the service begin? What Scriptures and hymns/carols will you include that express the joy of Christmas?

- ◆ Evaluate the service you have planned. What kind of spiritual significance does it offer? In what ways does it invite worshippers to rejoice in the birth of Jesus?

Tell Me the Story of Christmas: Sermon

October 16, 2016

John 1:1-18

Christmas begins on Christmas Eve and lasts for twelve days until Epiphany. It is the celebration of Christ's birth. The theme of this season is incarnation. While we do not have an exact date for the birth of Jesus, early Christians in the fourth century established a date near the winter solstice on December 25. At that time the days begin to lengthen and more light comes into the world. Christ is the eternal light of the world.

The color for Christmas is white, signifying light and purity. Many of the same symbols used during Advent are used at Christmas.

Each season of the Christian year, if seen only in and of itself, will give a _____ picture of the entire story.

The theological credence to our Christmas celebration is the _____ made flesh.

In ancient Israel the manifestation of God's presence was always from a _____.

In Christmas we see God _____ to be with us.

Similarly, in the Christmas season, _____ must choose to be with God.

Christmas is a time when Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, is more importantly _____ in us.

thinkmore _____

- ◆ How is the birth of Jesus a present, daily reality in your life?
- ◆ What words or images do you use to grasp the enormity of God becoming human, taking on our flesh and blood?
- ◆ How can you see past the secular version of Christmas to truly celebrate an incarnational spirituality? What steps might you take?
- ◆ How might a celebration of "the Word became flesh" look different from the Christmas celebrations you have experienced in the past?

Creative Ways for Personally Celebrating Christmas

- ♦ Turn out all electric lights in your home and light candles. Talk about how the light of the candles overcomes darkness.
- ♦ Before opening gifts or feasting, read the Christmas narrative from Luke 2 and contemplate on the meaning of Jesus' birth.
- ♦ Have a "blessing of our gifts" on Christmas day. Ask family members to bring some representation of a gift they feel they have received from God. Open these gifts and explain their meaning.
- ♦ Give a gift of evergreen, reminding persons that God's love is eternal as exhibited by Christ.
- ♦ Study the history of nativity scenes. If possible, visit a crèche collection at a local church.
- ♦ The origin of the "Twelve Days of Christmas" was actually a device to teach Christianity. Explore the meaning behind each symbol, including its biblical foundations.

True love	=	God
Person	=	Christian
Partridge in a pear tree	=	Jesus
Two turtle doves	=	Old and New Testaments
Three French hens	=	Faith, Hope, Love
Four calling birds	=	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
Five gold rings	=	Torah of the Old Testament
Six geese a laying	=	Six days of creation
Seven swans a swimming	=	Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rm. 12)
Eight maids a milking	=	Eight Beatitudes
Nine ladies dancing	=	Nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (Ga. 5)
Ten lords a leaping	=	Ten Commandments
Eleven pipers piping	=	Eleven faithful disciples
Twelve drummers	=	Twelve points in the Apostle's Creed

TELL ME THE STORY OF

Epiphany



OCTOBER 23, 2016

The Season of Epiphany

On the day we refer to Epiphany, January 6, the church remembers the magi who visited the infant Jesus. This day was known in its earliest forms as The Feast of the Manifestation. Indeed, the spiritual focus of this day is the manifestation of Christ to the world, represented in the magi from various nations who visited Jesus and then made his birth known. The Day of Epiphany is a celebration by us who are not descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; a celebration that Jesus has come to be our Savior as well.

Early Christians celebrated Epiphany by recalling the first times that Jesus disclosed his glory as the Son of God:

- ♦ Magi discovered the divine royalty of the baby Jesus (Mt. 2)
- ♦ The voice from heaven identified Jesus at his baptism (Mt. 3)
- ♦ Guests at a wedding party in Cana witnessed Jesus' first miracle (Jn. 2)

The season of Epiphany extends from January 6 to Transfiguration Sunday, the climactic conclusion of the seasons Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. The Transfiguration is the event where Jesus led his three closest disciples up a mountain and they see him shining with brilliant light. The season of Epiphany leaves no doubt that this Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. The message of the Magi was correct: this is the one who deserves our worship! Proper worship during this season will call for "Hallelujahs" in the same fashion we celebrate the resurrection on Easter.

A Brief History of Epiphany

The Epiphany season actually antedates observances of Christmas. References to Epiphany can be found as early as 200. The Eastern church chose to celebrate the birth of Jesus on January 6 along with his baptism. By the year 300, the inclusion of the magi's visit had become a major part of the celebration.

The Western church incorporated Epiphany into the calendar in the late fourth century. In doing so they separated the celebration of the magi, Jesus' baptism, his first miracle in Cana, and his transfiguration into four events. Their logic was simple: the magi represented the manifestation of Christ to non-Jews—an event that deserved its own observance.

The word Epiphany derives from the Greek meaning "an appearance" or "manifestation." It is Jesus' appearance to Jew and Gentile alike that Epiphany celebrates. In all, the season stretches across nine Sundays and ends on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday; the day that ushers the church into the season of Lent.

Epiphany Colors, Symbols, and Words

Epiphany—a Greek word meaning “appearance” or “manifestation.”

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh—The gifts of the magi to the infant Jesus. Each carries an understanding of royalty and point to Jesus as the true King.

Green—the color for Epiphany.

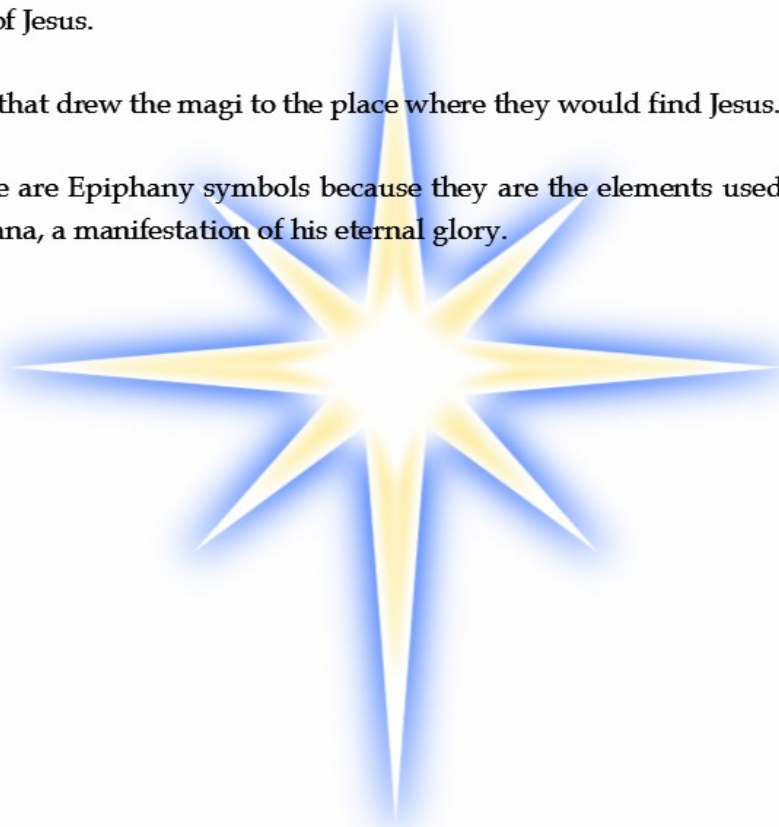
Light—an ancient symbol for Epiphany. To be “in the light” was to be alive and well in a right relationship with God.

Magi—also known as Wise Men and Kings; these foreign men came to visit the infant Jesus when he was approximately two years old. They represent all the nations of the world who hear of God’s Son and come to worship him. While tradition has delineated there were three magi, Scripture does not record a specific number.

Shells—this is a symbol of water that has become associated with baptism. Epiphany celebrates the baptism of Jesus.

Star—the celestial sign that drew the magi to the place where they would find Jesus.

Water and wine—these are Epiphany symbols because they are the elements used in Jesus’ first miracle at Cana, a manifestation of his eternal glory.



Tell Me the Story of Epiphany: Sunday School Lesson

October 23, 2016

The culmination of our spiritual journey in this early stage of the Christian year is Epiphany. This season brings to a close the celebrations of Advent and Christmas. In Epiphany we celebrate the realization that the light of Christ shines so brightly that it covers the entire earth! We've all had experiences of being in the dark hoping to find light. I recall a camping trip to Cumberland Gap where our guide led us through caves without any flash lights. The darkness seemed to wrap itself around us like a thick blanket. Suddenly, without any warning, our guide lit a small match that illuminated the entire cave. The light of Epiphany illuminates the entire world. It is the knowledge that Jesus was born as Savior not for a few selective individuals, but for everyone. For the weeks following Epiphany we witness manifestations of Jesus as the Christ, beginning with his baptism and ending with his transfiguration. In each of these manifestations we learn more about Jesus and his mission to the whole world.

lifeconnect _____

- ♦ Get in touch with your feelings about darkness. Can you relate to being in the dark for an extended period of time? How did it feel when you were brought back into light?

bibleconnect _____

In Scripture, the good news of Jesus to everyone is represented primarily through the magi who made the long journey to see Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12). The significance of the magi who came to see Jesus is in the fact they were Gentile, not Jewish. This has universally been understood as a symbol of Christ's mission to the world. God became incarnate in order to provide redemption for the whole world. And it is in this event that Jesus is first "manifested" to the world as God's gift of salvation.

- ♦ On each Sunday during Epiphany, Jesus is manifested in a different way. Read the following Scriptures and note how each one manifests Jesus to you.

Matthew 3:13-17

John 1:29-42

Matthew 4:12-23

Matthew 5:1-12

Matthew 6:24-34

- ♦ What is the most important teaching in these Scriptures for you personally?

worshipconnect

What kind of worship would you expect to encounter during Epiphany? The following prayer from the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* can offer focus:

O God, by the leading of the star you manifested your only Son to the Peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

This prayer asks Jesus, who was manifested in his earthly life, to be manifested to us now.

- ♦ **Reflect on the prayer. How does the prayer speak to the spiritual significance of Epiphany?**

- ♦ **How is Christ manifested in our worship? Explain.**

application

The seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany appear very familiar to us. We are well versed in the message of Jesus as the Savior of the world. But the spiritual challenge presented in this season of growing in godliness by making room for Christ in our lives and sharing Christ with others is a message we can never outgrow! These seasons call us to a kind of incarnational spirituality, given to us as a gift, and lived out through the choices we make. Only when we seek to live for Christ, will the light of Christ be manifest in us.

- ♦ **How is the light of Christ a present, daily reality in your life? Explain.**

- ♦ **How has Jesus been clearly manifested in your life?**

- ♦ **How can you manifest Jesus to others through your words and actions?**

Tell Me the Story of Epiphany: Sermon

October 23, 2016

Matthew 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th. Most churches observe this festival on the closest Sunday. The word epiphany means “manifestation,” but is also translated “bring to the light.” The spiritual focus is on the manifestation of Jesus as the Savior of the entire world. The nations of the world are represented by the magi from foreign countries who came to visit the infant Jesus.

The color for Epiphany is green, representing growth. We remember how the message of Jesus grew from the magi to the world. Scripture does not tell us how many magi there were, only that they brought three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (symbols of royalty). During the season of Epiphany we center on Jesus’ baptism, his first miracle at the wedding at Cana, and his transfiguration.

During Epiphany we focus our attention on Jesus’ _____.

The magi were not Jews, but _____ and that is evidence of Jesus’ coming as the Savior of the world.

The theme of _____ and _____ is central to Epiphany.

Jesus said “I am the light of the world” and also said _____.

thinkmore _____

- ◆ How are you being the “light of the world” in your day to day life?
- ◆ Do you know someone living in darkness that needs to hear the word of life?
- ◆ To whom can you extend encouragement and manifest the presence of Jesus?
- ◆ Name two ways you can be the presence of Christ this week to those around you.

Creative Ways for Personally Celebrating Epiphany

- ♦ Use the theme of light and the symbol of the star by lighting a candle or burning an electric star throughout the season of Epiphany.
- ♦ Leave only the baby Jesus and the magi on your crèche for the season of Epiphany.
- ♦ Follow the South American custom of placing bales of hay outside your front door for the camels of the magi.
- ♦ Research Scripture passages about stars from the Old Testament. Remember the star that led the magi to Jesus.
- ♦ Research the journey each of the magi might have made on their way to meet Jesus. What might they have encountered along the way? What food would they take for such a trip? Where did they acquire their expensive gifts?
- ♦ Learn of the Hebrew traditions and customs for young men that Jesus would have followed as he grew up.
- ♦ Research missions in the early church, particularly those that spread to the east in the land of the magi.
- ♦ Find a devotional that focuses on missionaries. Study a different missionary each day during Epiphany and how they spread the good news of Jesus.
- ♦ Ask your pastor for baptism (if you are a new Christian) or re-baptism on the Sunday designated for observing Jesus' baptism.
- ♦ Enjoy a hike up a mountain. When you reach the peak, read the story of Jesus' transfiguration. Imagine the experience of those first disciples who witnessed this manifestation of Jesus in all his glory.



TELL ME THE STORY OF

Lent



OCTOBER 30, 2016

The Season of Lent

We have always been told, “Lent is time for giving things up.” That is true. But for very good reason. The Lenten season is a time we remember how much Jesus gave up for us—his very life. Early Christians were told to give up eating meat on Fridays during Lent. Their reasoning was because it was on a Friday that Jesus gave up his “meat”—flesh and body—for us. Every time a person gave up meat on Friday, therefore, they were to remind themselves of everything Jesus gave up for them.

Why did Jesus have to give up his very life for us? The first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, answers that question directly. Because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin entered the world. God confronted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden asking, “What have you done?” and then reminded them of the consequences, “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.” That’s why many Christians wear ashes on Ash Wednesday. It is also a reminder of our need to confess the sin in our lives. The Psalm reading for Ash Wednesday is David’s plea: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” This call for confession and repentance is the focus throughout the Lenten season. We do not “give things up” simply to deprive ourselves. In Lent we give up our very selves in order to gain more of God.

Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday to the beginning of Holy Week. These forty days (excluding Sundays) are the first half of an arch centered over Easter. The other half is the fifty days of celebration beginning with Easter.

A Brief History of Lent

Although Easter is the oldest celebration in the church, the observance of Lent is a close second, appearing between 200-300. Lent was traditionally a time of preparation for individuals seeking baptism on Easter Sunday. Following the model of Jesus’ time in the wilderness, new converts practiced penance and prayer for forty days.

As people recognized the importance for everyone to prepare as Easter approached, the early church developed a more encompassing Lenten season ensuring proper observance of the resurrection event come Easter. Fasting became associated with the season for both those preparing for baptism and the church in general. New converts were instructed to fast for at least two or three weeks to demonstrate the penitence that should precede baptism.

After Christianity was recognized as a legal religion in 313, many people entered the church without suitable devotion to Jesus as his followers. The season of Lent became doubly important as a period of instruction in the faith, development of discipline, and growth in discipleship.

By the fifth century, Lent was well established, though at that time it was called *Quadragesima* (meaning “forty days”). Repentance and preparation for the Easter celebration became the central focus, calling for a disciplined life in devotion to Jesus.

Today, Lent asks us to examine our lives in light of our baptism. How are we doing? Are we living out the faith we received at baptism? Is Jesus being made real in our lives? By focusing forty days on repentance, we ask God to clean our hearts of all sin and self-centeredness.

Lenten Colors, Symbols, and Words

Ashes—a sign of penitence remembering the consequences for sin.

Black—the color used for Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent.

Cross—the primary symbol for the season of Lent. More than fifty styles of crosses are found in Christian art with the most common being the Latin cross which Romans used to execute criminals.

Forty days—The number is attached to a variety of events in Scripture: the flood, Moses’ days on Mt. Sinai, the Israelites wandering in the desert, the number of years Israel was at peace during Gideon’s life, the number of days Goliath challenged the Israelite army, Jesus’ fasting and prayer in the wilderness before beginning his ministry, and the number of days Jesus was revealed to the disciples following his resurrection.

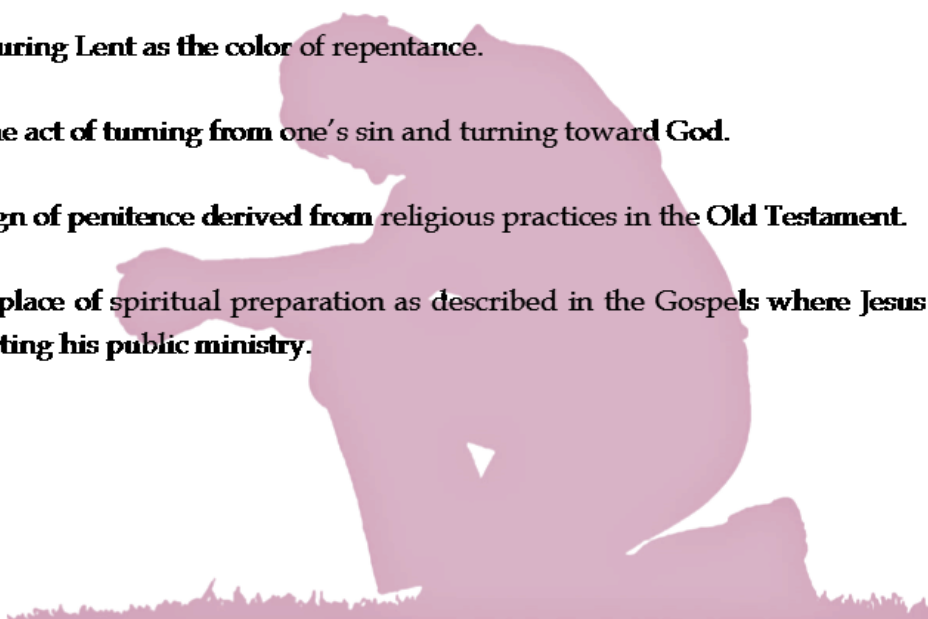
Lent—an Anglo-Saxon word meaning “spring.”

Purple—used during Lent as the color of repentance.

Repentance—the act of turning from one’s sin and turning toward God.

Sackcloth—a sign of penitence derived from religious practices in the Old Testament.

Wilderness—a place of spiritual preparation as described in the Gospels where Jesus went before starting his public ministry.



Tell Me the Story of Lent: Sunday School Lesson

October 30, 2016

For the past sixteen summers I've taken a special trip with five very close friends. Though all of us live in different parts of the country, we gather for one weekend a year to laugh, catch-up, and play golf. Preparation for the trip happens months in advance. In fact, we usually start talking about the following year before the trip we are on concludes. We have to decide on a location, dates, and which golf courses we want to play. Many of us jokingly say we keep a suitcase packed the whole year in anticipation of the trip.

Preparation plays a key role in the success of our vacation. When the weekend is haphazardly planned—failure to secure accommodations, golf courses that are in poor shape, or someone forgets their suitcase (all of which have happened!)—it does not make for a enjoyable weekend. The memories of our time together are usually overshadowed by complications and the trip has little impact. The same can be said for our Easter celebration.

Our preparation for Easter is a time we call Lent. The kind of preparation we undergo is repentance. This season begins with Ash Wednesday and moves us through Holy Week and the joy of resurrection morning. When we walk through Lent with a mindset of repentance, Easter becomes a genuine personal experience of Jesus' resurrection and life. As the old adage goes, "one cannot experience resurrection without first experiencing death." But if we haphazardly go through the Lenten season without any concern for its value, then the joy of Easter will never have the intended impact.

lifeconnect

- ◆ Recall a significant event in your life this past year. How did you prepare for that event? How did your preparations make the event more enjoyable?

bibleconnect

There are no Scriptures that reference Lent. Nevertheless, the theme of Lent is deeply rooted in Scripture. We are called to practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The aim of these disciplines is to help us enter the death of

Jesus so that the resurrection to new life may be more than an intellectual experience. Paul's theology understood this well. He believed those who are baptized in Christ also die with Christ. The season of Lent helps us remember this call on our lives and prepares us to be raised with Christ. The theme of Lent is repentance. This comes through self-examination, prayer and fasting. We should, of course, be engaging those disciplines all year long, but they are intensified during Lent. A person who truly practices Lent will spend more time in prayer and confession, the reading of Scripture, and looking for ways to give more to the needs of others. Similar to the self-denial of Jesus in his wilderness experience, we spend forty days in suffering as we await the resurrection.

- ♦ Look at the following Gospel readings for Lent. How does each Scripture reflect the theme of repentance in Lent and encourage spiritual preparation?

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Mark 1:9-13

Mark 8:31-38

John 2:13-22

John 6:4-15

John 12:20-33

- ♦ Using the Scripture lessons from above, create a personal plan for spiritual preparation during the forty day Lenten season.

worshipconnect

Because Lent is the major penitential season of the Christian year, our worship during this time should be more subdued and reflective. In one church the minister begins worship by lying prostrate on the floor at the front of the church for a short time and then stands to lead the congregation in a prayer of confession. This action, in contrast to Christmas and Easter, dramatically points to the nature of the season. Of course the preparations of Lent are not in vain. Lent leads us to the ultimate joy of resurrection.

- ♦ What changes can be made in worship to reflect the more repentant theme of the Lenten season?

- ♦ What specific Lenten disciplines could you develop to make spiritual preparations for Easter?

application

The temptation during Lent is to not take this time seriously. But in order to experience life in the resurrection, we must walk through the penitence of death. If we remain disciplined in our spiritual preparation of Lent and participate completely by practicing repentance and other spiritual disciplines, then we will experience a renewal in Easter like never before!

- ♦ Have you ever considered taking on the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving? How might such disciplines draw you closer to Jesus?

- ♦ What other spiritual activities would you like to participate in as Lenten preparation for Easter (retreats, book studies, worship styles, etc)?

Tell Me the Story of Lent: Sermon

October 30, 2016

Psalm 51:1-17; Mark 8:31-38

Lent is the forty day period (minus Sundays) before Easter. The season begins with Ash Wednesday and lasts until Holy Week. The use of the number forty is popular in Scripture and is a number representing fullness. Lent is a time we prepare for Easter through repentance. The color for this season is purple, representing penitence, reflection, and the royalty of Christ. The cross is the primary symbol used during Lent, with the Latin cross which the Romans used for execution being the most common. This symbol of death is appropriately transformed into a symbol of new life for those who choose to follow Jesus.

The danger we face when we plan for the future is to be _____ to the presence of God in our plans

Lent beckons us to enter once again into the _____ of the Lord.

Jesus' words in Mark's Gospel calls us to give up _____.

Lent enables us to come face to face with our _____ places and choose whether or not to _____ and follow a different road.

Lent leads us to a complete and _____ life in the risen Christ.

thinkmore _____

- ♦ Lent asks us to examine our lives in light of our baptism. How are you doing in that endeavor?
- ♦ Are you choosing to follow Jesus or to live a self-centered life?
- ♦ How have you denied yourself in order to draw closer to Jesus?
- ♦ In what areas of your life do you need to repent and ask God to create a clean heart within you?

Creative Ways for Personally Observing Lent

- ♦ In the customary tradition of Lent, choose to give something up.
- ♦ Practice fasting for an extended period of time.
- ♦ Attend an Ash Wednesday service.
- ♦ Use a wreath similar to one used during Advent. Add a fifth outer candle. Light all the candles at the beginning of Lent. On each Sunday of the season, extinguish one candle until Easter and then light all the candles again.
- ♦ Eat or make pretzels which remind us of folded arms in prayer. In early days the bread was known by its Latin name, *bracellae*, or "little arms." The name "bretzel" became "pretzel." This type of bread was prepared during Lent.
- ♦ Put up a Christmas tree minus the ornaments and lights. At the base of the tree place a rustic cross. Let this serve as a symbol of how the sacrifice of Jesus leads to eternal life (evergreen).
- ♦ Write notes of confession and repentance to those whom you may have offended or hurt in the past year.
- ♦ Place a single rose in a vase without water at the beginning of Lent. As the rose dies and the petals fall off, let it serve as a reminder of our dying to self.
- ♦ Each day read the story of the "Forgiving Father" in Luke 15:11-32. Allow the meaning of the story to sink in over the course of forty days.



TELL ME THE STORY OF

Holy Week



NOVEMBER 6, 2016

Holy Week and The Great Triduum

The experience of Holy Week is pinnade to our understanding of the Christian faith. Our very life and salvation result from the events of this week. Most believers who have walked through the events of this week know there is a great contradiction. At Palm/Passion Sunday, we cheer with the crowds as they welcome Jesus into Jerusalem. But those cheers quickly change to cries of “Crucify him!” as we edge toward Friday.

Thursday begins the great Triduum (Latin for “three days”). These are pivotal events in the faith: Maundy Thursday (Jesus’ last meal and command to love one another), Good Friday (Jesus’ death), and Holy Saturday’s Easter vigil and morning celebration (Jesus’ resurrection). In the early church these were not seen as three separate times of worship. The somber worship experience that began on the evening of Maundy Thursday lasted continuously until the celebration of Easter morning. And we know that the resurrection of Jesus on Easter not only reconciles the contradictions of this week, but reconciles humanity with God.

A Brief History of Holy Week and The Great Triduum

From the middle of the third century, Christians assigned a unique spiritual significance to the week leading up to Easter. No structure existed for worship during this period; however, many Christians made pilgrimages to Jerusalem right before Easter to retrace the steps of Jesus in his last days. Church leaders in Jerusalem responded by linking the events of Jesus’ final week in a continuous act of worship.

This observance of the final days in Jesus’ earthly life began to spread outside of Jerusalem and soon Holy Week became a major occasion for Christian worship. *Tenebrae* services—a service of increasing darkness where congregants meditate on key events in Holy Week—began to develop as a way of observing Holy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. Many churches celebrated communion on Maundy Thursday. Numerous churches hosted Easter vigils on Saturday evenings which lasted until resurrection morning.

Maundy Thursday takes its name from the Latin *Dies Mandati*, the Day of the Commandment, referring to Jesus’ commandment for disciples to love one another. On this evening Christians recall the events of Jesus’ final hours with his disciples: washing their feet, the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Judas’ betrayal, and the love commandment. Historically, this service has also included an offering given to the poor and the stripping of the altar of all fabrics, furniture, and flowers. No decorations were appropriate come Good Friday.

Early Christians referred to the day of Jesus' death as Paschal Day. This comes directly from the sacrifice of a paschal lamb during the Jewish observance of Passover. Jesus, Paul said to the Corinthians, is our Paschal lamb. The name Good Friday emerged among English Christians who judged the consequences of the day, not the crucifixion itself, as good. Eastern Christians have carried the adjective one step further, referring to the day as "Great Friday."

When early church worshippers exited the sanctuary on Good Friday, a sense of death and gloom filled the air. The scene remained that way when they returned on Holy Saturday for evening services. This beginning of the Easter vigil was much like a wake and conducted in a similar fashion as a memorial service. Lights were dimmed and worshippers were not allowed to enter the sanctuary until instructed. At the appointed time, the pastor began the service without any announcement by reading the words of comfort from Job 14 and then another minister responded with a reading from Psalm 90. As the service continued, the mood began to change from somber to hopeful and expectant. Soon worshippers would join in a great chorus of "Hallelujahs" for the risen Lord! The service lasted all through the night, ending with baptism on Easter morning.

Holy Week Colors, Symbols, and Words

Basin and towel—the items Jesus used to wash the disciples feet on Maundy Thursday.

Black—the color for Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

Communion—also Lord's Supper and Eucharist; an observance of Jesus' last meal with his disciples, made up of bread and wine.

Crown of thorns—the symbol made by soldiers and placed on Jesus' head as a cruel joke in reference to him as "King of the Jews."

Good Friday—the day Jesus died. Its name derives from an English understanding of the "good" things that result from this day.

Hammer and nails—symbols used to recall the death of Jesus on the cross.

Hosanna—the Hebrew expression of "Lord, save us!" shouted in the procession of the ancient Jewish festival of Tabernacles. This is what the chanting crowds recognized on Palm Sunday.

Holy Week—the events of Jesus' last week from his entrance in Jerusalem on Palm/Passion Sunday to the Saturday Easter vigil, culminating in Easter.

Maundy Thursday—deriving from the Latin word for “commandment” because of the night Jesus gave the disciples the commandment to love one another.

Palm Branches—Green leaves associated with Palm Sunday as symbols of victory.

Purple—the color for Holy Week until Good Friday.

Triduum—or “three days” that moves from the evening of Maundy Thursday through Easter Sunday.



Tell Me the Story of Holy Week: Sunday School Lesson

November 6, 2016

In last week's lesson I began by describing the annual golf trip I take with five friends. It is a special time I put on the calendar each January and look forward to every summer. You might say it is a turning point in my year—it gives new meaning each summer to my relationship with special people in my life. And by no means am I comparing my yearly golf vacation with the final week in the life of Jesus, but just as my trip gives special meaning to a week in my year, so does Holy Week to the cycle of the Christian year. All the more so, in fact! Holy Week is the *defining* week in the Christian year that gives great meaning to the entirety of the all the seasons. Even Christmas finds its ultimate meaning in this week. Having journeyed through Lent, now we begin to see light at the end of a long tunnel. Yes, we still have to endure death, but we know resurrection is just on the other side.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Do you have a special week in your year? Maybe it is an annual family vacation or the first week of school. How does this week organize your life?

bibleconnect

While there is no Scriptural evidence of a Holy Week observance, we would be foolish to ignore the last week of our Savior's life on earth. This week is pinnacle to our understanding of the faith. Historically speaking, it is the recitation of Jesus' last week, from his entry into Jerusalem on Palm/Passion Sunday to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday; Holy Week includes the Saturday night Easter vigil that continues until resurrection morning. Spiritually speaking, we draw our baptismal faith from the events of this week. As Paul described, we die with Christ and rise with Christ—what happened to Jesus happens to us.

- ♦ Summarize in your own words the biblical basis for Holy Week.

- ♦ Read Romans 6:1-11. How does this passage describe our position in Christ?

- ♦ How can Paul's words in Romans help us approach Holy Week?

worshipconnect

Egeria, a woman writing in the fourth century, described in her journal *Diary of a Pilgrimage*, a firsthand account of a Holy Week observance in Jerusalem. She emphasized the day-to-day events including: carrying palms to the church in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; singing hymns, reading Scripture, and preaching Monday through Wednesday; celebrating Communion on Thursday, followed by worship that lasted through the night as a way of reenacting the gospel accounts of Thursday night. Early on Friday, after worshipping all night, worshippers walked to Gethsemane where they read passages describing the Lord's arrest (Matthew 26:36-56). Egeria reports that "there is such moaning and groaning with weeping from all the people that their moaning can be heard practically as far as the city." They then proceeded to the place of the cross where the words of Pilate were read (Mark 15:1-15). That evening a cross was placed on a table in which people passed by "touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, and then with their eyes; and after kissing the cross, they move on." On Saturday, worship took place at the third and sixth hours, with the reading of Scripture interspersed with prayer. At nightfall on Saturday a vigil was held that lasted until Sunday morning when a dramatic reenactment of the resurrection took place followed by baptism, preaching, and receiving Communion.

Consider the total immersion in the death and resurrection of Jesus these worshippers experienced. By the end of the week they were exhausted by the intensity of following the final events of Jesus' life. But after an all night vigil on Saturday, the moment of resurrection finally came. Imagine their joy at celebrating Jesus overcoming death! Because these worshippers had entered death with Jesus, they were able to experience his resurrection in a way that would never happen apart from participation in the entire journey.

Finally, Egeria tells us that Easter did not end on Easter day. There were eight straight days of celebration. They replaced fasting with festive services. Their moaning ceased and great exuberance became the theme of their songs. For eight days they celebrated in ways that were in sharp contrast to their sober preparations for Lent and Holy Week. As we will learn next week, Easter was never meant to come and go in a single day. As the worshippers of Egeria's time knew well—those who are in Christ take seriously their identity with Jesus' death, but place their life in their identity with his resurrection.

- ♦ How is your own spiritual life energized as you move from the repentant theme of Lent to the somber theme of Holy Week to the joy of Easter?

- ♦ How might you celebrate Holy Week by using Egeria's example?

- ♦ How much more significant would Holy Week become in our spiritual lives if we made it the most pivotal week in our year?

application

- ♦ Using the three columns below, compare how each spiritually emphasizes the events of Holy Week.

	Early Church	Our Church	You Personally
Palm Sunday			
Holy Monday			
Holy Tuesday			
Holy Wednesday			
Maundy Thursday			
Good Friday			
Holy Saturday			
Easter Sunday			

Tell Me the Story of Holy Week: Sermon

November 6, 2016

Mark 14:12-36

Holy Week is the last week of Lent, recalling Jesus' last week before his crucifixion. On Palm/Passion Sunday we remember when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, a sign of peace. On Maundy Thursday we remember Jesus washing the disciples feet, instituting the Lord's Supper, and giving us the command to love one another. Good Friday remembers Jesus' death and Holy Saturday prepares us for the Easter celebration. The spiritual theme for this week is death and we recall our baptism of dying with Christ. Purple is the color used for the first half the week and it changes to black on Good Friday. A towel and basin are symbols for Maundy Thursday. A large hammer and nails and a crown of thorns are used to symbolize Good Friday.

Maundy Thursday begins what the ancient church called the _____.

The days of Holy Week represent the _____ or Passover, the great saving act of God.

The Old Testament refers to the cup of God's _____ which he will use to drain out the _____ of the earth.

Three symbols: _____, _____, and _____ point to the significance of Jesus as the suffering servant who takes on the sin of the entire world.

thinkmore _____

- ♦ Take time to contemplate on the enormity of Holy Week and God's actions to bring about your salvation.
- ♦ What does the fullness of the cross really mean to you?
- ♦ Are you willing to follow Jesus even unto death?
- ♦ In what ways do you wish to experience Holy Week in a more profound manner?

Creative Ways for Personally Observing Holy Week

- ♦ Save the trunk from a Christmas tree and make a rustic cross for Good Friday.
- ♦ Plan a Seder meal to observe with family and friends.
For instructions: <http://www.crivoice.org/seder.html>
- ♦ Attend a Tenebrae service, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, or Stations of the Cross service.
- ♦ Remove all decorations from your living room paralleling the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday.
- ♦ Consider worshipping continuously from Maundy Thursday to Easter morning.
- ♦ Peruse a hymnal and select the hymns that you most identify with as an expression of your faith.
- ♦ Carry a large nail in your pocket throughout the week. Whenever you feel the nail, take a moment to reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus.
- ♦ List “feeling” words that describe what happened to Jesus during the last week of his life. Is your list a “Good Friday” or “Easter Morning” type of faith?
- ♦ Using a long strip of paper, make a timeline of the events of Holy Week. Look up the following Scriptures for the events:
 - Matthew 21:12-13
 - Matthew 26:6-7
 - Luke 19:28-40
 - Luke 19:41-44
 - Luke 22:14-23
 - Mark 14:32-42
 - Matthew 26:47-56
 - Matthew 26:57-64
 - Matthew 27:11-31
 - Matthew 27:32-55
 - Matthew 28:1-10

TELL ME THE STORY OF

Easter



NOVEMBER 13, 2016

The Season of Easter

Easter is the oldest and most celebratory season in the entire Christian year and with good reason. The resurrection of Jesus is the pinnacle event that gives rise to our faith. Free of burden, free of sin, free of death, full of hope and expectation, the church throughout the world rises with Jesus.

Just as Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and Lent have their seasons, Easter does as well, an even longer one. There are fifty days to the celebration of Easter and it is worth the effort to keep the celebration going for the entire season. The church would do well to greet each other every day with the traditional Easter greeting: "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" After all, the Easter celebration continues every week of the Christian year because every Sunday is a "little Easter."

A Brief History of Easter

The festival of Easter was first mentioned by name in 130. It lasts fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. In the earliest centuries Easter was the only day new believers in Jesus would be baptized. The days after Easter were the time for them to explore the meaning of their new life in Christ.



Easter Day originally included both crucifixion and resurrection themes. Early Christians viewed the two events as the "new exodus" which Jesus made possible for all people. The celebration began at sundown on Saturday with a recitation of the crucifixion story. At dawn, the focus shifted to the resurrection and baptism of new believers. In the fourth century with the development of Holy Week, the focus of Easter narrowed to the resurrection of Jesus alone.

Today, some churches are recovering the Easter vigil on Holy Saturday as it was observed in the earliest centuries. The celebration of baptism on Easter is growing as well. Baptism joins all of God's people with the death and resurrection of Christ. For us, too, the Easter season's fifty days is a time to renew our commitment to Jesus as the source of our spirituality.

Easter Colors, Symbols, and Words

Baptism—a tangible symbol for every Christian at Easter. By baptism we are buried with Christ and raised with him to new life.

Crown—a sign of victory and royalty associated with Christ the King.

Easter—The English word is borrowed from the name of a pagan spring festival and is related to the fact the sun rises in the east.

He is risen. He is risen indeed.—the ancient shout of Christian people at Easter.

Lily—one of the most common symbols of Easter; shaped like a trumpet this flower announces victory, growing from a seemingly dead bulb which is buried in order to grow and live.

Paschal Candle—lit for the first time at the Easter vigil, marking the arrival of the Easter season. It symbolizes the return of the Light of the World.

White—the color for Easter, a symbol of purity and new life.



Tell Me the Story of Easter: Sunday School Lesson

November 13, 2016

Next to Christmas, Easter is the second major festival that most Christians unfamiliar with the Christian year are accustomed to observing. In fact, there is an old joke that says many people do not know what the church looks like without poinsettias or lilies, referring to those individuals who only worship on the high days of the church year. But as we have seen in this study, observance of the Christian year means more than just observing two days of Christmas and Easter. Like Advent for Christmas, Easter has a time of preparation in Lent. And like Christmas, Easter is not reserved to a day. It is a season of great rejoicing—fifty days in all—culminating at Pentecost. Fifty days to reflect and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Recall Easter celebrations from your youth. Was Easter seen as a day or a season? What spiritual effect would celebrating Easter for fifty days have on your life?

bibleconnect

Before the actual “Easter morning service,” the early church worshipped the entire night beforehand. The Holy Saturday service was an Easter vigil that began at sundown. It was a continuation of the worship that began on Maundy Thursday. This vigil service was filled with prayer and darkness while worshippers recited the major stories of Scripture. Beginning in Genesis with the creation, they traced salvation history through the patriarchs and prophets. The readings culminated with the story of resurrection and an early morning baptism. Though the contemporary readings for this service are much shorter, they include:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| - The story of creation | Genesis 1:1-2:2 |
| - The flood | Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:8-18; 9:8-13 |
| - The sacrifice of Isaac | Genesis 22:1-18 |
| - Israel’s deliverance | Exodus 14:10-15:1 |

- God's presence in Israel Isaiah 4:2-6
- Salvation offered freely Isaiah 55:1-11
- A new heart and spirit Ezekiel 36:24-28
- The valley of dry bones Ezekiel 37:1-14
- God's people gathered Zephaniah 3:12-20

The early church after Christ considered every Sunday a "little Easter." Weekly worship was a joyous event that relived the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This was most lived out in the participatory action of Communion which occurred every time the church gathered for worship. But long before the early church practices of celebrating Easter emerged, we find evidence of an Easter observance in Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The key to understanding how this verse is an Easter celebration is found in the word *Paschal*, a derivation of the word *Passover* that came to signify the Easter season. Jesus became our *paschal* lamb, sacrificed for our sins. Paul is telling the Corinthians to prepare for a feast in celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Moreover, many things happened in the days following Jesus' resurrection. He met with his disciples, ate with them, and fellowshiped. He also ascended to heaven. The Easter season recalls all of this as evidence of Jesus' continued life.

- ♦ Read Luke 24:13-53 and Acts 1:1-26. Outline the events that occurred between the resurrection and day of Pentecost. These events make up the season of Easter.

- ♦ How do you interpret the events that happened after Jesus' resurrection? Did Jesus offer any clues to how this season should shape our spirituality?

worshipconnect

The early church experienced Easter in a most meaningful way. But it did not happen haphazardly. There were significant factors that led to their resurrection joy:

- The long Lenten observance of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.
- Continuous worship that lasted from Maundy Thursday to Easter morning.

- The celebration of baptism on Easter, reminding them of their own baptism.
- The weekly celebration of Communion.
- The contrast of the worship tone between Lent and Easter.
- Prayers were said kneeling during Lent and were said standing during Easter.
- Worship was full of "Alleluias," which were not allowed to be sung in Lent.
- The church taught the meaning of life in Christ during the Easter season.

In addition, the writings of early church fathers express how significant the extended season of Easter became for those in the faith. Some of their observations include:

- Tertullian described Easter as "a most joyous space."
- St. Ambrose of Milan asked of the Easter season, "What gain is it to celebrate unless you imitate Him Whom you worship?"
- Basil of Caesarea credits Easter with reminding "us of the resurrection which we await in the other world."

- ◆ What factors from the early church might we incorporate today to make our Easter worship for meaningful?

- ◆ How might we recover the joy felt by early Christians during Easter?

- ◆ What do the statements about Easter from the church fathers mean to you?

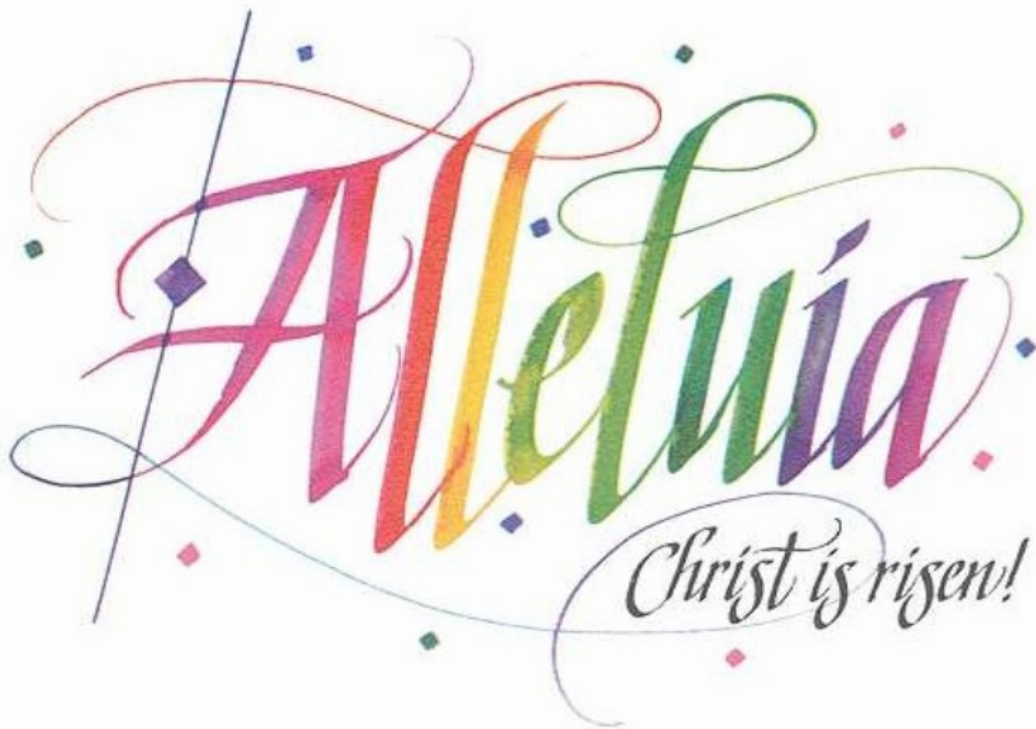
application

Easter, more than any other season, points to the *life* we have in Jesus. Such a celebration is not meant just for a day! The kind of worship we experience in Easter should lift our spirits, remind us of our position in Christ, and leave us awestruck.

- ◆ How have you died in Christ and been raised to new life in Christ?

- ♦ How has your new life in Christ been made manifest in the last year?

- ♦ Evaluate the services of our church during the Easter season. Is it a day or a season? How might we celebrate the power of resurrection for an extended period?



Tell Me the Story of Easter: Sermon

November 13, 2016

1 Corinthians 15

Easter begins on Easter Sunday and lasts for fifty days until Pentecost. This is when the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated. The word “Easter” derives from an ancient pagan festival surrounding the sun which rises in the east. Early Christians celebrated Easter three days after Passover, but Gentile Christians insisted it be celebrated on Sunday. In 325 the church set the date to celebrate Easter as the first Sunday after the full moon crosses the spring equinox. Because the equinox changes from year to year, the date of Easter fluctuates between March and April. White is the color of the Easter season, symbolizing purity and new life. Lilies are also used to pronounce the glorious resurrection.

Christianity is an _____ faith, and we are an _____ people.

Paul carefully argues that Christ has been _____ raised from the dead.

What _____ to Jesus _____ to us.

The Christian year is not just an _____ exercise but a _____ one.

We are encouraged to live _____, _____, and _____ Jesus.

thinkmore _____

- ◆ What seven words would you use to summarize the Gospel?
- ◆ Describe Easter spirituality in your own words?
- ◆ How can you celebrate Easter for more than just one day?

Creative Ways for Personally Celebrating Easter

- ♦ Celebrate Easter by renewing the vows you took at baptism, remembering how you are renewed by Christ.
- ♦ On Easter Sunday release butterflies as a sign of new life.
- ♦ Attend an Easter vigil and/or sunrise service.
- ♦ During the season of Easter, greet everyone by saying, "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed" instead of a common "hello" or "how are you doing?"
- ♦ If you made a timeline of the events leading up to Easter, add those events that happened after Easter Sunday.
- ♦ Study the resurrection story in all four Gospels and notice the differences each writer offers in sharing the narrative.
- ♦ Purchase lilies and deliver them to homebound or nursing home persons.



TELL ME THE STORY OF

Pentecost



NOVEMBER 20, 2016

The Season of Pentecost

Jesus promised his disciples that he would not leave them alone. The way he would accomplish this is by sending the Holy Spirit to be with them (and us). The Holy Spirit guides those who follow Christ: teaching, leading, inspiring, and encouraging us. One of the names Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit is “counselor.” The work of a counselor is to help guide persons into better circumstances. The help of the Holy Spirit guides us to the way Christ has shown us to live.

The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost—the fiftieth day after Easter (“Pentecost” means 50th)—is described in the second chapter of Acts. The Jewish festival of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, was observed by early Christians including Paul. As the church grew, Passover became tied to Easter and Pentecost was celebrated later.

This is the longest season of the Christian year. Following the day of Pentecost there is the season of Pentecost (also known as Ordinary Time) which spans six months until Christ the King Sunday. Where the first half of the year celebrated the life of Christ, the second half of the year focuses on communication and faithfulness. At Pentecost we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and renew our promise to “Go and tell the good news.” The season of Pentecost (Ordinary Time) challenges our faithfulness to pattern our lives after the life of Jesus.

The Gospel readings in this season show us Jesus in action, teaching us by word and example to follow him. That following includes our worship, prayer, and service. Will we help our neighbor in need? Will we truly love one another? Our answer to those questions will be proven in this season.

The color for the day of Pentecost is bright red, symbolizing the tongues of fire in Acts 2. The color for the remainder of the season is green, a symbol of life, just as the Holy Spirit gives life to God’s children. The season concludes with Christ the King Sunday, a day to remember the same Jesus who came to be our Savior will come again to be our forever King. That, incidentally, is the message of the first Sunday of Advent, the season that will begin the Christian year again seven days following Christ the King.

A Brief History of Pentecost

The day of Pentecost borrows its name from the ancient Jewish festival called the “Feast of Weeks” (Ex. 23:16) which is often referred to as Pentecost. The Jewish festival celebrated the wheat harvest, marking the end of the harvest season just as Passover marked the beginning. The festival was the fiftieth day, the day after a “week of

weeks.” During Pentecost, Jews celebrated the renewal of the giving of the Law.

Following Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, thousands of Christians gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate Easter. Church leaders encouraged their celebration to continue uninterrupted for fifty days until Pentecost and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. By the end of the second century, fasting and kneeling in prayer were forbidden during this period. It was a time for feasting, lifting of hands, and rejoicing.

The season after Pentecost (Ordinary Time) did not develop until late in the eighth century. Prior to this time the church saw these six months as just the rest of the year—the long period following the commemoration of Jesus’ life and saving work. But that did not mean the six months following Pentecost were without meaning. Even before being formally developed as a season in the Christian year, church leaders used these months to encourage individuals to live as faithful followers of Jesus in the daily routines of their lives. Over time the church developed these months into the season of Ordinary Time. The term “Ordinary Time” for this season is misleading. Whereas the first half of the Christian year is considered “extraordinary” because of its focus on Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection through great festival times such as Christmas and Easter, the second half of the year is “ordinary” because it does not contain any major festival days. However, it is a great time for ordinary followers of Christ to learn how to live extraordinary lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost Colors, Symbols, and Words

Dove—a symbol of peace and purity often associated with the Holy Spirit.

Fire—a major symbol for Pentecost; often associated with tongues of fire.

Green—the color for the season of Ordinary Time.

Holy Spirit—the gift of God, the Spirit is given to everyone who believes.

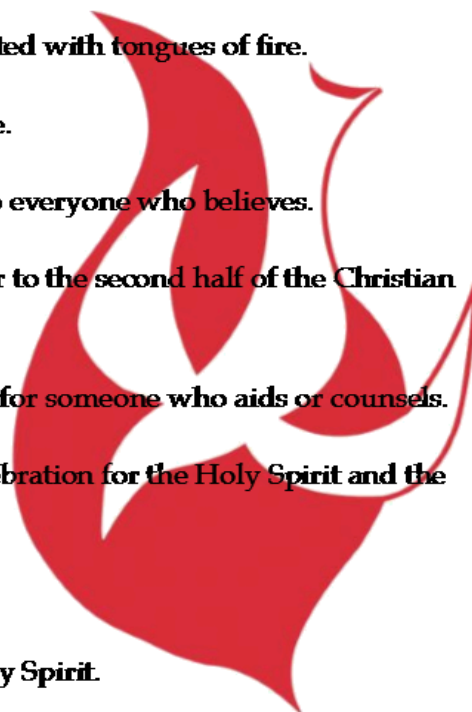
Ordinary Time—an alternative term used to refer to the second half of the Christian year.

Paraclete, Counselor—Paraclete is a Greek word for someone who aids or counsels.

Pentecost—the fiftieth day after Easter, it is a celebration for the Holy Spirit and the founding of the church.

Red—the color for Pentecost.

Wind—a major symbol for Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.



Tell Me the Story of Pentecost: Sunday School Lesson

November 20, 2016

One of the biggest events in my life was the day of my wedding. A lot went into that day! As anyone knows who has planned a wedding, the “to-do” list seems never ending. There are engagement parties and showers to attend, picking a date, designing invitations, choosing a dress or suit, reserving a venue, meeting with the minister, meeting with the photographer, selecting a reception site and menu, finding a cake, hotels, groomsmen gifts, bridesmaid gifts, attending the rehearsal—and that’s all before the actual wedding! Then the big day arrives and everything is fabulous. But then, in the blink of an eye, the wedding day is over. And life has to go on.

I often tell couples on their big day, “This is only a wedding. Tomorrow begins a marriage.” Indeed, the celebration of matrimony is a joyous day worth celebrating. But learning to live as husband and wife takes time.

The point of time we are in during Pentecost is much like the wedding scenario I just described. We have prepared ourselves through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Lent and Holy Week have sharpened our focus. And the entire fifty day Easter season is similar to one long reception party full of feasting and jubilation. The Easter season ends on the day of Pentecost—a celebration of a new life, the church, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The days after Pentecost are similar to a young couple learning to live as husband and wife. In the Christian year these days are known as Ordinary Time. During this time we read stories of Jesus teaching and public ministry. We, as followers of Jesus, learn how to go on once the celebration is over. We also learn how to live together with Jesus by following his teachings.

Scripture likens our relationship to Jesus much like a marriage. We are referred to as “the bride of Christ.” That is an apt description because just like a marriage, we become one with Christ in our baptism. Pentecost and Ordinary Time teach us how to live in that relationship.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Recall a time when you planned for a great event, such as a wedding ceremony. Once the event was over, how did you continue in life? How did you continue the joy of the event? What effect, if any, did the event have on how you continued to live?

bibleconnect

The biblical roots of Pentecost are found in Acts 2:1-47, which appropriately ends with the post-Pentecost church joining in worship. The Spirit which Jesus promised (John 15:26-27) now came to empower the disciples. On the day of Pentecost the church took root. Our focus on the day of Pentecost should be embracing a new commitment to the teaching of the church and the mission of the church to carry on the work of God.

The season after Pentecost, known as Ordinary Time, is the simple but profound time to commit the pattern of our lives after the life of Jesus. The absence of major festival times allows us to concentrate on how we are fulfilling the commands of Jesus.

- ◆ Read Acts 2:1-47. Outline the events of the day of Pentecost.

- ◆ In your own words, interpret the content of Peter's sermon.

- ◆ How does Acts 2:42-47 describe worship after Pentecost?

worshipconnect

We do not choose to observe the Christian year as mere ritual, but as a means for drawing closer to Jesus. Through this study we have been walking with Jesus, allowing his life, death, and resurrection to shape our spirituality. As we learn in our baptism, Jesus takes up residence in our lives and forms us into his image. This is what Christian year spirituality is all about.

- ♦ **Suggest some ways to make Pentecost and Ordinary Time more meaningful in our worship?**

- ♦ **How can observance of the Christian year form us spiritually into the image of Jesus?**

application

- ♦ **What unified themes about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus connect each of the seasons in the Christian Year?**

Advent: _____

Christmas: _____

Epiphany: _____

Lent: _____

Holy Week: _____

Easter: _____

Pentecost: _____

Ordinary Time: _____

- ♦ **How can you use the lessons you have gleaned from this study to live a more devoted life to Jesus?**

Tell Me the Story of Pentecost: Sermon

November 20, 2016

Matthew 6:9-13; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Pentecost is the fiftieth day after Easter. It is often called the birthday of the church. In the Old Testament, Pentecost was a celebration known as the Festival of Weeks, celebrating the end of the harvest season. In the New Testament, we associate it with the giving of the Holy Spirit. The color for Pentecost is red, the color of flames. Some of the symbols used include flames, as well as doves, which are a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Some churches even use red-hot peppers to represent how the early Christians were on fire for Christ.

The season after Pentecost is called Ordinary Time. It lasts from the Sunday after Pentecost until Christ the King Sunday, which is the Sunday before Advent. During this season we emphasize our faithfulness to spread the Gospel and live as Jesus taught us. The color for this season is green, reminding us of how Christianity has grown around the world and how we must be involved in nurturing that growth.

Pentecost is _____. Will we take our call in Jesus seriously or not?

This is the time to become attentive to the call of _____.

The Lord's prayer should be less of a _____ and more a _____ for living as followers of Christ.

thinkmore _____

- ♦ How are you walking in the good ways of Jesus? What must you do to increase this walk in your life?
- ♦ Does Sunday worship point you to live a life devoted to Jesus?
- ♦ How can you live out a Pentecostal spirituality?
- ♦ What will you do with the knowledge you have gained about the Christian year through this study?


Creative Ways for Personally Celebrating Pentecost

- ♦ Bake a birthday cake for the church and include candles. Blow out the candles one at a time, making a “wish” for the church with each one.
- ♦ Eat red-hot peppers and reflect on what it means to be “on fire for Christ.”
- ♦ Put up wind-chimes outside your home. Every time the wind causes them to ring, reflect on the rush of wind that came through during Pentecost.
- ♦ Wear some form of red clothing on the day of Pentecost and some form of green clothing throughout the season: socks, shirt, ring, ribbon in your hair, belt, shoelaces, even underwear!
- ♦ At Pentecost there were people from many countries speaking different languages. Learn how to say John 3:16 in a variety of languages over the course of the season.
- ♦ Plant a tree as a symbol of growth and new life.
- ♦ The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Make origami doves and give to individuals as a means of sharing the Gospel.
For instructions: <http://www.origamiway.com/origami-dove.shtml>
- ♦ The season of Pentecost is a good time to review our commitment to the church. Read the church covenant or constitution (or if your church has membership vows consider those) and examine if you are fulfilling your duties as a member of God’s church.



Familiar Scriptures Read During Ordinary Time

Some of the most poignant Scriptures on teaching us what it means to live like Jesus are read during the season after Pentecost known as Ordinary Time.



Sermon on the Mount <i>Matthew 5-7</i>	A House Divided/Restored <i>Mark 3:20-35</i>	True worship <i>Luke 13:22-30</i>
Do not Worry <i>Matthew 6:24-34</i>	"Even wind and sea obey!" <i>Mark 4:35-41</i>	Cost of discipleship <i>Luke 14:25-35</i>
Sending of the Disciples <i>Matthew 10:5-24</i>	Clean and Unclean <i>Mark 7:1-13</i>	Saving the lost <i>Luke 15:1-10</i>
The Parable of the Sower <i>Matthew 13:3-23</i>	"Ephphatha! Be Opened!" <i>Mark 7:24-30</i>	Serving God versus self <i>Luke 16:1-5</i>
The Parable of Wheat/Weeds <i>Matthew 13:24-30</i>	The first must be last <i>Mark 9:30-37</i>	The wealth God gives <i>Luke 16:19-31</i>
Feeding of the Five Thousand <i>Matthew 14:13-21</i>	Camel and a Needle's Eye <i>Mark 10:17-22</i>	Increase your faith <i>Luke 17:1-10</i>
Jesus walks on water <i>Matthew 14:22-33</i>	Not to be served, but serve <i>Mark 10:23-31</i>	Giving thanks <i>Luke 17:11-19</i>
Peter is the Rock <i>Matthew 16:13-20</i>	Love your enemies <i>Luke 6:20-42</i>	Persistence <i>Luke 18:1-8</i>
"Get behind me Satan!" <i>Matthew 16:21-28</i>	The call to follow <i>Luke 9:51-62</i>	Seeking mercy <i>Luke 18:9-17</i>
How often should we forgive? <i>Matthew 18:21-35</i>	Love for God and neighbor <i>Luke 10:25-37</i>	Bread from Heaven <i>John 6:22-35</i>
The Greatest Commandment <i>Matthew 22:34-46</i>	All who ask shall receive <i>Luke 11:1-13</i>	Eat and live <i>John 6:35-51</i>
Call to be Servants <i>Matthew 23:1-12</i>	Be rich toward God <i>Luke 12:13-21</i>	True Food, True Drink <i>John 6:51-69</i>

Other Special Days in the Christian Year

In addition to the great festival times of the year—which tell of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—and the season of Pentecost—which teaches us how to live as followers of Jesus—there are other special days which Christians may observe, not always on Sundays.

Days concerning the life of Jesus:

- ♦ Birth of Jesus (December 25)
- ♦ Naming on the eighth day (January 1)
- ♦ The visit of the Magi (January 6)
- ♦ His baptism (First Sunday after January 6)
- ♦ Transfiguration (The Sunday before Lent begins)
- ♦ Entry into Jerusalem (The Sunday before Easter)
- ♦ His last supper (Maundy Thursday)
- ♦ His death and burial (Good Friday)
- ♦ His resurrection (Easter)
- ♦ His ascension (The 40th day after Easter)

Days to remember the Gospel writers:

- ♦ Matthew (September 21)
- ♦ Mark (April 25)
- ♦ Luke (October 18)
- ♦ John (December 27)

Days to remember disciples and followers of Jesus:

- ♦ Andrew (November 30)
- ♦ Thomas (December 21)
- ♦ Matthias (February 24)
- ♦ Philip and James (May 1)
- ♦ Peter and Paul (June 29)
- ♦ Mary Magdalene (July 22)
- ♦ James (July 25)

Days set aside for Jesus' earthly parents:

- ♦ Annunciation (March 25)
- ♦ Joseph (March 19)
- ♦ Mary (August 15)

Days commemorating Old Testament figures:

- ♦ Isaac (August 16)
- ♦ Joshua (September 1)
- ♦ Moses (September 4)
- ♦ Jonah (September 22)
- ♦ Abraham (October 9)
- ♦ Noah (November 29)
- ♦ David (December 29)
- ♦ Adam and Eve (December 19)
- ♦ Job (May 9)
- ♦ Esther (May 24)
- ♦ Jeremiah (June 26)
- ♦ Isaiah (July 6)
- ♦ Ruth (July 16)
- ♦ Elijah (July 20)

Days in the life of the church:

- ♦ Trinity Sunday (The Sunday after Pentecost Day)—Recognition of God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ♦ Reformation Sunday (Nearest to October 31)—Commemorating when Martin Luther posted his statements on the church doors in 1517, an action which began the Protestant Reformation.
- ♦ Holy Cross Day (September 14)
- ♦ All Saints Day (November 1)—Commemorating those persons who lived in the past and those living today who choose to follow Christ.
- ♦ All Souls Day (November 2)—Specific celebration for believers who have gone before us.
- ♦ World Communion (The 1st Sunday in October)—Celebration of the unity of Christ throughout the world.
- ♦ Christ the King Sunday (Last Sunday in the Christian Year)



Epilogue

Anyone who spends much time around me will learn quickly that I love holidays. In particular, I love Christmas. Admittedly, I listen to Christmas music all year round. But the true celebration of Christmas is not the familiar carols, twinkling lights, or family traditions. The true celebration of Christmas is the intersection of humanity and divinity—Emmanuel, God-with-us, in the flesh! The life of Jesus born in Bethlehem impacts everything—he was with God in the beginning and he will be with God at the end of the age. And his life teaches us how we should live. That is, if we are willing to listen.

The Christian year enables us to follow the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus with an uncanny spiritual resolve. Each season points us to a new discovery and a new way of living. Moreover, it repeats these lessons year after year in a way that we can never outgrow.

Some people might tell you the Christian year is restrictive. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The Christian year celebrates the ultimate source of our being—the saving work of God in Christ. And for anyone who has followed Christ closely for any amount of time, you know it is never boring or restrictive. Life in Jesus is more freeing than anything the world can summon. All the excesses in the world—money, possessions, sex, alcohol, drugs—are limiting and always leave us craving more. They are made for people who have not discovered the joy of being in relationship with the God of the universe.

Following Jesus will give you joy, make you scared, discipline your life, and cause you to be a better person. The Christian year will do all of those things as well. How? Because it is built on following the life of Jesus. We will rejoice on Christmas, kneel in repentant prayer during Lent, shutter at the cross on Good Friday, shout “Alleluia!” Easter morning, be infused with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and learn to be more loving, compassionate, and giving during Ordinary Time. The Christian year makes wide scope for all human feelings, and all under the auspices of what it means to be alive, to be holy, to be centered on our baptismal call of oneness in Christ Jesus.

I pray this study has been helpful in teaching you more about the Christian year. But to a much greater extent, I pray you have grown closer to Jesus and will choose to follow him in all the seasons of your life.

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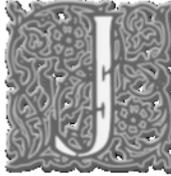


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APPENDIX C.4

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING GUIDE (pp 196-231)

TELL ME THE

 *Story* *of*  *Jesus*

A STUDY IN THE SEASONS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

**SUNDAY SCHOOL
TEACHING GUIDE**

Contents

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How Best to Use This Teaching Guide

- ♦ Always begin with prayerful consideration of your role as the teacher.
- ♦ The lessons in this guide are identical to the lessons in the workbook. Teaching notes have been added in the form of “sidebars” for each lesson. Use these at your discretion to help convey the material.
- ♦ Because of the nature of this study, each lesson focuses on a specific season in the Christian year. That makes it different from a traditional “Bible Study.” Rather than one particular biblical text to explore, the lessons use multiple texts to arrive at an understanding of each Christian season.
- ♦ Begin your preparation early in the week by overviewing all of the material and deciding what best meets the needs of your students and matches your capability and style as a teacher.
- ♦ Study Bible passages prior to class time. During class time, invite others to open their Bibles and read the passage(s) aloud. Ask for insight/comments as each passage is discussed.
- ♦ Study the introductory reading materials in the accompanying workbook that pertain to each week’s lesson. (For example: in the study of Advent, be familiar with “The Season of Advent,” “Brief History of Advent,” and “Advent Colors, Symbols, and Words.”) Be familiar enough with these materials to refer to them in your Sunday School lesson.
- ♦ Prior to class time, complete the Sunday School lesson questions on your own. Use your answers to help others form their own answers in class.
- ♦ Ask concrete personal questions of your students, such as “Have you experienced that? Where? When? How? Describe your feelings in that situation.”
- ♦ Look for practical ways to apply the material. Questions you might ask include, “How would you like to see this in worship?” or “How does this lesson help you become a better follower of Jesus?”
- ♦ After studying all of the material, develop your plan for teaching the class.
- ♦ If you have any questions regarding the teaching material, contact Jeff at your earliest convenience.
- ♦ If you need teaching materials, such as poster board, markers, past bulletins, hymnals, et cetera, please contact Jeff and he will make these available.
- ♦ Enjoy teaching the seasons of the Christian year and discovering how God can form us spiritually through the lessons contained therein.

Tell Me the Story of Marking Time: Sunday School Lesson

October 2, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

In Wiltshire, England stands one of the most mysterious sites on the face of the earth. Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument built around 2500 BC and contains huge stones—some of them up to one ton in weight—arranged in concentric circles. Historians argue that the site was once home to a prehistoric civilization, but their use of the stones is still up for debate. One interesting explanation is that the stones mark time. The placement of the stones allows the sunlight to move around the circle at different intervals that correspond to each month of the year.

Whether or not the primary purpose of the stones was marking time is anyone's guess. But their very existence points to the fact people throughout the ages have had ways to mark time. Each of us lives by a calendar that runs from January to December. Moreover, we live by days in each of those months, hours, minutes, and even seconds that make up each day. Many people organize those days by special events, such as a birthday or anniversary. Or you may mark your days by an occupation. For example, an educator will mark time from August to June. Everyone, in some fashion, marks time.

lifeconnect

Encourage students to be specific with their answer(s) to the Life Connect question. Do they mark time by their occupation, their family, their calendar, sports? For example, a sports fanatic might mark time based on the Super Bowl, the NCAA basketball tournament, baseball season, et cetera. Someone who has lost a spouse might mark time based on the length their loved one has been gone. How do these events influence how someone views "time"?

- ♦ **In what ways do you mark time? Is there a significant event in your life that governs how you view time (marriage, birthday, crisis, death)? How does this event interpret your view of time?**

bibleconnect

The biblical method of marking time is by God's saving events. An event time is called *kairos* (from which we get the word *crisis*). The time between *kairos* events is called *chronos* (from which we get the word *chronology*). The primary *kairos* event in Scripture is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That event gives meaning to all prior events and future events. The following three ways show how this is true:

- ♦ Jesus' life is fulfilled time. In his life, all the Old Testament expectations of a Messiah are fulfilled. Jesus himself said, "The time has come...The Kingdom of God is near" (Mark 1:15).

See also Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14-36.

- ♦ Jesus' life is the time of salvation. His death and resurrection changed the course of human destiny. No longer would death and evil have the final word.
- ♦ Jesus' life introduced anticipatory time. We live in the time between the saving work of God on the cross and the second coming of Jesus. For Christians, this is hopeful time, awaiting the return of our Lord.

The Christian year has its foundation in the understanding of the *kairos* time that is Jesus. Before studying any of the seasons, we need to remember the way our Christian calendar is marked in *kairos* time:

- ♦ The birth of Jesus is related through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany.
- ♦ The death and resurrection of Jesus is related through Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.
- ♦ The second coming of Jesus is related through Pentecost and Ordinary Time.

The cycle of the Christian year (see page 20 in the workbook) remembers and proclaims the events of Jesus and anticipates the events to come. Any use of the Christian year, therefore, places our focus exactly where it should be—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Before looking at the Scripture passages, ask students to reflect on the cycle of the Christian year. What do you know of the Christian year that helps you know more about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

- ♦ Read Exodus 12:1-28. How does this passage illustrate the marking of time for Israel?

Exodus 12 is God's institution of the Passover festival. It is a remembrance of God's saving act of delivering the Israelites from Egypt; though at the time God institutes the festival, they are still in Egypt. Notice the specific instructions that are given to each day and month. Also notice the many references to "remembering the event" found in this passage. How does this festival help the Israelites mark time in their relationship with God: past, present, and future?

- ♦ **Read Luke 23:44-49. How does this passage illustrate the *kairos* marking of time for Christians?**

How does the death and resurrection of Jesus order the way time is marked in the church week by week and year by year? In what special ways do we mark these times?

- ♦ **Read John 1:1-14. How does this passage illustrate how Christians should mark time now?**

- ♦ **In your own words, describe how the Christ event shapes your way of marking time?**

Compare answers to the above questions with the three ways Jesus' life gives meaning to all time.

- Jesus' life is fulfilled time.
- Jesus' life is the time of salvation.
- Jesus' life introduced anticipatory time.

worshipconnect

The Christian year allows for many opportunities of spiritual growth in worship. From the various readings, colors and symbols, to the prayers and sermons, we are exposed to the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in multiple ways. It is a process of slow immersion into the life of Jesus that, in the end, claims us, too, as part

of that life. Joan Chittister says the Christian year does two things for us in worship: one of them communal and the other very personal. First, the Christian year reminds us as the church what kind of community we are meant to be. It convicts us when we do not use our communal voice to speak out against injustice or to protect God's children. In those times we must repent and begin again. Second, the Christian year implants within us the very substance of our faith. We are called to be "followers of Jesus." And that means we do what Jesus did. It calls us to private and personal reflection on the place of Jesus in our daily lives and our intent on living as he lived. The Christian year presents us with the standard of participation in the spirituality of Christian life: who we are, who we are called to be, and how we are making that identity and call a reality. In essence, the Christian year is Jesus—with us, for us, and in us—as we strive to make his life our own.

Do you agree with Chittister's summation of what the Christian year can do for us in worship? Why or why not? Do you believe these things can happen for our church? Why or why not?

- ♦ Evaluate the way our church marks time. What is the dominant approach: an academic calendar, civil holidays, or Christian year model?

Consider looking at today's bulletin. What stands out as most important?

- ♦ It has been said that the Christian year has the power to spiritually shape a church and individuals into the likeness of Jesus. How would you describe that happening?

application

- ♦ How would you like to allow the Christian year to organize your spiritual life? What personal things will you do in the course of this study to make that a reality?

Tell Me the Story of Advent: Sunday School Lesson

October 9, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

After a recent fierce storm, the roof on our house suffered damage and needed repair. I called a local roofing company as well as our insurance company. Due to the number of houses in our neighborhood that also suffered damage and had called the same company, the contractor informed me, “We can’t get to your house for at least a month!”

That wasn’t the answer I wanted to hear. I am not a person who likes to wait. As most people who know me well can attest, I want everything done yesterday. I believe many people are like me in that they do not like to wait. Maybe you are not a “have it done yesterday” person, but neither do you enjoy waiting for a month!

The Christian year begins with a time of waiting. We call this time Advent. In Advent we wait for the Messiah to come, and we wait for the fulfillment of Jesus’ work in the new heaven and new earth—a kind of double waiting.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Do you remember a time when you waited and waited for something to happen? Describe your feelings of anticipation and the process of waiting.

bibleconnect

The Advent season is associated with many themes of waiting:

- ♦ We wait for the Messiah. Over 400 years passed between the prophets of Israel who announced the birth of the Messiah and the actual birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The Old Testament is filled with passages of prophetic utterance that express the longing for a new day (Isaiah 2:1-5; 7:10-16; 11:1-10; 35:1-10).

These texts from Isaiah are appointed for the four Sundays of Advent. Have a volunteer(s) read each Scripture. Discuss the mood and theme of each as it relates to the season of Advent.

- ♦ **We wait for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and in our hearts. Christian theology lets us know that Jesus was not only born in history, but he also is born in our lives and takes up residence within our hearts. Advent is a time to examine whether or not the presence of Jesus is real in our lives.**

How do we know the presence of Jesus is real in our lives? Likely, there will be a myriad of answers. Try to locate a theme or pattern among students' answers.

- ♦ **We wait for Jesus' second coming. The first Sunday of Advent points us to Jesus' coming at the end of the age, not as a baby in a manger.**

The first Sunday of Advent is *always* about Jesus' second coming. How might focusing on that arrival before turning to a baby in the manger shape our spirituality?

The weeks of Advent present an opportunity for the church to make a spiritual journey toward the birth of Jesus, his entrance into our lives, and his second coming. This journey is ordered by our worship.

We begin at a distance from the manger of Bethlehem by focusing on the second coming of Christ and our need to prepare for his return. These preparations are very similar to the preparations Israel made for the coming of the Messiah. Themes such as hope, longing, and anticipation fill our worship and capture our feelings as we await the consummation of all time and the redemption of all things.

But our preparations must constitute more than just warm feelings. It includes a spiritual challenge to be, as Peter wrote, the sort of people who lead lives of holiness and godliness (2 Peter 3:11). Consequently, the Lectionary includes Scripture readings on the first two weeks of Advent that emphasize godly conduct.

By the time we reach the third week of Advent we shift our focus to the actual birth of Jesus. Because both his first and second comings are related to our salvation and redemption, the theme of worship becomes exuberant joy! In the fourth week we are drawn into the events that surrounded Jesus' birth, including the spiritual knowledge that this is indeed Emmanuel, God-with-us.

How would you describe the four Sundays of Advent in your own words? What do they teach us about Jesus?

- ♦ **Use the following Advent texts and discuss the theme of waiting in each.**

The coming of the Messiah, Isaiah 9:1-7

The birth of Jesus in our hearts, John 3:1-17

The coming of Jesus at the end of the age, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

- ♦ **How do you personally encounter Jesus in these Scriptures?**

worshipconnect

Advent presents many opportunities for creative worship. Candles, banners, familiar carols, and the smell of evergreen and balsam all contribute to our seasonal celebrations. The expectancy of our Messiah demands such high praise.

- ♦ **What three Advent worship ideas would you most like to see included in the worship of our church?**

Why did you choose this aspect of worship? Look for several common themes in students' answers. You may choose to make a list of ideas you would like to see in worship. Deliver this list to Jeff or Jim following the lesson.

application

Worship during Advent should point us to all three themes of Jesus' coming and a commitment to spiritual renewal through Jesus.

- ♦ **How is the message of Isaiah applicable to us today?**

- ♦ **Of the three themes of waiting found in Advent, which one is most difficult for you to comprehend?**

- ♦ **How can you use Advent to prepare for the comings of Jesus?**

Consider closing with one of these options:

- Find bulletins from previous Advent seasons (you may ask Jeff or Vicki for these). Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Advent celebration in one of the services. If you can remember, did you encounter Jesus in one of these services?
- Identify some aspects of last year's Advent celebration (Voices of Christmas) that you found especially meaningful.
- Plan an Advent service that incorporates the three themes of waiting in Advent. Choose hymns, prayers, and Scriptures that represent the various comings of Jesus.
- Pray the following Advent prayer slowly, thoughtfully, and with intention. What does this prayer say to you?

Close by contemplating this traditional Advent prayer taken from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Tell Me the Story of Christmas: Sunday School Lesson

October 16, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

As I expressed in last week's lesson, I do not like waiting. That was very important as a little boy when Christmas morning arrived. I could not wait to dive into all the presents under the tree! I still love Christmas morning (and diving into presents!). Though now I can reflect on the true celebration of Christmas and find great joy in its spiritual meaning.

As my family grows (two children in two years!) we have begun making Christmas traditions of our own. My wife and I want our children to enjoy the "mystery" that the Christmas season brings, as well as pass along some of our favorite traditions from when we were kids. But more importantly, we want our boys to know the spiritual significance of this season: this is the intersection of divinity and humanity; the fulfillment of Israel in that the Messiah has come, prophecies are fulfilled, and the Savior of the world is born. I realize that is a lot for a little child to comprehend, but if we fail to teach the significance of Jesus' birth, then we have very little reason for rejoicing.

lifeconnect

- ♦ In this lesson we want to connect with our experience of Christmas. Start by describing the traditions your family kept when you were a child.

Do you still practice any of these traditions? If so, how do they shape your understanding of Christmas?

bibleconnect

Matthew and Luke share the biblical basis for Christmas in their infancy narratives. Each provides us with different perspectives and themes. Matthew is the narra-

tive that describes Joseph's dream and explains the meaning of the name Jesus: "He will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Luke shapes his narrative around the political environment of Jesus coming to the world for the poor and oppressed. Joseph and Mary must travel to Bethlehem to pay government taxes and upon their arrival they find no room in the inn (Luke 2:1-7). Luke also shares the angelic announcement to the poor shepherds watching their flock, not the rich and famous. The verbal response to the good news is expressed by Mary in the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), the song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79), and the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* of the angels (Luke 2:14). Luke's Gospel describes the great hope that accompanies Jesus' birth and the world's salvation.

Have a volunteer read Luke 2:8-20. The proclamation of the angels in verse 14 provides us with a proper response to the salvation that comes through Jesus. And the response of the shepherds in verse 17 shows how we must also make known the glorious news we have received.

- ♦ Read Mary's *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46-55. How does her song express Luke's theme of Christmas?

How does Mary view the birth of Jesus? The *Magnificat* is meant to be sung, not read. Try singing it! Make up your own tune!

- ♦ Which Christmas account, Matthew or Luke, do you most resonate with? Why?

Read the respective birth narratives of Matthew and Luke. How many people can identify with Matthew? How many identify with Luke? How are they similar? How are they different? What can we learn about Christmas from each writer?

worshipconnect

Our time of waiting in Advent quickly turns to fulfillment in Christmas. From the very beginnings of Christmas celebrations in the early fourth century, the theme of the Christmas season has always been the arrival of light—light that dispels darkness.

The prologue to John's Gospel says it succinctly: "In [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

The heart of our Christmas worship, therefore, is receiving the light of Jesus in both his first and second comings. This is represented in a Christmas prayer that states, "Grant that as we joyfully receive him for our redeemer, so may we with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our judge."

Moreover, our Christmas worship is not limited to a single day. We are all familiar with the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas." The season of Christmas begins on December 25 and lasts until January 6—twelve days. In these days we are challenged to contemplate this intersection of a holy God into our world. All services of worship in these days should focus primarily on the incarnation of Jesus.

Does it bother you that Christmas Day replaced a pagan festival to the sun god? (See "A Brief History of Christmas" in the workbook.) Do you believe that would be a means for missionary work today?

- ♦ Read Titus 2:11-14. How does this text capture the essence of Christmas worship?

While most of Paul's letters speak of Christ's "coming," Titus uses a different Greek word in verse 11 best translated "manifestation." Two manifestations mark God's plan of salvation: one past (see also Titus 3:4; 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:10) and one future (see also Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 6:14). How might this text influence our celebration of Christmas?

- ♦ Does our church celebrate Christmas according to Matthew's or Luke's approach?

application

Christmas is considered one of the most joyful times of the year. However, this joy is often misconstrued by people who do not know the real "reason for the season." Like children on Christmas morning who find everything they want under the tree, we have found everything we need in the baby born in Bethlehem.

- ♦ Give an example of how you celebrate Christmas for all the right reasons.

- ♦ Use your own words to express the theme of Christmas.

- ♦ Christmas Day falls on a Sunday this year. Plan a worship service for that day. How will the service begin? What Scriptures and hymns/carols will you include that express the joy of Christmas?

- ♦ Evaluate the service you have planned. What kind of spiritual significance does it offer? In what ways does it invite worshippers to rejoice in the birth of Jesus?

Tell Me the Story of Epiphany: Sunday School Lesson

October 23, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

The culmination of our spiritual journey in this early stage of the Christian year is Epiphany. This season brings to a close the celebrations of Advent and Christmas. In Epiphany we celebrate the realization that the light of Christ shines so brightly that it covers the entire earth! We've all had experiences of being in the dark hoping to find light. I recall a camping trip to Cumberland Gap where our guide led us through caves without any flash lights. The darkness seemed to wrap itself around us like a thick blanket. Suddenly, without any warning, our guide lit a small match that illuminated the entire cave. The light of Epiphany illuminates the entire word. It is the knowledge that Jesus was born as Savior not for a few selective individuals, but for everyone. For the weeks following Epiphany we witness manifestations of Jesus as the Christ, beginning with his baptism and ending with his transfiguration. In each of these manifestations we learn more about Jesus and his mission to the whole world.

lifeconnect

Consider turning off the lights and closing window blinds as you discuss the Life Connect question.

- ◆ Get in touch with your feelings about darkness. Can you relate to being in the dark for an extended period of time? How did it feel when you were brought back into light?

bibleconnect

In Scripture, the good news of Jesus to everyone is represented primarily through the magi who made the long journey to see Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12). The significance of the magi who came to see Jesus is in the fact they were Gentile, not Jewish.

This has universally been understood as a symbol of Christ's mission to the world. God became incarnate in order to provide redemption for the whole world. And it is in this event that Jesus is first "manifested" to the world as God's gift of salvation.

Does anyone remember the meaning of the word epiphany? The answer is "manifestation." Discuss how Jesus is manifest in the Scripture from Matthew.

- ♦ **On each Sunday during Epiphany, Jesus is manifested in a different way. Read the following Scriptures and note how each one manifests Jesus to you.**

Matthew 3:13-17

John 1:29-42

Matthew 4:12-23

Matthew 5:1-12

Matthew 6:24-34

- ♦ **What is the most important teaching in these Scriptures for you personally?**

worshipconnect

What kind of worship would you expect to encounter during Epiphany? The following prayer from the *Episcopal Book of Common Prayer* can offer focus:

O God, by the leading of the star you manifested your only Son to the Peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

This prayer asks Jesus, who was manifested in his earthly life, to be manifested to us now.

- ♦ **Reflect on the prayer. How does the prayer speak to the spiritual significance of Epiphany?**

- ♦ **How is Christ manifested in our worship? Explain.**

The texts of an Epiphany service speak to the Epiphany prayer:

- Isaiah 60:1-6 shares God's glory and how all nations will come to the light
- Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 speaks to the earth paying tribute to God's Son
- Ephesians 3:1-12 reveals God's plan for the world
- Matthew 2:1-12 describes the visit of the Magi

Read each text and discuss what means of worship (song, prayer, sermon focus, drama, art, et cetera) could best express the meaning of the Scripture.

application

The seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany appear very familiar to us. We are well versed in the message of Jesus as the Savior of the world. But the spiritual challenge presented in this season of growing in godliness by making room for Christ in our lives and sharing Christ with others is a message we can never outgrow! These seasons call us to a kind of incarnational spirituality, given to us as a gift, and lived out through the choices we make. Only when we seek to live for Christ, will the light of Christ be manifest in us.

- ♦ **How is the light of Christ a present, daily reality in your life? Explain.**

- ♦ **How has Jesus been clearly manifested in your life?**

- ♦ **How can you manifest Jesus to others through your words and actions?**

Tell Me the Story of Lent: Sunday School Lesson

October 30, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

For the past sixteen summers I've taken a special trip with five very close friends. Though all of us live in different parts of the country, we gather for one week-end a year to laugh, catch-up, and play golf. Preparation for the trip happens months in advance. In fact, we usually start talking about the following year before the trip we are on concludes. We have to decide on a location, dates, and which golf courses we want to play. Many of us jokingly say we keep a suitcase packed the whole year in anticipation of the trip.

Preparation plays a key role in the success of our vacation. When the weekend is haphazardly planned—failure to secure accommodations, golf courses that are in poor shape, or someone forgets their suitcase (all of which have happened!)—it does not make for a enjoyable weekend. The memories of our time together are usually overshadowed by complications and the trip has little impact. The same can be said for our Easter celebration.

Our preparation for Easter is a time we call Lent. The kind of preparation we undergo is repentance. This season begins with Ash Wednesday and moves us through Holy Week and the joy of resurrection morning. When we walk through Lent with a mindset of repentance, Easter becomes a genuine personal experience of Jesus' resurrection and life. As the old adage goes, "one cannot experience resurrection without first experiencing death." But if we haphazardly go through the Lenten season without any concern for its value, then the joy of Easter will never have the intended impact.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Recall a significant event in your life this past year. How did you prepare for that event? How did your preparations make the event more enjoyable?

If no one has an answer to the Life Connect question, you might consider what significant events in the life of our church have taken place over the past year (Nicaragua Mission trip, worship with Missio Dei, Vacation Bible School, et cetera).

bibleconnect

There are no Scriptures that reference Lent. Nevertheless, the theme of Lent is deeply rooted in Scripture. We are called to practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The aim of these disciplines is to help us enter the death of Jesus so that the resurrection to new life may be more than an intellectual experience. Paul's theology understood this well. He believed those who are baptized in Christ also die with Christ. The season of Lent helps us remember this call on our lives and prepares us to be raised with Christ. The theme of Lent is repentance. This comes through self-examination, prayer and fasting. We should, of course, be engaging those disciplines all year long, but they are intensified during Lent. A person who truly practices Lent will spend more time in prayer and confession, the reading of Scripture, and looking for ways to give more to the needs of others. Similar to the self-denial of Jesus in his wilderness experience, we spend forty days in suffering as we await the resurrection.

Before discussing the Bible Connect questions, have a volunteer read Romans 6:1-14. How does Paul's understanding of our relationship with Jesus invoke a call to spiritual discipline?

- ♦ Look at the following Gospel readings for Lent. How does each Scripture reflect the theme of repentance in Lent and encourage spiritual preparation?

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Mark 1:9-13

Mark 8:31-38

John 2:13-22

John 6:4-15

John 12:20-33

The Scriptures listed above are taken from Year B in the Lectionary. They represent the move from repentance to renewal that we experience in Lent. Note how each Scripture walks us toward the joy of Easter.

- ♦ **Using the Scripture lessons from above, create a personal plan for spiritual preparation during the forty day Lenten season.**

If you do not put your heart into Lent, you will never experience it fully and completely. What can you do to hold onto the spiritual meaning of Lent?

worshipconnect

Because Lent is the major penitential season of the Christian year, our worship during this time should be more subdued and reflective. In one church the minister begins worship by lying prostrate on the floor at the front of the church for a short time and then stands to lead the congregation in a prayer of confession. This action, in contrast to Christmas and Easter, dramatically points to the nature of the season. Of course the preparations of Lent are not in vain. Lent leads us to the ultimate joy of resurrection.

- ♦ **What changes can be made in worship to reflect the more repentant theme of the Lenten season?**

- ♦ **What specific Lenten disciplines could you develop to make spiritual preparations for Easter?**

How can the Lenten pilgrimage be experienced personally and corporately? How is the theme of Lent reflected in worship through prayers, sermons, Communion, hymns, and visuals?

application

The temptation during Lent is to not take this time seriously. But in order to experience life in the resurrection, we must walk through the penitence of death. If we remain disciplined in our spiritual preparation of Lent and participate completely by practicing repentance and other spiritual disciplines, then we will experience a renewal in Easter like never before!

- ♦ **Have you ever considered taking on the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving? How might such disciplines draw you closer to Jesus?**

- ♦ **What other spiritual activities would you like to participate in as Lenten preparation for Easter (retreats, book studies, worship styles, etc)?**

What has this lesson taught you about the season of Lent?

Tell Me the Story of Holy Week: Sunday School Lesson

November 6, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

In last week's lesson I began by describing the annual golf trip I take with five friends. It is a special time I put on the calendar each January and look forward to every summer. You might say it is a turning point in my year—it gives new meaning each summer to my relationship with special people in my life. And by no means am I comparing my yearly golf vacation with the final week in the life of Jesus, but just as my trip gives special meaning to a week in my year, so does Holy Week to the cycle of the Christian year. All the more so, in fact! Holy Week is the *defining* week in the Christian year that gives great meaning to the entirety of the all the seasons. Even Christmas finds its ultimate meaning in this week. Having journeyed through Lent, now we begin to see light at the end of a long tunnel. Yes, we still have to endure death, but we know resurrection is just on the other side.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Do you have a special week in your year? Maybe it is an annual family vacation or the first week of school. How does this week organize your life?

bibleconnect

While there is no Scriptural evidence of a Holy Week observance, we would be foolish to ignore the last week of our Savior's life on earth. This week is pinnacle to our understanding of the faith. Historically speaking, it is the recitation of Jesus' last week, from his entry into Jerusalem on Palm/Passion Sunday to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday—Holy Week includes the Saturday night Easter vigil that continues until resurrection morning. Spiritually speaking, we draw our baptismal faith from the events of this week. As Paul described, we die with Christ and rise with Christ—what happened to Jesus happens to us.

- ♦ Summarize in your own words the biblical basis for Holy Week.

- ♦ Read Romans 6:1-11. How does this passage describe our position in Christ?

- ♦ How can Paul's words in Romans help us approach Holy Week?

worshipconnect

Before reading the story of Egeria, ask, "How did you personally observe Holy Week this year? On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 as super intense), how would you rate the intensity of your Holy Week observance?"

Egeria, a woman writing in the fourth century, described in her journal *Diary of a Pilgrimage*, a firsthand account of a Holy Week observance in Jerusalem. She emphasized the day-to-day events including: carrying palms to the church in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; singing hymns, reading Scripture, and preaching Monday through Wednesday; celebrating Communion on Thursday followed by worship that lasted through the night as a way of reenacting the gospel accounts of Thursday night. Early on Friday, after worshipping all night, worshippers walked to Gethsemane where they read passages describing the Lord's arrest (Matthew 26:36-56). Egeria reports that "there is such moaning and groaning with weeping from all the people that their moaning can be heard practically as far as the city." They then proceeded to the place of the cross where the words of Pilate were read (Mark 15:1-15). That evening a cross was placed on a table in which people passed by "touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, and then with their eyes; and after kissing the cross, they move on." On Saturday, worship took place at the third and sixth hours, with the reading of Scripture interspersed with prayer. At nightfall on Saturday a vigil was held that lasted until Sunday morning when a dramatic reenactment of the resurrection took place followed by baptism, preaching, and receiving Communion.

Consider the total immersion in the death and resurrection of Jesus these worshippers experienced. By the end of the week they were exhausted by the intensity of following the final events of Jesus' life. But after an all night vigil on Saturday, the moment of resurrection finally came. Imagine their joy at celebrating Jesus overcoming death! Because these worshippers had entered death with Jesus, they were able to experience his resurrection in a way that would never happen apart from participation in the entire journey.

Finally, Egeria tells us that Easter did not end on Easter day. There were eight straight days of celebration. They replaced fasting with festive services. Their moaning ceased and great exuberance became the theme of their songs. For eight days they celebrated in ways that were in sharp contrast to their sober preparations for Lent and Holy Week. As we will learn next week, Easter was never meant to come and go in a single day. As the worshippers of Egeria's time knew well—those who are in Christ take seriously their identity with Jesus' death, but place their life in their identity with his resurrection.

- ♦ How is your own spiritual life energized as you move from the repentant theme of Lent to the somber theme of Holy Week to the joy of Easter?

- ♦ How might you celebrate Holy Week by using Egeria's example?

- ♦ How much more significant would Holy Week become in our spiritual lives if we made it the most pivotal week in our year?

application

Holy Week recalls the final week of Jesus' earthly life before his crucifixion. From Egeria's writing we learn a great deal about how the early church observed this week. List the following columns on the board. Discuss how the early church observed each day during Holy Week, how our church has observed these days, and how each student has observed these days. Spend a good amount of time marking the similarities and differences. How can we use this information to deepen our worship during Holy Week? What goals might we set as individuals and as a church to increase our spiritual focus during this season?

- ♦ Using the three columns below, compare how each spiritually emphasizes the events of Holy Week.

	Early Church	Our Church	You Personally
Palm Sunday			
Holy Monday			
Holy Tuesday			
Holy Wednesday			
Maundy Thursday			
Good Friday			
Holy Saturday			
Easter Sunday			

You may choose to use some of the following questions for further reflection:

- Read one of the Palm Sunday accounts in the Gospels (Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-19; Luke 19:28-45; John 12:12-19). What words can you use to describe the feelings of the people present that day?
- What is the purpose in celebrating Palm Sunday?
- Read and discuss the following Scriptures pertaining to Maundy Thursday:
 - Luke 22:7-16; Preparing for the Last Supper
 - John 13:1-17; Washing of the Disciples feet
 - John 13:31-35; The Love Commandment
 - Luke 22:17-20; Institution of the Lord's Supper
- Evaluate the way our church observes Maundy Thursday each year.
- Read Mark's account of Jesus' crucifixion and burial (15:16-47). Discuss the spiritual significance of each event Mark records.
- Has anyone ever attended a Holy Saturday vigil?
- How might our church observe a Holy Saturday vigil as a means of spiritual preparation for Easter morning?
- How can you prevent Holy Week from becoming a mere recitation of historical facts pertaining to Jesus' death?
- How can you turn Holy Week into a continuous worship experience?
- Which day in Holy Week speaks most to your relationship with Jesus? Why?

Tell Me the Story of Easter: Sunday School Lesson

November 13, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

Next to Christmas, Easter is the second major festival that most Christians unfamiliar with the Christian year are accustomed to observing. In fact, there is an old joke that says many people do not know what the church looks like without poinsettias or lilies, referring to those individuals who only worship on the high days of the church year. But as we have seen in this study, observance of the Christian year means more than just observing two days of Christmas and Easter. Like Advent for Christmas, Easter has a time of preparation in Lent. And like Christmas, Easter is not reserved to a day. It is a season of great rejoicing—fifty days in all—culminating at Pentecost. Fifty days to reflect and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Recall Easter celebrations from your youth. Was Easter seen as a day or a season? What spiritual effect would celebrating Easter for fifty days have on your life?

Has anyone ever been part of a church that celebrated Easter for fifty days? What effect did that have on you?

bibleconnect

Before the actual “Easter morning service,” the early church worshipped the entire night beforehand. The Holy Saturday service was an Easter vigil that began at sundown. It was a continuation of the worship that began on Maundy Thursday. This vigil service was filled with prayer and darkness while worshippers recited the major stories of Scripture. Beginning in Genesis with the creation, they traced salvation history

through the patriarchs and prophets. The readings culminated with the story of resurrection and an early morning baptism. Though the contemporary readings for this service are much shorter, they include:

- The story of creation Genesis 1:1-2:2
- The flood Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:8-18; 9:8-13
- The sacrifice of Isaac Genesis 22:1-18
- Israel's deliverance Exodus 14:10-15:1
- God's presence in Israel Isaiah 4:2-6
- Salvation offered freely Isaiah 55:1-11
- A new heart and spirit Ezekiel 36:24-28
- The valley of dry bones Ezekiel 37:1-14
- God's people gathered Zephaniah 3:12-20

How might an all-night worship service lead you to celebrate Easter morning?
Read Mark 16 as a class. Discuss the emotional content of the story. How did the resurrection of Jesus change the lives of his first followers?

The early church after Christ considered every Sunday a "little Easter." Weekly worship was a joyous event that relived the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This was most lived out in the participatory action of Communion which occurred every time the church gathered for worship. But long before the early church practices of celebrating Easter emerged, we find evidence of an Easter observance in Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The key to understanding how this verse is an Easter celebration is found in the word *Paschal*, a derivation of the word *Passover* that came to signify the Easter season. Jesus became our *paschal* lamb, sacrificed for our sins. Paul is telling the Corinthians to prepare for a feast in celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Moreover, many things happened in the days following Jesus' resurrection. He met with his disciples, ate with them, and fellowshiped. He also ascended to heaven. The Easter season recalls all of this as evidence of Jesus' continued life.

- ♦ Read Luke 24:13-53 and Acts 1:1-26. Outline the events that occurred between the resurrection and day of Pentecost. These events make up the season of Easter.

- ♦ How do you interpret the events that happened after Jesus' resurrection? Did Jesus offer any clues to how this season should shape our spirituality?

worshipconnect

The early church experienced Easter in a most meaningful way. But it did not happen haphazardly. There were significant factors that led to their resurrection joy:

- The long Lenten observance of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.
- Continuous worship that lasted from Maundy Thursday to Easter morning.
- The celebration of baptism on Easter, reminding them of their own baptism.
- The weekly celebration of Communion.
- The contrast of the worship tone between Lent and Easter.
- Prayers were said kneeling during Lent and were said standing during Easter.
- Worship was full of "Alleluias," which were not allowed to be sung in Lent.
- The church taught the meaning of life in Christ during the Easter season.

The early church offered baptism only on Easter day. In your own words, describe the significance of baptism related to Easter.

In addition, the writings of early church fathers express how significant the extended season of Easter became for those in the faith. Some of their observations include:

- Tertullian described Easter as "a most joyous space."
- St. Ambrose of Milan asked of the Easter season, "What gain is it to celebrate unless you imitate Him Whom you worship?"
- Basil of Caesarea credits Easter with reminding "us of the resurrection which we await in the other world."

- ♦ What factors from the early church might we incorporate today to make our Easter worship for meaningful?

- ♦ How might we recover the joy felt by early Christians during Easter?

- ♦ What do the statements about Easter from the church fathers mean to you?

application

Easter, more than any other season, points to the *life* we have in Jesus. Such a celebration is not meant just for a day! The kind of worship we experience in Easter should lift our spirits, remind us of our position in Christ, and leave us awestruck.

- ♦ How have you died in Christ and been raised to new life in Christ?

- ♦ How has your new life in Christ been made manifest in the last year?

- ♦ Evaluate the services of our church during the Easter season. Is it a day or a season? How might we celebrate the power of resurrection for an extended period?

Plan a post-Easter Sunday service that retains a sense of the resurrection's power. What elements would you include in this service? How would you share joy?

Tell Me the Story of Pentecost: Sunday School Lesson

November 20, 2016

Begin with prayer. Since worship is a type of prayer, learning about worship should be a prayerful experience. After prayer, review the workbook material prior to beginning this lesson. If students did not read the material, encourage them to do so.

One of the biggest events in my life was the day of my wedding. A lot went into that day! As anyone knows who has planned a wedding, the “to-do” list seems never ending. There are engagement parties and showers to attend, picking a date, designing invitations, choosing a dress or suit, reserving a venue, meeting with the minister, meeting with the photographer, selecting a reception site and menu, finding a cake, hotels, groomsmen gifts, bridesmaid gifts, attending the rehearsal—and that’s all before the actual wedding! Then the big day arrives and everything is fabulous. But then, in the blink of an eye, the wedding day is over. And life has to go on.

I often tell couples on their big day, “This is only a wedding. Tomorrow begins a marriage.” Indeed, the celebration of matrimony is a joyous day worth celebrating. But learning to live as husband and wife takes time.

The point of time we are in during Pentecost is much like the wedding scenario I just described. We have prepared ourselves through Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Lent and Holy Week have sharpened our focus. And the entire fifty day Easter season is similar to one long reception party full of feasting and jubilation. The Easter season ends on the day of Pentecost—a celebration of a new life, the church, empowered by the Holy Spirit. The days after Pentecost are similar to a young couple learning to live as husband and wife. In the Christian year these days are known as Ordinary Time. During this time we read stories of Jesus teaching and public ministry. We, as followers of Jesus, learn how to go on once the celebration is over. We also learn how to live together with Jesus by following his teachings.

Scripture likens our relationship to Jesus much like a marriage. We are referred to as “the bride of Christ.” That is an apt description because just like a marriage, we become one with Christ in our baptism. Pentecost and Ordinary Time teach us how to live in that relationship.

lifeconnect

- ♦ Recall a time when you planned for a great event, such as a wedding ceremony. Once the event was over, how did you continue in life? How did you continue the joy of the event? What effect, if any, did the event have on how you continued to live?

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bibleconnect

The biblical roots of Pentecost are found in Acts 2:1-47, which appropriately ends with the post-Pentecost church joining in worship. The Spirit which Jesus promised (John 15:26-27) now came to empower the disciples. On the day of Pentecost the church took root. Our focus on the day of Pentecost should be embracing a new commitment to the teaching of the church and the mission of the church to carry on the work of God.

The season after Pentecost, known as Ordinary Time, is the simple but profound time to commit the pattern of our lives after the life of Jesus. The absence of major festival times allows us to concentrate on how we are fulfilling the commands of Jesus.

The Pentecost story in Acts records multiple languages being spoken. To the best of your student's ability, read the Pentecost story in different languages. Use the following website to help in this endeavor: www.biblegateway.com. If you need assistance with this website, contact Jeff and he will provide copies for you.

Acts also records the image "tongues of fire." One of the modern symbols used to illustrate this concept is chili peppers. Consider having students taste chili peppers and describing what it feels like to have a "tongue of fire." Relate how this analogy pertains to Pentecost.

- ◆ Read Acts 2:1-47. Outline the events of the day of Pentecost.

- ◆ In your own words, interpret the content of Peter's sermon.

- ◆ How does Acts 2:42-47 describe worship after Pentecost?

worshipconnect

We do not choose to observe the Christian year as mere ritual, but as a means for drawing closer to Jesus. Through this study we have been walking with Jesus, allowing his life, death, and resurrection to shape our spirituality. As we learn in our baptism, Jesus takes up residence in our lives and forms us into his image. This is what Christian year spirituality is all about.

- ♦ Suggest some ways to make Pentecost and Ordinary Time more meaningful in our worship?

- ♦ How can observance of the Christian year form us spiritually into the image of Jesus?

How can our church celebrate Pentecost for more than just one day?

What elements could we add to worship during Ordinary Time in order to keep us focused on becoming more devoted followers of Jesus?

application

- ♦ What unified themes about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus connect each of the seasons in the Christian Year?

Advent: _____

Christmas: _____

Epiphany: _____

Lent: _____

Holy Week: _____

Easter: _____

Pentecost: _____

Ordinary Time: _____

- ♦ How can you use the lessons you have gleaned from this study to live a more devoted life to Jesus?

Can you sum up in one word or phrase what you have learned from this study of the Christian year? List answers on the board and look for common themes.

How has this study of the Christian year shaped you spiritually?

How will you approach worship from this point forward?



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APPENDIX D

WORSHIP ORDERS AND SERMONS (pp 232-286)

This includes worship orders, sermons, and any additional worship explanations pertaining to the project. Each worship service may be viewed on the Calvary YouTube channel.⁸⁶

D.1 October 2, 2016—Marking Time

D.2 October 9, 2016—Advent

D.3 October 16, 2016—Christmas

D.4 October 23, 2016—Epiphany

D.5 October 30, 2016—Lent

D.6 November 6, 2016—Holy Week (Triduum)

D.7 November 13, 2016—Easter

D.8 November 20, 2016—Pentecost and Ordinary Time

86. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCetyvKiSGRfW4euecwGJ_Mg.

APPENDIX D.1

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

October 2, 2016—Marking Time

The Church in Ministry.....Jeff Hayes

Prelude.....Evelyn Ponder

O God Our Help in Ages Past

Introduction to Marking Time.....Jeff Hayes

In the hit Broadway musical *Rent*, a group of rag-tag friends in East Manhattan struggle to build the lives of their dreams. Broke, abused, as well as physically and emotionally challenged, they face their obstacles head on, making personal discoveries along the way and learning what really matters most in life.

The most famous tune from that musical is called “Seasons of Love.” The song begins, *525,600 minutes...525,600 moments so dear...how do you measure, measure a year? In daylights? In sunsets? In cups of coffee? In inches? In miles? In laughter and strife?*

The premise of the song is how we measure our life: 525,600 minutes being one year in our life. How do we account for that time? The answer is given in the song’s chorus: *How about love? Measure your life in love.*

Perhaps that is a good beginning for our study of the Christian year, because what better love could we measure our lives by than the love of Jesus? The love he showed in his life, death, and resurrection. In the Christian year we learn that story over and over again every year.

Today also happens to be World Communion Sunday—a day set aside for believers across the globe to join in telling the story of Jesus’ love by partaking the meal that joins us all as one body.

As we begin our worship today, I encourage you to join the global community of faith in recalling the story of Jesus which transcends denominational boundaries and political walls. After all, it is Christ’s love that has called us here and it will be Christ’s love that sends us from this place.

In a few moments, as Jim leads us into worship, I invite you to come forward and receive the bread and cup on your own. And as you do, take time to reflect on the measure of Christ’s great love.

Let us pray together...

Communion.....STORY OF JESUS

Tell Me the Story of Jesus

Hymn of Praise #572.....FISCHER

I Love to Tell the Story

Old Testament Lesson.....Sam Hocking

Exodus 12:1-28

¹The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ²This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance. ¹⁵Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶On the first day you shall hold a solemn assembly, and on the seventh day a solemn assembly; no work shall be done on those days; only what everyone must eat, that alone may be prepared by you. ¹⁷You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your companies out of the land of Egypt: you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a perpetual ordinance. ¹⁸In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, you shall eat unleavened bread. ¹⁹For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether an alien or a native of the land. ²⁰You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your settlements you shall eat unleavened bread.

²¹Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go, select lambs for your families, and slaughter the Passover lamb. ²²Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood in the basin. None of you shall go outside the door of your house until morning. ²³For the Lord will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door and will not allow the destroyer to

enter your houses to strike you down. ²⁴You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. ²⁵When you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. ²⁶And when your children ask you, “What do you mean by this observance?” ²⁷you shall say, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.” ’ And the people bowed down and worshipped.

²⁸The Israelites went and did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron.

Hymn of Praise #262.....AUSTRIAN HYMN

Word of God, Across the Ages

Offertory Prayer.....Bruce Farlow

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Music.....Susan Hocking

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

New Testament Lesson.....Jeff Hayes

Romans 6:3-8

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Message.....Jeff Hayes

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Marking Time

It was a Saturday, just before dusk, when I walked in the house after mowing the grass. Krista was sitting on the couch. I could tell she wasn't feeling well. "What's wrong?" I asked. Without hesitation, she hurriedly answered, "Go clean up. I think it's time." She was nine months pregnant and everything in our lives was about to change forever. Sixteen hours later our first child was born at 7:42AM on Sunday, April 6th, 2014.

In the past two years since that event we've experienced lots of milestones: Benjamin's first smile, his first word, his first steps, his first time trying ice cream, his first visit to the beach, and his first (and last!) little brother.

It has been said that life is made up of the turning of years. There is a lot of truth in that statement. Every passing year becomes a marker in life. We talk about "what kind

of year it has been.” In fact, we often give them names. “The year I got married.” “The year I finished law school.” “The year our first child was born.” “The year mom died.”

On the flip side, we frequently arrive at New Year’s Eve and say: “This year is going to be better.” “I’m finally going to take that trip, graduate college, stop smoking, eat healthier and exercise.” I believe the reason for this is because with the turning of another year we want to say we’ve accomplished something, that the year hasn’t been a waste—that it has brought meaning to our lives.

The way we define our years determines what we think about and how we will live because of it. No doubt about it, as life inches on, the way we spend our years defines who we are. Every year is a distinct growth point in life. We are a little older. A little wiser. As followers of Jesus, therefore, the question we must ask is, “What kind of year means the most to us spiritually?” How will we be able to say at the end of a year, “I’ve grown closer to Christ.”

The journey we are embarking on over the next two months is a study in the Christian year. I am proposing that this way of understanding our years has the power to form us spiritually in ways unlike what we have come to experience. It’s not about history and tradition—though both are certainly components of the Christian year. And it is not about an arbitrary list of holidays (from the old English for “holy days” mind you). More, it is about our growing holier, growing into the likeness of the one we claim to worship. The seasons of the Christian year convey how the people of God are intricately woven into the story of God’s saving work in Christ. To accomplish that, the Christian year immerses us, year after year, in the story of God’s saving acts until we become exactly who we say we are—followers of Jesus.

Now for all of us who bear that name, we know the saving work in our lives began with our baptism. I easily remember the date of my baptism because in recent years that date has become a defining event for our country and our world. I was baptized on September 11, 1989. I stood in the waters with my pastor and he pronounced over me, “Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life.” In that declaration he proclaimed Paul’s theology of baptism which defined my new position in Christ. Hear again Paul’s sermon to the Romans:

Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (Romans 6:4-5).

Paul expounded further to the Colossians:

When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised Jesus from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses (Colossians 2:11-13).

Finally, Paul made it crystal clear to the Galatians:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

Paul says “died *with* him,” buried *with* him,” “raised *with* him,” “united *with* him,” “live *with* him,” “together *with* him.” In other words, the things that happened to Jesus happen to me. I experience this through my baptism: “Buried *with* Christ in

baptism, raised to walk in newness of life.” And from that point forward I am called to live in the pattern of Christ’s life, his story becoming my story.

There is an old tale once told about a Christian man who heard the voice of God calling, “Who is it there?” and the man answered, “It is I, Lord.” Then the voice disappeared.

Years later, the voice called again with the same question, “Who is it there?” And the man answered, “It is I, Lord. It is I.” And a second time the voice disappeared.

Finally, years after, the voice called a third time, “Who is it there?” This time the man answered, “It is you, Lord. *Only* you.”⁸⁷

At its core, the Christian year teaches us the story of Israel and Jesus which leads us to live out our baptism—to put down our self-centeredness and grow more into our calling to be one with Jesus so that eventually we can echo “only you Lord; only you.” During Advent we prepare for Jesus’ first coming and our rising with him at his second coming. At Christmas we celebrate the joy of Jesus’ birth who is God-*with-us*, born into our lives and communities. Through the season of Epiphany, we are reminded of our own baptism and calling as we read of Jesus’ baptism and his call of disciples. Lent summons our need for confession, repentance, and commitment to die with Christ. Easter and the days that follow celebrate the resurrection of Christ and our own ultimate resurrection over death. At Pentecost we receive the same Spirit that the first disciples received—a gift to help us discern Christ’s voice and carry out Christ’s commands. Ordinary Time, especially, teaches us how to live *in* Christ as we learn what it means to be the church—Christ’s body—continuing his saving work in the world. It is through these ebbs and flows that we become more spiritually mature ourselves. In watching Jesus deal with those who are unlike him, we learn to open our hearts to those who are different from us. In hearing Jesus speak compassionate forgiveness to the worst of sinners, we, too, learn how to offer forgiveness to those who have wronged us. In seeing Jesus enjoy life, making friends, going to parties, laughing, grieving, and welcoming everyone to be a part of his life, our spiritual maturity expands. We walk with Jesus in all the details of his life and he, in turn, walks with us in ours. Ultimately, we can say the Christian year is the arena where our life and the life of Jesus intersect. Keeping the Christian year helps us live at that intersection.

Over the next eight weeks we are going to discover the Christian year together. Some of you may say, “What in the world is the Christian year?” while others may say, “I’ve known about this for some time.” Either way, I hope each of us can learn the beauty of walking with Jesus through the seasons of the year. And maybe—just maybe—along the way we will be transformed even more to the image of Jesus.

Bobby Gross, director of graduate ministries for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, has written a compelling study titled *Living the Christian Year: Time to Inhabit the Story of God*. In that book he identifies three reasons why observance of the Christian year is important. First, when the church follows the Christian year, it allows the story of God’s work to shape how it views time. Instead of marking our time by civic holidays or school schedules, our time is ordered by the life of Christ. Second, the Christian year aids in the evangelistic mission of the church. Through the celebration of each season we are reminded of God’s saving work through Jesus. By proclaiming the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we give witness to the world of God’s power.

87. Chittister, 40.

Finally, by following the Christian year, the church is formed by the narrative of God. The stories, symbols, and actions of God give meaning to the worship and work of the church.⁸⁸

On a personal note, I fell in love with the Christian year during divinity school when I was exposed to it by my preaching professor. When I became pastor of my first church I tried following the seasons in worship and preaching. However, it wasn't until a traumatic personal experience that the seasons became very real for me. During a very devastating time in my personal life, I felt everything begin to spiral out of control and I fell into a deep depression. I began attending a local church that followed the Christian year. Through the prayers, the music, the sermons—even the colors—I was able to place myself in the story of God's redemptive work. The seasons of the Christian year became very alive for me because in the stories of the seasons I found my story. With David I could pray "create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10). With Paul I could declare "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). And with James I could rest assured that the testing of my faith would produce endurance, so that I might be mature and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:3-4). In the darkest of times my spiritual compass became the saving work of God as told through the stories of the church year.

Second, I just love stories. I love how they unlock new worlds and adventures. I love how they speak to mind and heart causing us to weep and laugh and think. How they speak the exact words we want to say when our words seem silent. How they change us from the inside out. All great stories do this. And there is no greater story than the story of God through Jesus. By following the Christian year, we enter that story over and over and over again.

I believe the Lord had something like this in mind when he told the Israelites to institute the Passover in Exodus. The instructions God gives Moses and Aaron regarding the observance of Passover included the command to remember it year after year: "throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance." So important was this ordinance that the Lord says anyone who chooses not to observe the festival correctly will cease to be an Israelite. The celebration of Passover became a *defining* event of God's saving act for the Israelites, delivering them from captivity in Egypt and setting them on a new road toward the Promised Land.

For that reason, it's not by coincidence that Jesus was later crucified during the Passover season. Early Christians easily made the connection between God's redemption of Israel in Egypt and the new redemption in Christ. In Corinthians Paul spoke of "Christ, our Passover lamb" as being sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7). Paul goes on to list how Christ's sacrifice should be experienced. It is the earliest recording of an Easter celebration and a partial basis for our Easter celebrations. And just like the Jewish Passover Seder which recalls the Exodus event in very present terms—"We were slaves in Egypt; we are now free," our experience of Easter, Christmas, Lent and the other stories we encounter of God's saving work are not merely recollections of historical events. They are participatory events in which we become one with Christ per our baptism: living, dying, and rising with Jesus. "We have been united with him in death," Paul says. "We will be united with him in resurrection."

88. Gross, 9-11.

The idea that God sets forth an annual tradition—such as Passover—in order for events to be experienced over and over again should not sound unfamiliar to us. Consider how we pass traditions on to our children and grandchildren. For example, at Christmastime many people celebrate by decorating a tree with the same ornaments from years past, the same stories are told around the same table as people eat the same meal year after year. These traditions help recreate Christmases past while forging Christmases future. We become one with the season in our participation, remembrance, and foretelling.

Likewise, our celebration of the Christian year is a way of participating in the life of Jesus by marking the past and telling the future. With each passing year we make a public statement in word and deed about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and its meaning for us past, present, and future. We participate in a global declaration of what it means to bear the name Christian. And we give witness of where our life is as a result of Jesus and where our life is leading because of Jesus.

Pastor Ed Shepard cuts to the heart when he says, “Show me how you worship and I’ll tell you what you believe and what kind of disciple you are becoming.”⁸⁹ The kind of disciple I pray each of us seeks to become is a more devoted follower of Jesus. But how would anyone know that? How might our worship speak to it? How might the turning of our years point to our spiritual growth as disciples of Jesus? At the stroke of midnight come New Year’s Eve, will you be able to say, “I grew closer to Jesus this past year?” For me, observance of the Christian year allows those things to happen because the Christian year constantly places my focus exactly where it need be—the life and saving work of Jesus. And to live the Christian year well is to be reminded ceaselessly of that saving work and my obligation to live differently as a result.

So happy Advent. Merry Christmas. Glorious Epiphany. Let us die with Jesus on Good Friday and rise to life on Easter Sunday. Let us receive his Spirit at Pentecost and do his work of justice and love and mercy all the days—and years—of our lives.

Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #399.....EDGE

Believers All, We Bear the Name

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

May the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit now be with all of you who bear the name Christian. And may the story of Jesus be told through you this week. Amen.

Postlude.....Susan Hocking

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

89. Shepard, 221.

APPENDIX D.2

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

October 9, 2016—Advent

The Church in Ministry.....Jeff Hayes

Introduction to Advent.....Jeff Hayes

Today we continue our study on the seasons of the Christian year with a look at Advent. And though Advent is the first season of the Christian calendar—occurring the four Sundays prior to Christmas—by no means was it the first season to be established. Advent did not emerge until the sixth century. But even then—and for centuries after—the celebration was about Christ’s second coming at the end of the age, not his first coming in a manger.

Later, as the season of Lent became an established preparatory time for Easter, the church saw it fit to make Advent a time of preparation as well; preparation for the coming of Jesus at the end of time and, yes, his coming in Bethlehem as a baby. Therein lies the brunt of this season. It’s preparation for Christmas. Advent is not Christmas. So put down the gingerbread and stop humming “Away in a Manger.” We are not there yet. First, we must prepare and wait.

Prelude.....Evelyn Ponder
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel/Of the Father’s Love Begotten

Choral Call to Worship.....Choir
Tell Me the Story of Jesus (Verse 1)

Call to Worship.....Jim Burnett

In the season of Advent we learn to wait as we trust in the Lord’s goodness and rely on his mercy.

But waiting is difficult. And walking in the Lord’s way is hard.

We wait for the babe Christ to be born again in this season,

But we confess that we find the birth of Jesus yet another event in our crowded lives.

We wait for Christ to come again at the end of the age, bringing peace to hearts and nations,

But we are reluctant to change our worldview and do what we can in the present to share his salvation.

We wait for Christ to be born afresh in our hearts, leading us to pattern our lives after his,

But we forget daily to let go of ourselves and be led by the Spirit to a good and better way.

Lord, we wait for your coming.

Lord, we wait for your leading.

In our worship let us prepare for God to break into our lives; let us be alert for signs of his arrival.

We worship with hope, focusing our eyes on the small glimmer of light that represents the salvation of the Lord. For when it comes in fullness of glory, we shall wait no longer.

Special Music.....Harry Ponder

The King is Coming

Hymn of Praise #83.....FESTAL SONG

Arise, Your Light is Come!

Old Testament Lesson.....Lin Berrier

Isaiah 64:1-9

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—

to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.

⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.

But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.

⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.

We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

⁷There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Hymn of Praise #76.....VENI EMMANUEL
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Offertory Prayer.....Dan Bradshaw

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Music.....Choir
Advent Procession in Blue

New Testament Lesson.....Jeff Hayes
 Revelation 22:16-17, 20

¹⁶‘It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.’

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’

And let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’

And let everyone who is thirsty come.

Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

²⁰The one who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Message.....Jeff Hayes
Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Advent

I’ve never been one to sneak around the house in the weeks before Christmas hoping to find my presents. Even as a kid I enjoyed the anticipation of waiting for Christmas morning. The exuberance of walking down the stairs and ripping into presents would have been lost if I already knew what was wrapped inside the box. And so I patiently waited all through December until Christmas morning. Without realizing it at the time, I was practicing Advent.

This is where the Christian year begins, in a season of waiting. We are not immediately plunged head first into the chaos of a gruesome crucifixion or the mysterious joy of resurrection. Instead, the Christian year begins with a time that teaches us what it means to wait for what is to come. It trains us to see beyond the obvious and to look for deeper meaning as we contemplate the intersection of humanity and the divine. Like my time in childhood of walking past the Christmas tree, knowing presents were there but resisting the urge to peek, Advent teaches us to wait.

Most of us are not very good at waiting. Some of us think we are, but, inevitably, we show our true colors when stuck in traffic or the slowest check-out line at the grocery. Despite the closely related fruit of the Spirit called “patience,” waiting is something most of us just can’t wrap our twiddling thumbs around.

Given, however, all the references to waiting that we find in the New Testament, you think we might be better at it than we are. Perhaps we have grown too accustomed to getting what we want, when we want it. Or maybe waiting is difficult because it means we are no longer in charge; our future is dependent on the work of someone else.

We are not the first to have such feelings of helplessness. Around 538 BC Isaiah voiced a similar lament when he called on God to “tear open the heavens and come down.” The Israelites had returned from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem. Although they knew in their hearts their home would be devastated, they were not prepared for the utter desolation they found. Solomon’s temple had been leveled and the lush, green fields were now either overgrown or barren. They had no one to turn to but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Isaiah raised the cry of the people, even professing “we are the clay and you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” It was a cry of submission. It was a cry of helplessness. It was an acknowledgement that the work that lay ahead of the people was beyond their capability. They knew it was God alone who delivered them from captivity and it would be God alone who could restore them. Isaiah made the cry. Then it was time to wait. And so they waited. And waited. The restoration of Israel would not happen for some time. Nor would the promise of a coming Messiah. The realization of God’s Messiah did not come for several hundred years. For that reason, the appropriate sense of the Advent season is captured not in the jubilant proclamation “Joy to the World, the Lord is Come,” but in the heart-wrenching plea “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

Learning to wait is an essential component to our spiritual growth. Waiting hones our insights. It builds patience within us. It offers us perspective so that we might discern what is good, better, and best for our lives. If we do not learn to wait, then we will rush through our days oblivious to everything greater than ourselves. That was certainly the case for captive Israel and has most assuredly been the case for us. We live in an “instant” culture: instant coffee, instant access, instant gratification, insta-gram! And yet we will never experience the deep longing for something to give meaning and purpose to our existence if we never learn to wait.

Deriving from the Latin word *adventus*, which means “coming,” Advent encourages us to wait for Jesus in three distinct ways. On the first Sunday of Advent we wait as Israel waited—and waits—for Jesus’ second coming at the end of the age. Jesus promised, and those of us who follow him believe, that he will return again in glory. That coming will not be as subtle as a “baby lying in a manger.” The reign of God for which we long to heal our broken world will come in all its fullness.

During the second Sunday, we continue our waiting for Jesus’ second coming when we come face to face with a fiery prophet named John the Baptist who reminds us to “prepare the way of the Lord” and chastises those who do not choose to do so. How do we prepare? We prepare by living as Jesus taught us. We feed the hungry. We clothe the naked. We care for the sick. John commands: “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise” (Luke 3:1-11). He extols tax collectors and others to practice good ethics and to live in generosity. In other words, we prepare for Jesus’ coming by doing the things Jesus taught us.

This is the real theme of Advent. Despite all the waiting we do in Advent, the theme of this season is preparation. In other words, what are we doing while we wait? Are we conforming our lives in the way God intends? The message to Israel was the same message as John the Baptist: “Your lives are not holy! Prepare yourselves for God’s arrival by repenting and doing good works.” As we await the second coming of Jesus, does that message still ring true? Should we still be conforming our lives to the pattern God intends?

By the time we reach the third and fourth Sundays of Advent we are relieved to meet familiar—and less threatening—characters, namely Elizabeth, Mary, and Joseph. With them we practice the second type of waiting in Advent. We wait for the coming baby Jesus, born in Bethlehem. This is the Advent waiting we are most familiar with, but, still, it is not an easy kind of waiting. Joseph struggles in his waiting to understand how Mary is pregnant. Mary struggles coming to terms with her visit by the angel Gabriel. They are reminders that we, too, struggle to comprehend the intersection of God and man in the form of Jesus.

Finally, there is the third period of waiting we endure during Advent—waiting for Jesus to come into our lives. Isaiah pleaded with God to break in on the lives of the Israelites. We plead the same cry: “God, we need you to break open the heavens and enter our lives once more!” Advent is a sacred time to review once more where our faith is placed and how our lives are being lived. What areas of our lives do we need to repent and prepare the way for Christ’s coming: at the end of time, in Bethlehem, and, most importantly, in our hearts?

In Advent we wait for Jesus’ coming at the end of the age.

In Advent we wait for Jesus’ coming as a babe in Bethlehem.

And in Advent we wait for Jesus’ coming in our lives.

This third kind of waiting is the great spiritual challenge we face during Advent—where do we stand with God? We must resist the urge to get caught up in a bright star or a young expectant couple, or an unruly group of shepherds, but to ask ourselves: “Where do we stand with the God of the universe who is revealed in Jesus Christ the Lord?” Clearly that takes some work. Being patient and contemplative in the month of December is not easy. Waiting, practicing repentance and preparation are chores on top of an already demanding time of year. How can we make time to see Jesus in all his comings during Advent? Thankfully, the load is not entirely on our shoulders.

Consider, if you will, the preparation of a woman who is pregnant. That shouldn’t be a difficult image to comprehend during Advent. Of course she must pay attention to her body and take care of herself, but the life within her mysteriously takes shape and steadily grows on its own. She must eat right and get rest. She must prepare herself for the child’s arrival, but as for the time or day there is nothing she can do. It’s a waiting game. Similarly, in Advent, God is at work becoming incarnate in our lives. That is, if we let him. As Luci Shaw describes it:

During the waiting times God is vibrantly at work within us. And if God has sown his gospel seed in us, then Jesus is being formed within us, little by little, day by day. But we have to wait if the Word is to become flesh in us. And that kind of waiting feels like work.⁹⁰

The prophet Isaiah can help us in this work of waiting. Old Elizabeth and Zechariah will have their say as well. Their son, John, will give us instruction. An expectant girl named Mary will show us what God can do if we “let it be according to his word.” And a confused, but trustworthy fiancé named Joseph will teach us to trust, even though we can’t see the end result. We will listen to all their stories and with them we will wait.

90. Luci Shaw, *Breath for the Bones: Art, Imagination, and Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007) 119.

We will wait for the seed of God to take root in our hearts. We will wait for the Word to be made flesh. We will wait until we reach the cross and the empty tomb. We will wait for the King of Glory to return. And, yes, we will wait for a baby to be born in a manger; because even though our salvation doesn't take place in a cow trough, it can't happen without it.

This is the season of Advent.

Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #77.....HYFRYDOL

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

Go now and wait, believing that one day our Lord will return in glory. But in your waiting do not neglect to prepare for his arrival by being about his work. Depart in peace. Amen.

Postlude.....Susan Hocking

Emmanuel

APPENDIX D.3

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

October 16, 2016—Christmas

“Operation Christmas Child” Video Promotion

The Church in Ministry.....Jeff Hayes

Introduction to Christmas.....Jeff Hayes

Merry Christmas! I don’t believe it is too early to say that as we continue our study of the seasons in the Christian year today by talking about Christmas. The first Christmas celebration did not happen until 354 AD, which means a lot of time passed between Jesus’ actual birth and the first gift of fruitcake! But therein lies a very important point. There are many traditions to this season that have nothing to do with its actual meaning. For starters, the color of Christmas is not red or green, but white for the purity Jesus brings. Likewise, Christmas has been attached to a variety of other themes. For example...*(music begins)*

Christmas is music and family in town,
 Christmas is Snoopy and Charlie Brown.
 It’s anticipating that snow is going to fall,
 It’s praying to find some place to park at the mall.

It’s mom going crazy because the turkey got burned,
 It’s saying thanks for some gift you’ll return.
 Christmas is caroling kids at your door,
 It’s paper and ribbon spread all over the floor.

Christmas is rooftops all covered in lights,
 It’s “Away in a Manger,” it’s “A Wonderful Life.”
 Christmas is caring for those who have nothing,
 It’s dropping your change in the bell ringer’s bucket.

Christmas is all of these fun things for sure,
 But Christmas is really oh so much more.
 It’s hope for the whole world because,
 Christmas...Christmas is Jesus.⁹¹
(music ends)

Pray with me...

91. Francesca Battistelli, *Christmas Is*, performed by Francesca Battistelli, Sony Music Publishing, CD, 2012.

Prelude.....Evelyn Ponder
Emmanuel/O Come All Ye Faithful

Choral Call to Worship.....Jim Burnett
Tell Me the Story of Jesus (Verse 1)

Call to Worship.....Jim Burnett

Newborn God,
 you are as young as an infant child,
 yet ageless as the oceans, mountains, and stars.
 Two thousand years have not diminished your presence.
 Indeed, you add splendor to splendor,
 and the intensity of your face shines brighter still
 for those who recognize your presence.
You are Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Word made flesh.
 Enter every longing heart.
 Awaken our eyes, God,
 as you did Simeon's old and cloudy ones.
 Shine your incomprehensible in-the-beginning presence
 into the deepest corners of our hearts
 so that we can see beyond the poverty of Mary and Joseph
 to the treasure of the child Jesus.
You are Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Word made flesh.
 Guide us in our faith;
 for you are the one for whom we've been waiting.
 Let your grace be lived out in us;
 and your face fleshed out again and again,
 for we are your children, the people in whom you dwell.
**You are Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Word made flesh;
 and we long to worship you.**⁹²

Chorus of Praise.....AS THE DEER
As the Deer Pants for the Water

Hymn of Praise #7.....HYMN TO JOY
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

Hymn of Praise #87.....ANTIOCH
Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come

Offertory Prayer.....Bruce Farlow

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

92. Adapted from "Christ Child" in Sharlande Sledge, *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1999), 17.

Offertory Music.....Anita Smith

Light of the World

New Testament Lesson.....Jeff Hayes

John 1:1-18

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Message.....Jeff Hayes

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Christmas

There is an old folktale about three blind men who encounter an elephant for the first time and attempt to learn about it by grabbing different parts of the enormous animal. One takes hold of the elephant's tail and says, "This beast is like a rope!" The second man reaches around one of the elephant's ginormous legs and exclaims, "Oh no, it is like the trunk of a tree." And the third, taking hold of its tusk, says, "This creature is like a spear!" Obviously, had any of the men been privy to all three insights at once, that man would have understood more about the elephant than any of them could have known alone.

Understanding the purpose of the Christian year is a bit like that as well. Each season, if seen only in and of itself, will give a distorted picture of the entire story. Imagine reading only one chapter of a great mystery novel and trying to figure out "who dunnit." We must be willing to walk through the entirety of the Christian year in order to understand how each piece fits with the whole. The season of Christmas is a prime example. Much of the world has detached Christmas from its true meaning. Secular

society has lessened it to commercial excess and child-like fantasies. It's not even kosher to say "Merry Christmas" anymore, but "Happy Holidays!"

Even in most churches, Christmas has metamorphosized beyond its true meaning to include children's pageants and cookie fellowships that do little to explain the significance of the season. Don't misunderstand me. All of those things have their place, but the truth of the matter is that Christmas is about much more than a day. And its meaning extends far past a little town called Bethlehem. Christmas is a part of the whole story of God's saving act and to limit it or detach it is to miss its spiritual significance. Matthew, Luke and John each have their way of telling the story of Jesus' birth. Mark is the only gospel to exclude such a narrative. In Matthew we have the genealogy of Jesus, Joseph gives him a name, and we learn the meaning of that name. Nothing too remarkable about that. Each of us have a family tree. Each of us are given a name. And each of our names have meaning. [Jeffrey is of German origin, though my family tree is English, and my name means "God's peace." People with the name Jeffrey are considered creative and outgoing, brilliant and often inventive. I think my name fits, don't you? I digress...]

In Luke's telling of the story, he records the political climate surrounding Jesus' birth, explains the census that led Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, and gives witness to the shepherds who came to visit the child. It all makes for great pageantry where we are free to imagine the anxious young mother and the makeshift crib in a smelly cattle stall. It's a beautiful story, yes, but like Matthew, it is very commonplace. Political news and human births happen every day.

John's Gospel, on the other hand, tells the story much differently. He spells out the existence of the Word from the beginning of time, the source of all light and life, and the one full of God's glory: "The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." This is one of the most remarkable statements in all of Scripture, though we've heard it so many times that we often miss its enormity. The one through whom the world was created, the one who was "with God" and "is God," the light of the world who overtakes darkness, became flesh and blood. Did you hear that? God broke into the world and became one of us. Things like *that* just don't happen every day. It is this birth that really changes things and gives rise to Christmas. This is the theological credence to our Christmas celebration—the Word made flesh.

The "Word" in John is the Greek term *logos* from which we get our word "logic." That immediately suggests something more profound than simply the name for a baby. The *logos*—the Word—is meaning, explanation, purpose. And from the very beginning that meaning was God. In other words, when holy God became holy man he gave meaning and purpose to our very existence. He showed us, in a way no prophet or teacher could ever hope, what God the Father is like. As John says, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known." That intersection of God and man is the true brunt of this season.

I recall the first Christmas I spent with my in-laws. We entered the house of my wife's grandmother and the aroma of hot cider filled the air. On the table sat a golden brown, perfectly roasted turkey. In the oven cooked sweet potatoes and casseroles. A walk through the kitchen and into the den revealed six stockings hanging on the mantle, each of them busting at the seams, overflowing with an assortment of goodies. But before

we could enjoy any of those things, Ma-maw had all of us parade into the sitting room. It was void of any traditional decorations; just a simple Advent candle wreath on the coffee table. Though we could still smell dinner cooking and through the doorway see the stockings, Ma-maw handed each of us a script highlighted with our particular part to play in her homespun Christmas service. Some of us read prayers, others Scripture, and the kids lit candles at the appropriate time—all the while the rich aromas from the other room began to infiltrate our sense of smell. It was difficult to read a prayer and light a candle without letting our minds wander to the delicious meal we were about to consume or the ripping into stockings and presents that would come shortly thereafter. As I reflect on that experience, I am drawn to the contrast that existed between our attempt at a simple family worship service and the abundance of gifts and smells that filled the room simultaneously. It was something heavenly and divine juxtaposed with something very earthly and human. This juxtaposition, in an uncanny way, is the incarnation of God in Jesus; the divine presence intersecting with the human form: “The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.”

This is in contrast to what we witness in the Old Testament. In ancient Israel the manifestation of God’s presence was always encountered from a distance. For example, in Exodus Moses described the glory of the Lord as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21-22). Later when the Lord entered into covenant with the people, he did so with thunder and lightning, and a thick cloud on the mountaintop, and boisterous trumpets (Exodus 19:6). Ezekiel once saw a vision of God’s glory and he described it as gleaming amber and the appearance of a rainbow (Ezekiel 1:27-28). What Moses, the people of Israel, and prophets like Ezekiel saw from a distance—we see face to face. For it is the full glory of God incarnate in the flesh and blood of Jesus: a Jesus who belonged to a family and a community, who went to school and played games, who suffered injuries and tasted grief, who joked with friends and felt sexual attraction, who engaged in business and talked politics, who read Scriptures and sang in worship, who made spiritual discoveries and wrestled with doubt, who felt the pull toward fame but remained humble unto death. This is not a God we see far, far away, but a God who is like us in every way imaginable because he is *one* of us. That is the momentous event we call Christmas—God choosing to be with us by becoming one of us.

Still, there is another side to this season. That is the necessity of our choosing to be with God. As John puts it, “He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believe in his name, he gave power to become children of God.” God chooses to be with us and we must choose to be with him. God initiates the relationship and we must decide whether to reciprocate. During Advent we waited for Jesus to be born in our lives. Now it’s Christmas. And we must choose whether or not to let that event happen—to let Jesus be born in our lives. Has that happened for you? Have you received God into your life? And is the birth of his son Jesus a present, daily, reality in your life?

The season of Christmas offers us the gift of twelve days to consider an answer to those questions. Twelve days to once again draw close to Emmanuel, the Word-made-flesh, the Creator turned creation, the heavenly turned humanity. It is a gift, mind you, to know that Jesus who was born in Bethlehem is, more importantly, born in us.

That—not cooing noises inside a crib—is what Christmas is *really* all about.
 This is the season of Christmas.
 Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #576.....PRECIOUS NAME

Take the Name of Jesus with You

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

Choral Benediction.....TRADITIONAL

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

May Emmanuel, God-with-us, be Emmanuel, God-in-you, born in your hearts,
 your minds, and your lives, as you seek to do his good and perfect will. Go in peace.
 Amen.

Postlude.....Susan Hocking

Good Christian Men, Rejoice

APPENDIX D.4

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

October 23, 2016—Epiphany

The Church in Ministry.....Jeff Hayes

Introduction to Epiphany.....Jeff Hayes

Today, in our study of the Christian year, we turn our attention to Epiphany. The waiting of Advent is over and the joy of Christmas has come as Christ is born, the Word made flesh! You can almost hear the angels singing, “Glory to God in the highest!”

The celebration of Epiphany has played a modest role in church history—even among those who regularly observe the Christian calendar; though some congregations still hold an Epiphany party and share an Epiphany cake with a plastic baby Jesus figurine baked inside. Whoever gets the piece of cake with Jesus is responsible for baking the cake the following year.

Epiphany really deserves more attention than it receives. It is the celebration that Jesus Christ is the light of the world and that his light shines for everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, who profess his name. Indeed, the promise of Messiah made long ago to ancient Israel has come true—and you and I are included in its rewards! That is reason for worship.

Let us celebrate together.

Prelude.....Susan Hocking
Epiphany Medley

Choral Call to Worship.....Vicki Sorenson
Go Tell It!

Call to Worship.....Vicki Sorenson

Come and see!

**The light of God has come into our world
to proclaim God’s justice and love;
It has overcome the darkness and brought new life.**

Come and follow!

**Christ our companion has redeemed our world
He draws us into a loving family
From every tribe and family and culture.**

Go and tell!
The Spirit has equipped us for service
To love our neighbors as we do ourselves
To bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

Come and see, come and follow, go and tell!
In God's Love the nations of the earth will put their hope.⁹³

Hymn of Praise #566.....RHEA
Tell the Good News

Epistle Lesson.....Peggy Brown
 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

¹Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. ²We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Hymn of Praise #586.....MESSAGE
We've a Story to Tell to the Nations

Offertory Prayer.....Dan Bradshaw

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Music.....Vicki Sorenson
Go Light Your World

Gospel Lesson.....Jeff Hayes
 Matthew 2:1-12

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'
³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where

93. Christine Sine, "The Light of God Has Come," re:Worship, January 4, 2014, accessed October 17, 2016, <https://re-worship.blogspot.ca/2014/01/litany-light-of-god-has-come.html>.

the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Message.....Jeff Hayes

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Epiphany

In the town of Ravenna, Italy, an ancient mausoleum was built to be the final resting place for one of fifth century Rome’s most powerful women. The mausoleum contains the remains of Galla Placidia: daughter, sister, and mother to three Roman emperors. The building is shaped like a cross and the interior walls are covered with intricately designed mosaics that preserve some of the most stunning early Christian art. The focal point is the ceiling mosaic which bears a depiction of Jesus as the Great Shepherd surrounded by his sheep. Experts describe it as one of the best preserved mosaics of the time period.

But visitors who set out in hopes of seeing the beauty of these paintings may be surprised to find the entire interior of the mausoleum veiled in darkness. Upon entering this ancient relic, tourists find themselves unable to see—covered in the blackness of a room without light. Suddenly, though, an employee flips a switch that illuminates a spotlight pointed toward the ceiling. The mosaics that everyone has come to see are set aglow in all their glory. After a few fleeting minutes, however, the switch is flipped again and the darkness returns. In those fleeting moments of light, what visitors experience inside the mausoleum is called an epiphany.

The word Epiphany comes from the Greek verb *phainein*, which means “bring to the light.” It’s like one of those “aha” moments when the “light” bulb goes off above your head and you understand fully what previously had seemed incomprehensible. During the season of Epiphany, we focus our attention on understanding Jesus in all of his glory, full of the grace and truth John described in last week’s lesson (John 1:14). To follow the lectionary readings for each Sunday in this season will bring to the light Jesus’ baptism, his miracle at Cana, healing the sick, confronting powers of darkness, teaching eager crowds, patiently training his disciples, and being transfigured on a mountainside. The theme throughout each of these events is manifestation—the manifestation of Jesus’

glory—both to Jew and Gentile alike. But it all begins before Jesus is able to even tie his own shoelaces.

The first Sunday of Epiphany gives us the familiar narrative in Matthew of Gentile kings who come to visit the child Jesus. Notice I said “child” and not “baby.” I know we are all accustomed to seeing the wise men at the nativity, but in actuality they did not visit Jesus until he was almost two years old. And as any parent can tell you, once a boy reaches the age of two, there is rarely anything “baby” left about him.

Who these kings were or exactly where they came from is anybody’s guess. Actually, calling them “kings” is being generous. They were magi: soothsayers, fortune tellers, magicians. Not one clue exists to say they were royalty—no matter what the King James Bible may say! Their significance, however, is undeniable. Their visit is an “epiphany” of who this child really is—the Savior not just of Jews, but of everyone. They were Gentiles coming to worship Jesus. Their visit has always been understood as the manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah for the entire world.

The Gentile magi paid homage to Jesus by following a bright star to the location of the Savior where they presented him with gifts. By contrast, King Herod rejected Jesus and sought to destroy him. Where the magi followed the light to worship Jesus, Herod chose to remain in the darkness.

This theme of light and dark is central to the season of Epiphany. Once again, the word itself means “bring to the light.” In John’s Gospel Jesus said “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Then in Matthew he told the disciples, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). Epiphany is about the life-altering truth of both these statements. Jesus came into the world to bring light to our darkness, but he also sends us out to share light with those who desperately need it.

Fast forward in the Gospels and on more than one occasion we find Jesus sending out his disciples to heal the sick and preach the kingdom of God. Following one particular journey, seventy disciples returned to Jesus overjoyed with what had happened, exclaiming how even demons submitted to them. Jesus rejoiced with them, not only for what they accomplished, but even more for what they discovered along the way. In their work for Jesus, they had been changed from the inside out (Luke 10:1-24). So it is for us—or at least it should be. The more we live with Jesus, the more we grow into Jesus. Spending time with Jesus should change us from the inside out.

Has this happened for you? Has spending time with Jesus changed you? Have you made a commitment to follow Jesus and share his Gospel throughout your life? Are you living into being “the light of the world?” Like the employee stationed at the light switch of the mausoleum in Ravenna, we are called to bring light to dark places. As the contemplative Thomas Merton reminds us:

We who have seen the light of Christ are obliged, by the greatness of the grace that has been given us, to make known the presence of the Savior to the ends of the earth...not only by preaching the glad tidings of his coming; but above all by revealing him in our lives...every day of our mortal lives must be his manifestation, his divine Epiphany, in the world which he has created and redeemed.

Consider how you might display more light in this dark world. Try asking Jesus to increase your love for your neighbors—those that are across continents and those that are across the street. Become alert to openings in your everyday relationships where you

might bring Jesus into the conversation in a natural way.⁹⁴ Commit to inviting a certain number of people to church each week. Speak up for injustices. Show forgiveness. Adopt someone who is struggling and in need of encouragement. Practice mercy. Exhibit love. Whatever the way, choose to be light in the dark corners of the world. And as you go, remember Paul's words of assurance:

Our message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ...all we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus...It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:5-6 *The Message*).

Come the end of Matthew's Gospel Jesus will send his followers out again, only this time they will go knowing Jesus will not physically be there when they return. He will instruct them to make disciples of all nations, to baptize in his name, and to teach everything he has commanded. We, who are followers of Jesus, receive those instructions as well. The one who summons us to himself now sends us out on his behalf. The one who shows himself to us fully now asks us to make him fully known. The one who declares, "I am the light of the world," says to us, "You are the light of the world." How might we make that light shine?

Of course there is an alternative to following Jesus' command. There always is. Like King Herod we could choose to stay in the darkness. But in doing so, we will never see King Jesus.

This is the season of Epiphany.

Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #571.....COLEMAN

Let Others See Jesus in You

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

We have celebrated that Jesus Christ came for every person in every culture in every country on earth—for he is the Savior of all. Go now as a light to all people and share the story of Jesus so that all may come to know him as Lord.

Postlude.....Susan Hocking

Emmanuel

94. Gross, 93.

APPENDIX D.5

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

October 30, 2016—Lent

The Church in Ministry.....Jeff Hayes

Prelude.....Susan Hocking

Lamb of God

Choral Call to Worship.....Choir

Tell Me the Story of Jesus (Verse 2)

Introduction to Lent.....Jeff Hayes

Today our Christian year study brings us to the season of Lent. This time teaches us about the days Jesus spent in the wilderness enduring the temptation of Satan and the beginning of his ministry. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and carries us all the way to Holy Week and Easter.

It is a time of repentance and preparation for Easter. A time of self-reflection and examination. In the early church, Lent was a time to prepare new Christians for baptism. Today, we use the season to focus on our relationship with God and, more often than not, our need to renew that relationship.

Each year on Ash Wednesday, Psalm 51 is read as a foundation for the season of Lent. As we begin our worship today, let us do likewise.

Call to Worship.....Jeff Hayes

Psalm 51

Have mercy on us, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out our transgressions.

**Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity,
and cleanse us from our sin.**

For we know our transgressions,
and our sin is ever before us.
**Against you, you alone, have we sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,**
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
Indeed, we were born guilty,
sinners when our mothers conceived.

You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore, teach us wisdom in our secret heart.

**Purge us with hyssop, and we shall be clean;
wash us, and we shall be whiter than snow.**

Let us hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

**Hide your face from our sins,
and blot out all our iniquities.**

Create in us clean hearts, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within each of us.

Do not cast us away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from us.

**Restore us to the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in us a willing spirit.**

Then we will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

**Deliver us from bloodshed, O God,
O God of our salvation,
and our tongues will sing aloud of your deliverance.**

O Lord, open our lips,
and our mouths will declare your praise.

For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if we were to give you burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.

**The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

Hymn of Praise #15.....NETTLETON
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

All Saints Day Remembrance.....Jeff Hayes

As we study the Christian year I believe it's important to not let the actual days of the year slip by us as we go. Today is one of those days. It is Reformation Sunday, recalling the work of Martin Luther that led to the Protestant Reformation. And Tuesday is All Saints Day, not to be confused with All Hallows' Eve—also known as Halloween.

All Saints Day is a service we have observed in the past and will do so this morning. We will name aloud those who have passed away from our membership in the last year and also remember others who have gone before them. In a few minutes as Lin sings, I invite you to come forward and light a candle in remembrance of any saint who has gone before you. I ask that you please just light one per person so that everyone has an opportunity.

You might take note that the color for All Saints Day is not the black of Good Friday but the white of Easter. Why? Because we place the death of our loved ones in context. After all, we gather to worship the one who has given power over death.

What a difference that should make for us! What a difference this makes! Not just in our attitude about death, but also about *life*. Because on this day – as on Easter – we recall most powerfully that we are those persons who have been joined by baptism to Christ’s death *and* resurrection. Remember Paul’s words we read on the first Sunday of our study, “Do you not know that all those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the power of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

For this reason, while we mourn the death of our loved ones, yet we also celebrate their triumph, their victory, as they now rest from their labors and live with Christ in glory.

Pray with me....

Special Music.....Lin Berrier
How Great Thou Art

Hymn of Praise #334.....ASSURANCE
Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine

Offertory Prayer.....Bert Ingle

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Music.....Susan Hocking
Wondrous Love

Gospel Lesson.....Jeff Hayes
Mark 8:31-38

³¹Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.’

Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Message.....Jeff Hayes

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Lent

By this time in the Fall of the year most of us are settled back in from the hustle and bustle of summer, the beginning of another school year, and the demands of preparing our homes and lives for a change in seasons. We've pulled out sweaters and jackets, raked leaves, and made the necessary arrangements for the upcoming winter months.

Where is God in all of this? The danger we face as we plan for the future, whether it be a change in seasons or career or anything else, is the tendency to be indifferent to the presence of God in our plans.⁹⁵ We believe we can do it all on our own. We become self-confident and feel that we have no need of God. When this happens God becomes remote and absent. We may go for days without any sense of God. We do not pray. We do not meditate. We do not feel God in worship. Like the leaves falling from the trees during this Fall season of the year, our spirituality becomes lifeless.

To say we did not mean for this to happen is an understatement. None of us choose willingly to isolate ourselves from God, but nevertheless, when our spiritual life is suffering, God feels distant. At times like these we are akin to the Psalmist whose sin had driven him from a positive relationship with God. Psalm 51 is what Old Testament scholar James Mays calls a "liturgy of the broken heart."⁹⁶ Like many of the psalms, it's the desperate cry of someone who has found themselves in deep trouble. And the psalmist admits that it is his fault. Because of his own actions he no longer feels close with his Creator. And so he pleads, "Do not cast me away from your presence! Do not take your spirit from me!"

Lent is the season in the Christian year that remedies this deplorable situation. As Robert Webber asserts, "It calls us back to God, back to basics, back to the spiritual realities of life. It calls us to put to death the sin and the indifference we have in our hearts toward God and our fellow persons. Lent beckons us to enter once again into the joy of the Lord—the joy of a new life born out of a death to the old life."⁹⁷ Lent is the time to cry out to God, "Create in me a clean heart! Put a new and right spirit within me!"

Lent has a different feel than the three seasons that precede it. However beautiful and dazzling the sanctuary usually is throughout Advent; however boisterous we sing "Joy to the World" on Christmas morning; or however moved we are to be the "light of the world" in Epiphany, there is another side to our worship. Lent is the other side of the Christian year.

This is true for life in general, is it not? We have good days and we have bad days. There are high points and there are very deep, sinking low points. Outside of Good

95. Webber, 37.

96. James Mays. *Psalms*. Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994) 203.

97. Webber, 99.

Friday, the season of Lent is the lowest point of the Christian year. But it is an incredibly needed season. Lent is always needed when we have separated our lives from Christ. When we go about life striving for power, success, and wealth without care or concern for God's presence or will, we need a time of repentance. When worship becomes dull and we are indifferent to God's word, we need a time of restoration. The season of Lent offers forty days for this time of renewal. Forty days excluding Sundays to focus on restoring our relationship with God.

The season of Lent begins on a dark day known as Ash Wednesday. Robert Webber recalls an Ash Wednesday service when the true meaning of this season became clear to him. The celebrant led the congregation in reading Psalm 51 in unison. "I had read that psalm many times in my life," he writes, "and had heard sermons on it, but it had never touched me in the depths of being as it did that night...As I repeated the psalm I was not just saying words; God was there standing beside me, as it were, listening to me pour out a reality that reached into my inner self and expressed what I felt in my gut." Here, he thought, is what God wants of me—a spirit that is truly broken of pride and self-sufficiency, a heart that feels its own willful path, a path that has led itself away from the presence of God and obedience to his will for my life.⁹⁸

The season of Lent can have that effect on us. Usually void of bright colors and filled with a solemn darkness that permeates the air, Lent leads us into a time of penance. It can be felt in the prayers, the hymns, the Scriptures, and especially the sermons. [Preachers love Lent because it's an entire season we can point our finger and shout, "I told you to straighten up!"] It's as if the church is saying, "Ok boys and girls, it's time to get serious." In Lent our spirituality grows up and becomes an adult.

Most people associate this growth with "giving something up." It's easy to think of Lent as a time when we deny ourselves chocolate, coffee, television, or some other form of pleasure. And to be sure there is value in practicing a Lenten discipline. But, as David Winter has noted in his commentary, the words of Jesus in Mark's Gospel do not indicate a secondary object to the verb "deny." He calls his followers to deny *themselves*, rather than to deny themselves *something*.⁹⁹ The difference is important. In fact, it may be the difference between a Lent that leads us to a restored relationship with God compared with one that ends just as it began. Jesus' words in Mark are clear—we must give up our very selves.

But that begs an age old question of the faith—"What does denying oneself really mean?" After all, how can I deny who I am? Is Jesus asking me to cease to be an individual? The imperative is that those willing to lose their life will find a much better life in Christ—a life that is not possible without him. That is where Lent is leading us, to a better life, that can only be lived in fullness when we walk with Jesus to the cross by living life with him instead of on our own. In order to become all that God intends for us to be, we must become less of who we choose to be. Joan Chittister notes:

Lent comes to train us, like spiritual athletes, to keep our eyes with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. Then, perhaps, we will come, like Jesus, to see the sick and the lame, the outcast and the foreigner in our own world and bend to heal them, stop

98. Webber, 104.

99. David Winter, *Seasons of the Son: A Journey Through the Christian Year* (London: Canterbury, 2008), 40.

to listen to them, reach out to raise them from the dead edges of society to new life.¹⁰⁰

To put it another way, Lent requires those who choose to follow the way of Jesus to stop for a while on this road to an upper room and a gruesome cross, to take inventory, and reflect again on the commitment we made at baptism. Lent orders our spirituality back to its beginnings, back to the basics of repentance and faith. Do I truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have I given my life to him? And if I have, how is that evident in the way I live? How am I choosing to follow Jesus' teachings more than I'm choosing to follow my own path? These are questions we are faced with for forty long days, lest we arrive in Jerusalem only to proclaim with Peter, "I never knew the man!" (Matthew 26:74)

In a very palpable sense Lent enables us to come face to face with our weakest places and choose whether or not to repent and follow a different road. Maybe we will rise above the greed that consumes us. Perhaps we will learn to ward off the insatiable lust that tries to overtake us, or the self-indulgence, or the envy that has stained our soul. Possibly we will find the energy to fight off the laziness that has kept us from growing in Christ the way we know we ought. Maybe we will finally spend more time in the Scriptures, more time in prayer, and more effort in helping our brother and sister. Therein lies the hope of Lent. See, it's not as doom and gloom as it may sound. This season is leading us somewhere. And that somewhere is a complete and abundant life in the risen Christ.

The familiar story of Lazarus in John's Gospel will help us here (John 11:1-17). The death of Lazarus symbolizes our own dead spiritual condition. We are not moved in worship. We do not resonate with the songs and prayers. The bread and cup do not touch our hearts. Whatever the reason, we have become stale and lifeless in our relationship with God.

But just as it was for Lazarus, death is not the end. Jesus calls Lazarus, and us, to come forth. He calls us to new life. He resurrects within us a new in-breaking of God's Spirit. That can only happen when we walk with Jesus toward Jerusalem, taking our self-serving ways with us in order to nail them to the cross and bury them in the tomb. Then we can be raised to new life, given a new heart, and let our tongues sing aloud of God's deliverance.

I believe Lent can be the greatest journey we ever take toward full discipleship and spiritual maturity in Christ. But we have to be willing to walk the first step of giving up ourselves.

This is the season of Lent.

Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #146.....PATRICIA

O How He Loves You and Me

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

100. Chittister, 106.

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

Discipleship requires commitment. Discipleship requires faith. Discipleship requires giving your entire self. Go now unafraid to give yourself fully to God.

Postlude.....Susan Hocking

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

APPENDIX D.6

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

November 6, 2016—Holy Week (Triduum)

The Church in Ministry.....Jeff Hayes

Prelude.....Susan Hocking

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Choral Call to Worship.....Choir

Tell Me the Story of Jesus (Verses 2 and 3)

Call to Worship.....Jim Burnett

God, today we remember your journey to the cross.

The word is almost too big.

Its meaning staggers us.**We can't get our arms around it.**

But we hear you calling for us to follow you.

Lord, we want to fall in step beside you.

When we are exhausted, raise us to walk again.

When we stumble, help us up.

When we want to turn back, keep encouraging us.

When we shield our eyes, help us to see.May we take seriously the meaning of your cross,
as we take up ours.**Call us once more, Lord, to the true meaning of discipleship,
so that together we can live out your mission in the world.¹⁰¹**

Hymn of Praise #132.....POWER IN THE BLOOD

There Is Power in the Blood

Hymn of Praise #136.....WASHED IN THE BLOOD

Are You Washed in the Blood?

Video: "Our King Calling Us to Love"

101. Adapted from "Cross" in Sharlande Sledge, *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1999), 52.

Prayer for Our Nation.....Jeff Hayes

In all the noise of this election season, it is very easy to lose sight of who our true king is and our calling in his kingdom. Yes, as citizens of this country it is important we let our voice be heard at the polls on Tuesday. But our true voice is heard only when we live out the teachings of King Jesus: loving and caring for one another despite our color, creed, or political views.

When Jesus went to the cross he did not die for only those who were registered Democrats. He did not die for only those who defended the Second Amendment. Jesus died for all people. His blood on the cross was not partisan.

Today we continue our study of the Christian year. We have walked through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and Lent. Today we arrive at Holy Week. Maybe we need some holiness in this week? As we prepare for our presidential election, let us use this study of Holy Week to remember our true, sovereign, and faithful King.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Praise #197.....DARWALL

Rejoice, the Lord Is King

Offertory Prayer.....Tom Mattox

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Music.....Susan Hocking

Were You There

Gospel Lesson.....Jeff Hayes

Mark 14:12-36

¹²On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?’ ¹³So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, ¹⁴and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”’ ¹⁵He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.’ ¹⁶So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

¹⁷When it was evening; he came with the twelve. ¹⁸And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.’ ¹⁹They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, ‘Surely, not I?’ ²⁰He said to them, ‘It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. ²¹For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.’

²²While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ ²³Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. ²⁴He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’

²⁶When they had sung the hymn; they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷And Jesus said to them, ‘You will all become deserters; for it is written,

“I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.”

²⁸But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.’ ²⁹Peter said to him, ‘Even though all become deserters, I will not.’ ³⁰Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ ³¹But he said vehemently, ‘Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.’ And all of them said the same.

³²They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ ³³He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴And he said to them, ‘I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.’ ³⁵And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶He said, ‘Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.’

Special Music.....Choir

Wash Their Feet

Communion

Message.....Jeff Hayes

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Holy Week (Triduum)

Last month my grandparents celebrated their seventy-first wedding anniversary. That makes their wedding year 1945. Just think of all that has happened in the last seventy-one years! Since my grandparent’s wedding day, they have seen the invention of super glue, credit cards, handheld calculators, color television, cell phones, computers, and Betty Crocker cake mix! In 1945, McDonalds wasn’t even a twinkle in the Hamburgler’s eye and Burger King was just a Burger Prince. Those restaurants did not emerge till the mid-50’s. And up until this past month, my grandparents had been married longer than the Cubs had been to a World Series!

What is more, think of all that has happened in my family since they were married. Because of that fateful day seventy-one years ago, our family now has four living generations: my grandparents, my mom and aunt, their children—including my cousins, sister, and myself, and all of our children—four boys and two girls. Imagine the stories each of us could share that have been gathered through the years.

Last year, on the occasion of my grandparent’s seventieth wedding anniversary, our family gathered for a time of celebration and remembrance. We talked about how they met, my grandfather going off to war, and their honeymoon in Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, where they spent the night in a teepee. In a very real way we went back to

where it all began and recalled how the marriage of two people from two very small towns, Gray Court, SC and Fayetteville, TN, made all of our lives possible.

The same can be said for what we call Holy Week. It takes us back to the original events that happened many years ago, but have made all of our spiritual lives possible. And each time we gather for a Maundy Thursday or Good Friday service, we reflect on the meaning of it all.

The season of Lent officially ends on the Thursday evening of Holy Week. This day that we refer to as Maundy Thursday begins what the ancient church called the Triduum, or the three great days. These are the days we recall the final events of Jesus' life. On Thursday Jesus washed the disciple's feet, instituted the Lord's Supper, gave the command to love one another, and was arrested. On Friday Jesus was crucified. On Saturday the body of Jesus laid lifeless in the tomb. The three great days end with Easter morning and the proclamation: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Here at Calvary we have enjoyed very meaningful services during this time. I remember a very poignant Maundy Thursday service a couple years ago. The tables were covered in burlap, arranged in a large square, and lit by only a few small candles. In the middle of the square stood an enormous wooden cross, worn from years of weather exposure, and laid on its side with a crown of thorns draping over the crossbar. A single spotlight illuminated the cross. Together we rehearsed the final events of Jesus' life through the reading of Scripture and song. It would have been difficult to witness that service and not grasp the significance of it all.

Author Bobby Gross recalls a Maundy Thursday sermon that spoke to him in a significant way. It was entitled "Weight of the Cross, Weight of Glory." "What weighs on you tonight?" the speaker asked. "Sickness? Grief? Marriage Strain? Work troubles? Debt? Loneliness? Death?" Then he rehearsed the weight Jesus bore, from his temptation in the desert and his anguish in Gethsemane to his stumble on the walk to Golgotha, carrying the beam that would hold his dying body. "All of this borne for us, for our healing, for our salvation," he said. Finally, the speaker urged his listeners to entrust themselves, burdens and all, to Jesus, who wanted to wash their feet, serve them bread and wine, and turn their "slightly momentary affliction," as the Apostle Paul put it, into an "eternal weight of glory."¹⁰²

I love how the ancient church treated the period from Maundy Thursday to Easter morning. It was one uninterrupted service of worship. Literally, they stayed in church from Thursday evening to Easter morning. [Try doing that today and there would be a riot—especially when Holy Week falls during March Madness!] But imagine how meaningful that must have been. Worshippers mourned, reflected, prayed, and mourned some more until the light of Easter morning shone on Sunday.

Together, the days of Holy Week represent the *Pascha* or Passover, the great saving act of God. As in the Exodus story when blood from an unblemished lamb protected the people from death so they could pass through the sea to freedom, so it is for us. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" for us so that we can be free from sin and death (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). There is no time in the Christian year more crucial than these three days. This is the source of our entire spirituality. Everything we have experienced in Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and Lent

102. Gross, 163.

has prepared us for what is about to happen in Jesus' death and resurrection. And everything that comes after this time in Pentecost and Ordinary Time has its roots in what takes place during these three days.

Each Gospel writer devotes a substantial part of their narrative to the final week of Jesus' life. Through their various accounts we know of his Passover celebration with the disciples, his washing their feet, his betrayal by Judas, his anguish in the garden, his middle of the night arrest, his abandonment by the disciples, the bogus trial before the Jewish elders, his grief when Peter denies him, his expedient condemnation by Pilate, his flogging and mockery by the Roman guards, his walk out of the city carrying the cross, his excruciating death on Golgotha, and his hasty burial in a borrowed tomb.

That first extraordinary act of washing the disciple's feet, however, is told in John alone. They are completely caught off guard as Jesus, their beloved leader, plays the lowly role of a servant. He handles each man's rough feet with tender care, looks into each pair of eyes and speaks some word of affection to each, including Judas. He makes clear that his followers must be willing to love and serve one another in humility. Paul talked about Jesus emptying himself and taking the form of a slave, becoming obedient even to the point of death (Philippians 2:7-8). By removing his robe and wrapping a towel around his waist, Jesus gave a profound illustration of how extravagant that obedience would soon become.

Later that same evening he infused the most common elements of a meal, bread and drink, with new meaning. They represent him. He will give his body to be beaten, his blood to be spilled. And he will do this for them. He will be the lamb killed as an atoning sacrifice. And this isn't just a one-time ritual. Jesus intends for this meal to be eaten over and over again as remembrance of what he did for his followers.

Finally, Jesus and the disciples made their way to a garden where he asked Peter, James, and John to join him in prayer. He becomes "distressed and agitated" according to Mark, "deeply grieved, even to death" (Mark 14:32-33). Jesus pleads with God to spare him the ordeal: "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want" (Mark 14:36). What is this cup? Psalm 75:8 refers to the cup of God's wrath which he will use to drain out the wicked of the earth. John Stott explains this cup that Jesus wanted God to remove:

It symbolized neither the physical pain of being flogged and crucified, nor the mental distress of being despised and rejected even by his own people, but rather the spiritual agony of bearing the sins of the world, in other words, of enduring the divine judgment which those sins deserved.¹⁰³

Three symbols—a towel, bread, and a cup—point to the significance of Jesus as the suffering servant who takes on the sin of the entire world.

"The salvation of the world," writes William Faulkner, "is in man's suffering."¹⁰⁴ We have seen it with our own eyes as we gaze upon the events that surround Jesus' final hours. The suffering of Jesus is the salvation of the world.

It is imperative that we give these days their due. These are the measures that give meaning to who we are in Christ. And it is reason for us to follow the seasons ever more closely. We need to live in these events year after year after year as we continually

103. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1986), 76.

104. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1951), 276.

remember the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. For in the spilling of his blood lies the very source of our spiritual blood. It's not easy to comprehend is it? Countless books have been written trying to explain the supernatural occurrence that takes place on the cross. Paul tried to explain it by comparing it to Adam: "Just as sin came into the world through one man's trespass, and death came through sin, so one man's act of righteousness leads to life for all" (Romans 5:12-17). I'm not sure that does it justice. The whole ordeal can leave us dumbfounded. And maybe that's a good thing. For only in the quiet moments can we really begin to comprehend the enormity of these events.

One of the special traditions I've come to appreciate at Calvary is what we do at the close of each Maundy Thursday service. If you have participated in one of these services, you know exactly what I am referring to. We walk in silence from the Candler Center to the cross on the front lawn. There we watch, starkly, as the colors are changed from purple to black, a foreshadowing of the dark death that is about to take place on Good Friday. No words. No music. Just the stark image that is formed in our minds of the Lord's body hanging from the bloody nails.

The heart of the Christian year lies in our response to that moment. What does the fullness of the cross really mean? How will we now live after seeing that gruesome sight? Are we willing to follow Jesus even unto death? Indeed, these are not easy questions to answer, which is why I believe most of us walk away from the scene in the same manner we arrived—sober and silent.

This is Holy Week.

Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #139.....HUDSON

At the Cross

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

By his stripes, we are healed. By his wounds, we are made whole. Go in the name of Jesus Christ and live in the salvation made possible by the goodness of our true King. Amen.

Postlude.....Susan Hocking

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

APPENDIX D.7

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

November 13, 2016—Easter

The Church in Ministry.....	Dan Bradshaw
Prelude.....	Doris Welch
<i>Savior of the Nations, Come</i>	
Choral Call to Worship.....	Choir
<i>Tell Me the Story of Jesus (Verses 2 and 3)</i>	
Special Music.....	Doris Welch
<i>Hosanna</i>	
Hymn of Praise #159.....	EASTER HYMN
<i>Christ the Lord Is Risen Today</i>	
Hymn of Praise #160.....	CHRIST AROSE
<i>Low in the Grave He Lay (Up from the Grave He Arose)</i>	
Scripture Lesson.....	Reader 1: Krista Hayes
1 Corinthians 15	
	Reader 2: Jeff Hayes
	Reader 3: Jim Burnett

Reader 2: Hear the word of the Lord.

Reader 1: Friends, let me go over the message with you one final time— this message that I proclaimed and that you made your own; this message on which you took your stand and by which your life has been saved.

Reader 2: I'm assuming, now, that your belief was the real thing and not some passing fancy, that you're in this for good and that you are holding fast.

Reader 3: Remember the first thing I did was place before you what was placed so emphatically before me:

Reader 2: that the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it;

Reader 1: that he was buried;

- Reader 3: that he was raised from death on the third day,
- Reader 2: again exactly as Scripture says;
- Reader 3: that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time, most of them still around; although a few have since died;
- Reader 1: that he then spent time with James and the rest of those he commissioned to represent him;
- Reader 2: and that he finally presented himself alive to *me*.
- Reader 3: It was fitting that I bring up the rear. I don't deserve to be included in that inner circle, as you well know, having spent all those early years trying my best to stamp God's church right out of existence.
- Reader 1: But because God was so gracious, so very generous, here I am. And I'm not about to let his grace go to waste. Haven't I worked hard trying to do more than any of the others? Even then, my work didn't amount to all that much. It was God giving me the work to do, God giving me the energy to do it. So whether you heard it from me or from those others, it's all the same: We spoke God's truth and you entrusted your lives.
- Reader 2: Now, let me ask you something profound yet troubling. If you became believers because you trusted the proclamation that Christ is alive, risen from the dead, how can you let people say that there is no such thing as a resurrection?
- Reader 1: If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ.
- Reader 3: And face it—if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors.
- Reader 2: Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of barefaced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ—sheer fabrications, if there's no resurrection.
- Reader 1: If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead.

- Reader 3: And if Christ wasn't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever.
- Reader 2: It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot.
- Reader 1: But the truth is that Christ *has* been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.
- Reader 2: There is a nice symmetry in this: Death initially came by a man, and resurrection from death came by a man.
- Reader 3: Everybody dies in Adam; everybody comes alive in Christ.
- Reader 2: But we have to wait our turn: Christ is first, then those with him at his coming, the grand consummation when, after crushing the opposition, he hands over his kingdom to God the Father.
- Reader 1: He won't let up until the last enemy is down—and the very last enemy is death!
- Reader 3: As the psalmist said, "He laid them low, one and all; he walked all over them."
- Reader 2: When Scripture says that "he walked all over them," it's obvious that he couldn't at the same time be walked on. When everything and everyone is finally under God's rule, the Son will step down, taking his place with everyone else, showing that God's rule is absolutely comprehensive—a perfect ending!
- Reader 1: Why do you think people offer themselves to be baptized for those already in the grave? If there's no chance of resurrection for a corpse, if God's power stops at the cemetery gates, why do we keep doing things that suggest he's going to clean the place out someday, pulling everyone up on their feet alive?
- Reader 2: And why do you think I keep risking my neck in this dangerous work? I look death in the face practically every day I live. Do you think I'd do this if I wasn't convinced of your resurrection and mine as guaranteed by the resurrected Messiah Jesus?
- Reader 3: Do you think I was just trying to act heroic when I fought the wild beasts at Ephesus, hoping it wouldn't be the end of me? Not on your life! It's resurrection, resurrection, always resurrection, that

undergirds what I do and say, the way I live. If there's no resurrection, "We eat, we drink, the next day we die," and that's all there is to it. But don't fool yourselves. Don't let yourselves be poisoned by this anti-resurrection loose talk. "Bad company ruins good manners."

- Reader 1: Start thinking straight! Awaken to the holiness of life. No more playing fast and loose with resurrection facts. Ignorance of God is a luxury you can't afford in times like these.
- Reader 3: Aren't you embarrassed that you've let this kind of thing go on as long as you have?
- Reader 1: Some skeptic is sure to ask, "Show me how resurrection works. Give me a diagram; draw me a picture. What does this 'resurrection body' look like?"
- Reader 2: If you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams for this kind of thing. We do have a parallel experience in gardening.
- Reader 3: You plant a "dead" seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between seed and plant. You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different.
- Reader 2: You will notice that the variety of bodies is stunning. Just as there are different kinds of seeds, there are different kinds of bodies—humans, animals, birds, fish—each unprecedented in its form. You get a hint at the diversity of resurrection glory by looking at the diversity of bodies not only on earth but in the skies—sun, moon, stars—all these varieties of beauty and brightness.
- Reader 3: And we're only looking at pre-resurrection "seeds"—who can imagine what the resurrection "plants" will be like!
- Reader 1: This image of planting a dead seed and raising a live plant is a mere sketch at best, but perhaps it will help in approaching the mystery of the resurrection body—but only if you keep in mind that when we're raised, we're raised for *good*, alive forever! The corpse that's planted is no beauty, but when it's raised, it's glorious. Put in the ground weak, it comes up powerful. The seed sown is natural; the seed grown is supernatural—same seed, same

body, but what a difference from when it goes down in physical mortality to when it is raised up in spiritual immortality!

- Reader 2: We follow this sequence in Scripture: The First Adam received life, the Last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. Physical life comes first, then spiritual—a firm base shaped from the earth, a final completion coming out of heaven. The First Man was made out of earth, and people since then are earthy; the Second Man was made out of heaven, and people now can be heavenly. In the same way that we’ve worked from our earthy origins, let’s embrace our heavenly ends.
- Reader 3: I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthy lives don’t in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God. Their very “nature” is to die, so how could they “naturally” end up in the life kingdom?
- Reader 1: But let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I’ll probably never fully understand. We’re not all going to die—but we are all going to be changed.
- Reader 3: You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you look up and blink your eyes—it’s over. On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again.
- Reader 2: At the same moment and in the same way, we’ll all be changed. In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen: everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true:
- Reader 1: Death swallowed by triumphant Life!
- Reader 2: Who got the last word, oh, Death?
- Reader 3: Oh, Death, who’s afraid of you now?
- Reader 1: It was sin that made death so frightening
- Reader 2: and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage.
- Reader 3: But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three—

Reader 1: sin

Reader 2: guilt

Reader 1: death

Reader 3: are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ.

Unison: Thank God!

Reader 1: With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground.

Reader 2: And don't hold back!

Reader 3: Throw yourselves into the work of the Master,

Reader 1: confident that nothing you do for him is ever,

Reader 2: ever,

Reader 3: *ever*

Reader 1: a waste of time or effort.

Reader 2: This is the word of the Lord.

Unison: Thanks be to God.

Hymn of Praise #168.....ST. DENIO
We Welcome Glad Easter

Offertory Prayer.....Bert Ingle

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Music.....Evelyn Ponder
I Know that My Redeemer Liveth

Message.....Jeff Hayes
Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Easter

I have a confession to make this morning: I have always found it difficult to preach on Easter. And this being the middle of November does not make it any easier. I realize it's counter-intuitive since the resurrection is the most significant event in the entire story of Christendom, not to mention the most exciting. We believe Jesus, who was

dead, actually *rose* from the grave. That's pretty electrifying stuff! Without resurrection there would not be a church. Without resurrection we'd all have something else to do on Sunday mornings. Without resurrection I'd be out of a job! Without resurrection there wouldn't be a story to tell! Easter Sunday is the *crème de la crème*. It is the Sunday of all Sundays. It is the day of new beginnings for the entire cosmos. And therein lies the brunt of my problem. What more can I add to such a remarkable day: "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed."

Christianity is an Easter faith, and we are an Easter people. The message of Easter is that Christ defeated the powers of evil and death; and we, being baptized into Christ, have defeated those things as well. As we have said throughout this study—and Paul reiterates in our lesson for today—through our baptism what happens to Jesus happens to us. Still, every Spring, preachers feel pressure to add something to this story. We often resort to gimmicks or clever illustrations that seldom hit home. The truth of the matter is that we would do well to just speak, as the ancient hymn reads, the "old, old story of Jesus and his love."¹⁰⁵

There was a time when Easter was the only "old, old story" in the Christian year. It was the first festival celebrated by the early church. No Christmas. No Pentecost. No Sunday School promotion day. No Stewardship Sunday! Just Easter. Rightly so, don't you believe? Everything in the Christian year points to this reality. Nothing else in Christianity so completely explains all other things as well as Easter. Faith in a Christ who is dead? That doesn't amount to anything. But faith in a Christ that was dead and is now alive? That changes everything. Nevertheless, not everyone believes in resurrection with such ease. Case in point, Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth.

Fueled by the philosophy of the time, the Corinthians believed the only resurrection that could possibly take place was a resurrection of the soul. At conversion, people were spiritually resurrected to a new life, but there should not be any hope for a future physical resurrection. The whole idea of bodily resurrection seemed faulty to them. They had it on pretty good evidence that dead bodies did not just rise from the grave. No one had ever seen it happen. Nor had they ever heard of it happening. Once people were dead, they stayed dead.

Interesting to note, the Corinthians were not giving up on living out the teachings of Jesus. Nor did they desire to cease being a church. They just wanted to be a church that didn't believe in the resurrection.

But Paul wouldn't hear of it. He told them: "If there is no resurrection, our faith is worthless and you are still in your sins! We have no hope!" For Paul everything depended on whether the resurrection actually happened. If Christ has not been raised, everything Paul staked his life on was in vain and Christians are the most pitiful people in the world, and the world is without hope.

Paul carefully argued that Christ has been physically raised from the dead and his resurrection makes all the difference for their present and their future. "I want to remind you of the Gospel," he says. The word "remind" is the Greek *gnoridzo* which means "to make known." Paul feels they've strayed so far from the true Gospel that he needs to make it known all over again. "I want to make known to you the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn believed, in which also you stand, through which

105. Kate Hankey, *Tell Me the Old, Old Story*. Baptist Hymnal. (Nashville, TN: Genovox, 1991), 625.

also you are being saved.” Paul proceeds to share Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection—reminding the Corinthian church of the truth of the gospel.

Several years ago *The Christian Century* magazine ran an article titled, “The Gospel in Seven Words.” In the article they asked famous Christian leaders to summarize the gospel message in seven words. Some of them were quite provocative. Baptist pastor Will Campbell responded, “We’re all [expletive] but God loves us anyways. (Yea, I know, he used eight words versus seven.) Famed Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann answered in his typically dense way: “God’s bodied love continues world-making.” (“I used only six words,” he said; “and I rested on the seventh.”)¹⁰⁶ Here is how Paul summarizes the Gospel—fair warning, it’s more than seven words:

Of first importance, Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time. Last of all, he appeared to me (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

Paul couches his resurrection belief in what he knows of the Scriptures, what others have testified, and what he has seen with his own two eyes. Because of those three things, Paul believes in an actual, historical, physical resurrection of Jesus.

Second, Paul wants the Corinthian church to know they will be raised as well. Hear what he told the Romans: “If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5). Because Jesus has risen, those who believe in his resurrection will rise as well. This is our confident hope. It’s why we can look straight in the eye despicable things like cancer and disease and death and say, “You *will not* have the last word.”

At the beginning of this series, you may recall how I shared my baptism. I was twelve years old when my pastor lowered me into the water pronouncing, “Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life.” That is Paul’s theology of baptism. We who have been baptized are in Christ and Christ is in us. What happened to Jesus happens to us. We experience this through our baptism. We die *with* him. We are buried *with* him. And, most importantly, we rise *with* him.

This, to me, is the beauty of Christian year spirituality. It is not just an intellectual exercise but a participatory one. We join Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection through our baptism. We are reminded of this with every story in every season. And we are challenged to join Jesus by patterning our lives after his life; doing the things that Jesus did day by day, season by season.

Of course, keeping step with the risen Jesus can be difficult, even in the Easter season. It lasts fifty-days mind you, and does not come with the pomp and circumstance we find in Advent and Christmas. There are no decorations to keep up just a little while longer, no catchy songs [“On the first day of Easter my true love gave to me...”], and most churches offer little encouragement to stay the course. Easter Sunday? No problem. We know how to make that day special: lilies and pipe organs, bright outfits and cheerful Alleluias. But by the next Sunday many churches have moved on to the latest “how to” sermon series and the same old routine they practiced before resurrection. This is

106. David Heim, “The Gospel in Seven Words,” *The Christian Century*, August 23, 2012, accessed September 3, 2016, <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2012-08/gospel-seven-words>.

unfortunate because not only does it devalue Easter, but implies resurrection cannot extend past one day in our lives.

Maybe there's the rub for us in this season. We often resort to following Christ just for the day, so why not Easter? What I mean by that is that it's very easy to come to church on Sunday, sit in a beautiful sanctuary or cathedral, listen to the music, hear the prayers, and be swept away into the presence of God. It's easy to follow Jesus when the environment lends itself to it and everyone around you is joining in.

But try following Jesus in rush hour when the guy beside you nearly side swipes your car. Try following Jesus when your kids misbehave and you're at wits end with your spouse. Try following Jesus when you're passed over for a promotion even though you were the most qualified. Try following Jesus during and after a bitterly divisive election cycle.

Following Jesus on Sunday? In a church? Surrounded by believers? We can do that. Following Jesus in the nuts and bolts of life Monday through Saturday? That takes a more concerted effort.

But that's why I love the Christian year. Year after year, month after month, day after day we are encouraged to live in, with, and through Jesus.

When we are cut off in traffic we are challenged to respond with grace. When we fight with our children or our spouse we are encouraged to practice forgiveness. When life doesn't go our way, we are instructed to respond as Jesus would respond because Jesus lives in us.

Christian year spirituality teaches us to do that Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and every other day of our lives by keeping our focus exactly where it need be: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Some years back neurologist Oliver Sacks wrote a fascinating vignette of an intriguing neurological difficulty. Tourette's Syndrome is a mental disorder that causes victims to have any number of physical and verbal tics. Some Tourettic people have constant facial twitches, others find themselves uncontrollably uttering verbal whoops, beeps, and sometimes raunchy swear words. One man with Tourette's, whom Dr. Sacks knew, was given to deep, lunging bows toward the ground, a few verbal shouts, and also an obsessive-compulsive adjusting and readjusting of his glasses.

The kicker is that this man was a skilled surgeon! Somehow and for some unknown reason, when he donned his mask and gown and entered the operating room, all of his tics disappeared for the duration of the surgery. He totally lost himself in the role. However, when the surgery was finished he returned to his odd quirks of adjusting his glasses, shouts, and bows.¹⁰⁷

Sacks did not make any spiritual comment on this, yet I find this surgeon an intriguing example of what it means to have a Christian year—no, an Easter year—spirituality. When we get so lost in the story of Jesus that it becomes who we are. That is our goal as we travel with the resurrected Jesus, is it not? To get lost in the role so much that we do the things Jesus did. His life becoming our life.

Come to think of it, preaching the Easter message shouldn't be that difficult after all. We have an Easter faith because we are an Easter people. What was true for Jesus is true for all of us. We serve because he served. We love because he loved. We live

107. Scott Hoezee, "Easter 5C," *Center for Excellence in Preaching*, April 18, 2016, accessed September 3, 2016, http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/easter-5c/?type=the_lectionary_gospel.

because he lives. And that message can be summed up in seven simple words: “Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.”

This is the season of Easter.
Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #360.....REGENT SQUARE
Easter People, Raise Your Voices

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

Since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again;
death no longer has any power over him.

The life he lives; he lives to God. Alleluia!

Because of our sins, he was handed over to die;
and he was raised to life in order to put us right with God.

The life he lives; he lives to God. Alleluia!

May the God of peace,
who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus,
provide us with every good thing we need
in order to do his will.

Go in peace, as witnesses of the risen Lord.
In the name of the risen Jesus. Amen.¹⁰⁸

Postlude.....Evelyn Ponder
Hallelujah! What a Savior

108. Adapted from “Benediction for Easter Sunday,” Lutheran Church of Australia, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://re-worship.blogspot.com/2012/03/benediction-for-easter-sunday.html>.

APPENDIX D.8

WORSHIP ORDER AND SERMON

November 20, 2016—Pentecost and Ordinary Time

The Church in Ministry.....Jeff Hayes

Introduction to Pentecost and Ordinary Time.....Jeff Hayes

We have been walking through the seasons of the Christian year and discussing what they might mean for us spiritually. Today we come to our final Sunday. We are going to look at Pentecost and Ordinary Time. Now if you have been in the church for a long time then you are probably familiar with Pentecost: tongues of fire, violent winds, and the birth of the church. However, you may not be as familiar with Ordinary Time. It doesn't sound as glamorous does it? Nobody likes to be called "ordinary." And, yet, in this ordinary time of the church we are called to live extraordinary lives. Ordinary in the sense that there are no feasts during this time in the calendar. Extraordinary in that we see Jesus in his public ministry and we are encouraged to live as Jesus.

The color for Pentecost is red and the color for Ordinary Time is green. Though the color red could also serve for Ordinary Time because the word ordinary comes from the word ordain, and we are ordained in Ordinary Time to live as Jesus.

Prelude.....Susan Hocking

Give Thanks

Call to Worship.....Jim Burnett

God of all nations,

Your Spirit transcends the boundaries of geography and time.

If we travel to African villages parched by drought and frightened by violence, you are there.

If we journey to Middle Eastern countries caught in the clash of religions and cultures, you are there.

If we make our home in Latin American cities separated from us more by economics than distance, you are there.

If we move to other places far from the comfort of family and friends, you are there.

God you are where we cannot be at this hour, except through our prayers...

With the Bedouin shepherd rising with the sun

With the Bosnian mother crying in the night for her children

with the elderly American facing a holiday alone.

As today becomes tomorrow, add our voices to those who weep, sing, and shout to you in

Arabic and Russian and Swahili,

Korean and Serbian and Vietnamese,
 Spanish and Indonesian and Greek,
Cantonese and German and French.
 Make of our third world, second world, and first world
One world bound together by the gospel of Christ.
 Let all the world in every corner sing your praise
Until the sounds of our great thanksgiving echo throughout the lands:
 Gracias!
 Danke!
 Shukran!
 Merci!
In this thanksgiving season, we gather together to ask the Lord's blessing
 To sing praises to his name!
He is beside us to guide us, our God with us joining;
Let us worship the God who makes us one!¹⁰⁹

Hymn of Praise #636.....KREMSER

We Gather Together

Hymn of Praise #637.....ST. GEORGE'S WINDSOR

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

Operation Christmas Child Recognition and Prayer

Baby Dedication.....Jeff Hayes

Oliver Reid Nix
 Leah Grace Barak
 Jackson Wade Hayes

Dedication Song.....Terry Smith

Find Your Wings

Hymn of Thanksgiving #644.....BLESSINGS

Count Your Blessings

Offertory Prayer.....Bruce Farlow

The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Music.....Susan Hocking

Come into His Presence with We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise

109. Adapted from "Nations" in Sharlande Sledge, *Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1999), 35.

Scripture Lessons.....Jeff Hayes
 Matthew 6:9-13; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

⁹Pray then in this way:
 Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
¹⁰Your kingdom come.
 Your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.
¹²And forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³And do not bring us to the time of trial,
 but rescue us from the evil one.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Message.....Jeff Hayes

Tell Me the Story of Jesus: Pentecost and Ordinary Time

When I was younger I loved performing in little plays put on by our church. Often I was dubbed as the main character because, one, I volunteered, and two, I wasn't afraid to be in front of people. Through the years I have not outgrown my desire to be on stage. You will recall our Advent season last year when I delivered monologues each Sunday dressed as a character from the biblical story. Who can forget those ruggedly handsome fellas? *[picture on screen]*

A lot of work goes into preparing for a performance. You must memorize lines, take stage directions, have a costume fitting, listen to the director, and practice, practice, practice. But no matter how many times you practice, once the lights dim and the curtain goes up you either know your part or you do not. Pentecost and Ordinary Time in the Christian year are a lot like that moment. This is go time!

Pentecost is a time for action. In the biblical story from Acts 2 there were violent winds, tongues of fire, wonders and signs, and the church grew exponentially. In the Christian year, Pentecost is a time to determine how we will take all of what we know from Advent to Easter and put to it our hands and feet. Will the church grow because of us? In a real sense this is decision time: will we take our call in Jesus seriously or not? And if we do take it seriously, how will that be shown in the way we live?

As for the specific day of Pentecost in the Christian year, it is a dividing point in time. It ends one season and begins another. The extraordinary seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, and the great fifty days of Easter come to a close. For six months the church has been carried through all of the saving acts of God: his incarnation, manifestation to the world, life, death, and resurrection, his ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. All of these crucial events which form the meaning of our faith and give direction to our spiritual lives.

"Broadly speaking," Robert Webber emphasizes, "Pentecost brings understanding to the followers of Jesus, empowers them in ministry, establishes the church, and points to the end of history when the kingdom of Christ will be established over all the earth."¹¹⁰

"This is the time," says theology professor Wendy Wright, "to become attentive to the call of discipleship both inner and outer. What are we called to do? What are we called to be?"¹¹¹ Essentially, we learn that we have a role to play in the production of God's kingdom. And the central question becomes: Are we ready?

"Are we ready?" How we respond to that question ushers in a long season known as Ordinary Time. Long in that it lasts six months. Ordinary in that the Sundays contain no major celebrations comparable to Christmas or Easter. The lessons we read throughout Ordinary Time are Jesus' public ministry. Beginning with Pentecost and leading all the way to Christ the King Sunday [which is today, mind you] we see how Jesus interacted with those around him: how he treated the less fortunate, how he went about justice, and how he spoke of God's kingdom on earth. The focus in this time is faithfulness: we are choosing to commit the pattern of our lives after the life of Jesus. In a very real sense, if

110. Webber, 161.

111. Wendy Wright, *The Time Between: Cycles and Rhythms in Ordinary Time* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 1999), 15.

Pentecost is the time to ask “Are we ready?” Ordinary Time is the moment when the curtain goes up and our answer to that question can be seen by everyone.

Which leads to why I have chosen the Lord’s prayer as our Scripture for today. Consider the Lord’s prayer less of a recitation and more as a pattern for living as followers of Christ. The prayer, as told in Matthew, can be divided into two parts: the first half centering on God with implications for us, and the second half focusing on us, with declarations about God. The prayer begins with acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,” and moves to God’s rightful rule over all creation: “*Your* kingdom come, *your* will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The prayer then makes a turn: “Give *us* what we need each day, including forgiveness, and teach *us* how to forgive each other.” Finally, we ask God to keep us clear from trouble and should we encounter it, to help us be liberated from it.

Bobby Gross notes how this prayer can serve as a pattern for our lives. Grateful for God’s love, we love God in return. In awe of his holiness, we worship him. In response to his sovereignty, we give our allegiance. As we live in this world, we look to God for provision and forgiveness and protection. We depend on God in body, soul, and spirit. We seek to do his will in every circumstance.¹¹² Imagine the spiritual formation that might occur in our lives if we prayed this prayer each day, giving our lives to Jesus daily, and choosing daily to live in his will. Remember our lesson from last Sunday. The risen Christ lives in, with, and through us in order that our story becomes his story and we can do the things that Jesus did. We practice grace. We show each other mercy. We help our neighbor. We give voice to the voiceless. We speak good news to those in despair. Pentecost and Ordinary Time bring all of that together. This is where the rubber meets the road.

The story goes like this. It was a normal rush-hour day in a New York City airport. Commuters raced down concourses to make their flight. Men in heavy coats swinging their briefcases and women in high-heels loaded down with cumbersome shoulder bags. Each one of them skidding around vendors and carts, corners and counters in a mad rush to reach their gate before the doors close. They push their way through crowds of people, bumping and pounding anything in their paths.

Suddenly, everyone heard the crash. The fruit stand teetered for a moment and then toppled onto the floor. Apples, oranges, bananas all rolled helter-skelter up and down the concourse. Then the girl behind the counter burst into tears, fell to her knees, and began to sweep her hands across the floor, searching for the fruit. “What am I going to do?” she cried. “It’s all ruined! It’s all bruised! I can’t sell this!”

One man, seeing her distress as he ran by, stopped and came back. He got down on the floor with the girl and began putting apples and oranges and bananas back into baskets. And it was then, as he watched her continue to sweep her hands across the floor frantically, that he realized she was blind. “They’re all ruined!” she kept crying.

The man took two fifty dollar bills out of his wallet and pressed them into her hand. “Here,” he said as he prepared to go, “here is one hundred dollars to pay for the damage that has been done.” The girl straightened up. She began to grope the air, looking

112. Gross, 236.

for him. “Mister,” the blind girl called out, “Mister, wait...” He paused and turned to look back into her blind eyes. “Mister,” she said, “are you Jesus?”¹¹³

I dare say choosing to live the Christian year is putting ourselves at that treacherous intersection Jeremiah spoke of when he said, “Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). Are we searching for the ancient paths? Are we walking in the good ways of Jesus? Have we become the kind of people who would stop to help a stranger pick up apples and oranges and bananas—laying aside our own to-do list, which could seem much bigger than any of those things? This is the goal of Christian year spirituality. That we would live in, with, and through Jesus—but also that we would live as Jesus.

The Spanish saint, Teresa of Avila, has written:

Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.¹¹⁴

I believe if Saint Paul had known Saint Avila, they would have been great friends. Paul had similar thoughts in his letter to the Corinthians when he said by God’s Spirit we have all been baptized into one body and each of us has a role to play. We are the eyes, the feet, the hands, the voice by which Jesus is made known.

“Are you Jesus?” That’s not a question you probably get asked a lot. But the truth is, people are silently asking that question of us every day. And the answer Christian year spirituality forms in us, if we live it with consistency, is a resounding “Yes!”

Our study of the Christian year has come to a close. And next Sunday brings with it a new year. Next Sunday is the First Sunday in Advent, the very beginning of a new Christian year. We have been practicing for eight weeks and now it is go time! The lights are about to dim and the curtain is soon to go up. It is time to live as Jesus.

Are you ready?

This is the season of Pentecost.

This is Ordinary Time.

This is the Christian year.

Thanks be to God.

Pray with me...

Hymn of Response #638.....NUN DANKET

Now Thank We All Our God

Time of Reflection (Evaluations)

Word of Thanksgiving (Gratitude for everyone’s participation in my D.Min. project)

113. Chittister, 177-179.

114. St. Teresa of Avila, <http://www.catholicity.com/prayer/prayer-of-saint-teresa-of-avila.html>.

Choral Benediction #122.....STORY OF JESUS
Tell Me the Story of Jesus

Benediction.....Jeff Hayes

Go into the world and tell the story of Jesus. And by your telling, may others
receive God's salvation and Spirit. Amen.

Postlude.....Susan Hocking
Tell Me the Story of Jesus

APPENDIX E
EVALUATIONS (pp 287-339)

This includes all survey, evaluation, and interview questions, alongside the results for each therein.

E.1 Weekly Evaluations

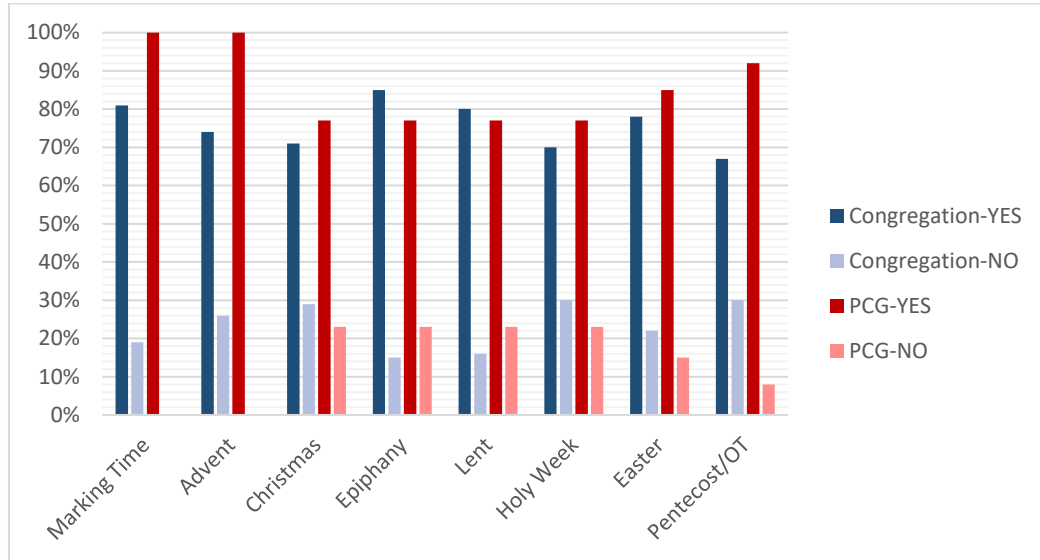
E.2 Pre- and Post- Project Surveys

E.3 Positive Control Group Post-Project Interview

APPENDIX E.1

WEEKLY EVALUATIONS

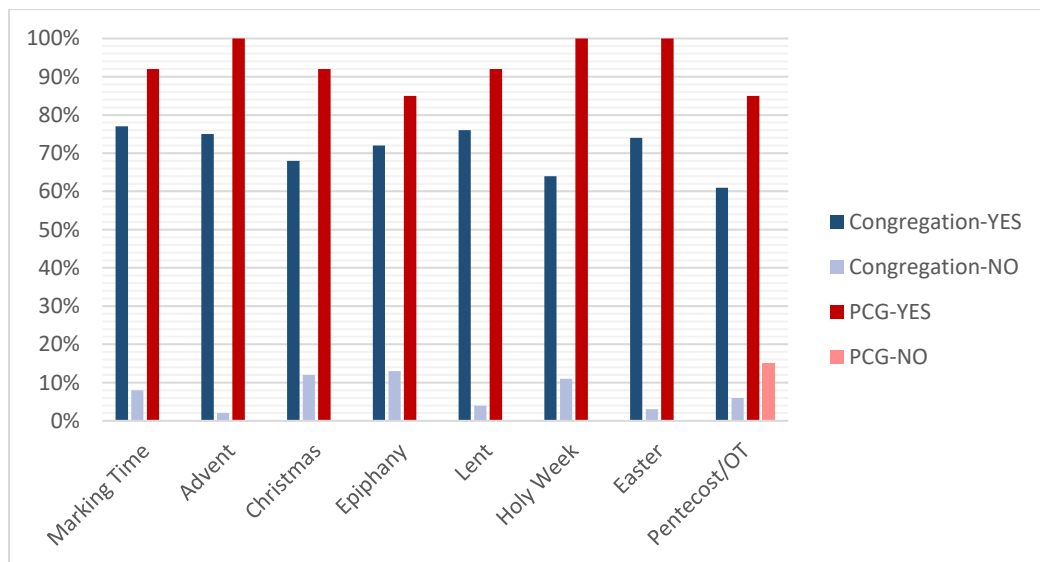
1. Did you attend a Sunday School class today?



No Answer: Marking Time 0%
 Advent 0%
 Christmas 0%
 Epiphany 0%

Lent-Congregation 4%
 Holy Week 0%
 Easter 0%
 Pentecost/OT-Congregation 3%

2. Did your Sunday School leader teach the lesson on _____ from the workbook?

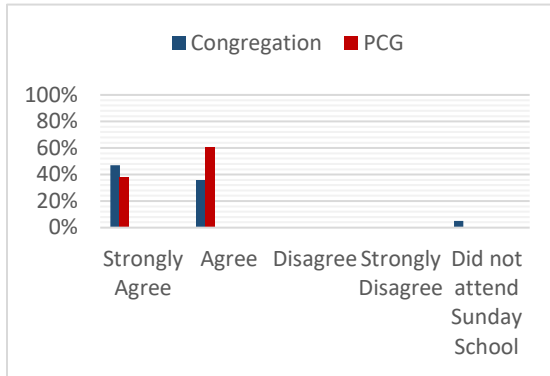


No Answer: Marking Time- Congregation 13%; PCG 8%
 Advent- Congregation 13%
 Christmas- Congregation 18%; PCG 8%
 Epiphany- Congregation 13%; PCG 15%

Lent- Congregation 20%; PCG 8%
 Holy Week- Congregation 25%
 Easter- Congregation 23%
 Pentecost/OT- Congregation 33%

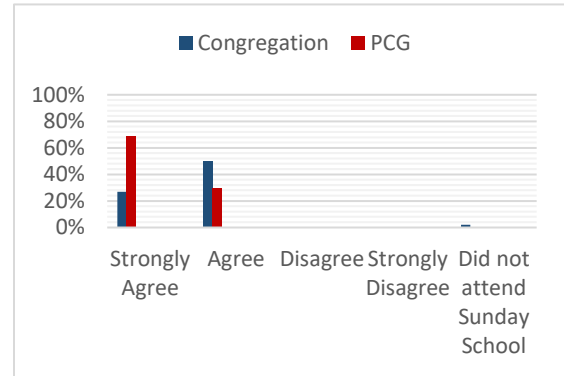
3. Did you find the Sunday School teaching contributed to your overall understanding of _____?

Marking Time



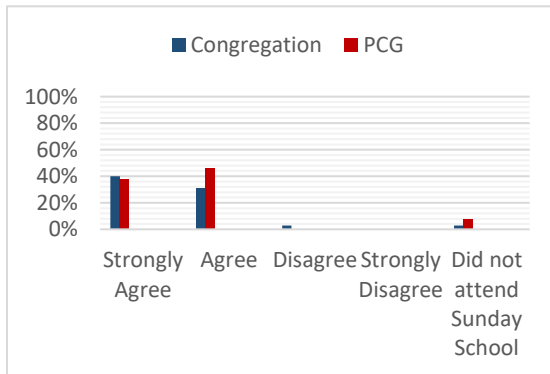
No Answer: Congregation 11%

Advent



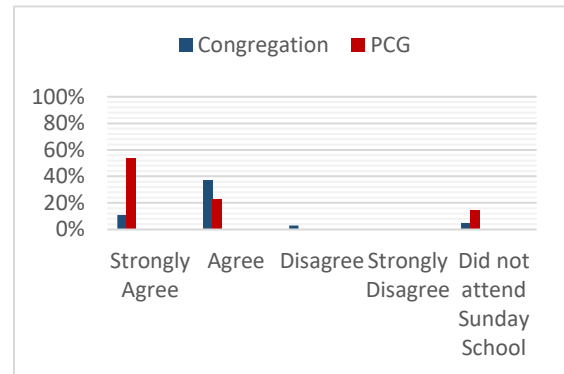
No Answer: Congregation 20%

Christmas

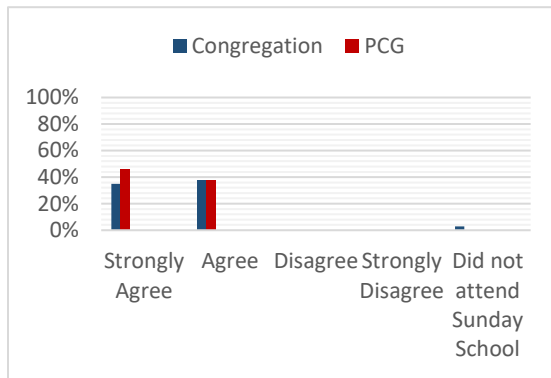


No Answer: Congregation 21%; PCG 8%

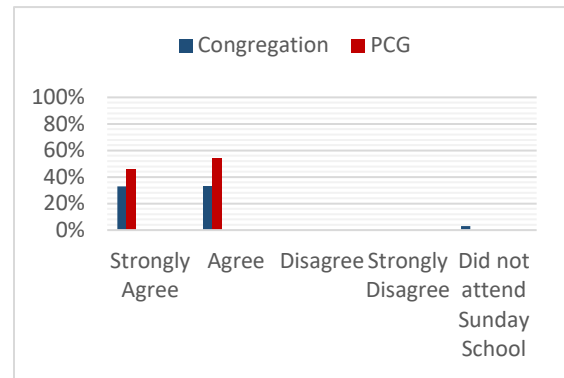
Epiphany



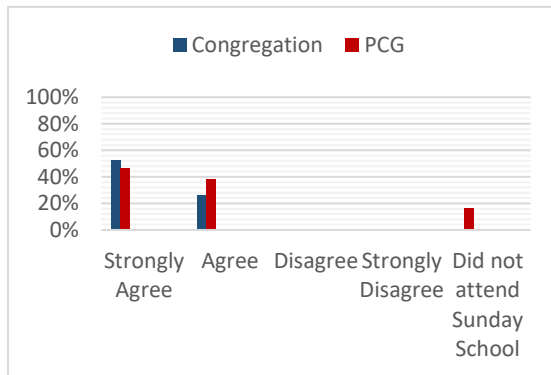
No Answer: Congregation 5%; PCG 8%

Lent

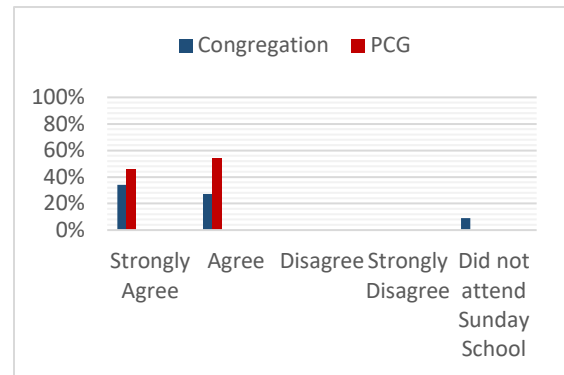
No Answer: Congregation 23%; PCG 16%

Holy Week (Triduum)

No Answer: Congregation 33%

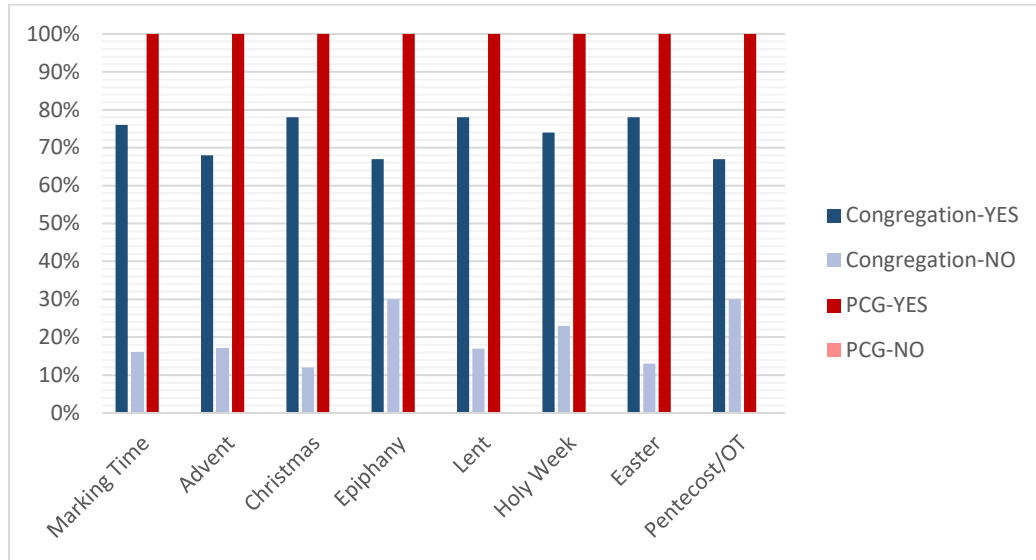
Easter

No Answer: Congregation 22%

Pentecost/Ordinary Time

No Answer: Congregation 30%

4. Did you read the materials in the study workbook pertaining to _____?

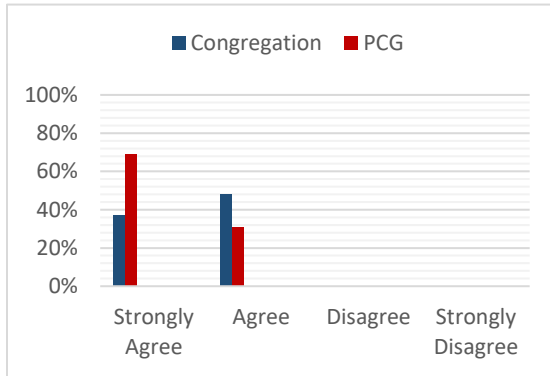


No Answer: Marking Time- Congregation 8%
 Advent- Congregation 13%
 Christmas 0%
 Epiphany- Congregation 3%

Lent- Congregation 4%
 Holy Week- Congregation 3%
 Easter- Congregation 9%
 Pentecost/OT- Congregation 3%

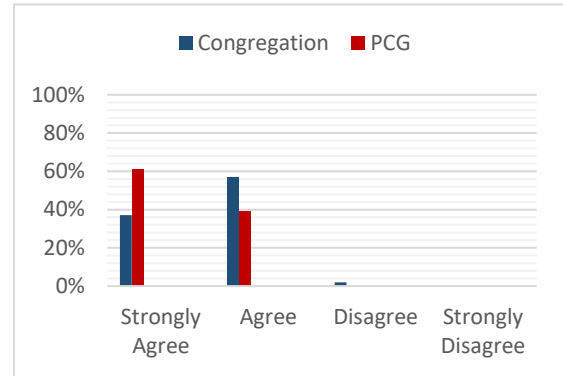
5. Did you find the materials in the workbook contributed to your understanding of _____?

Marking Time



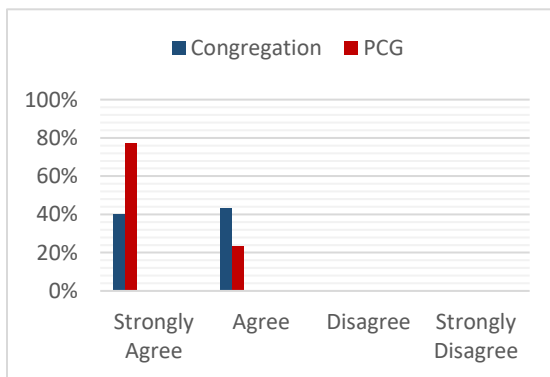
No Answer: Congregation 13%

Advent



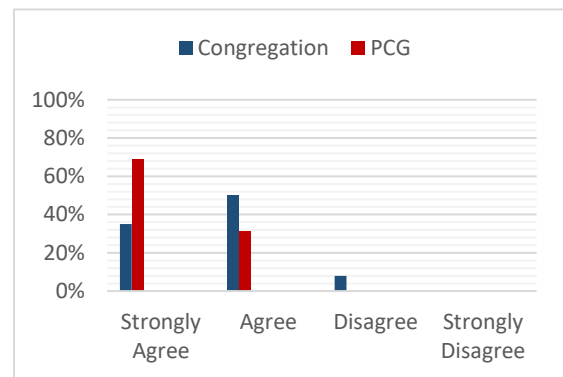
No Answer: Congregation 2%

Christmas

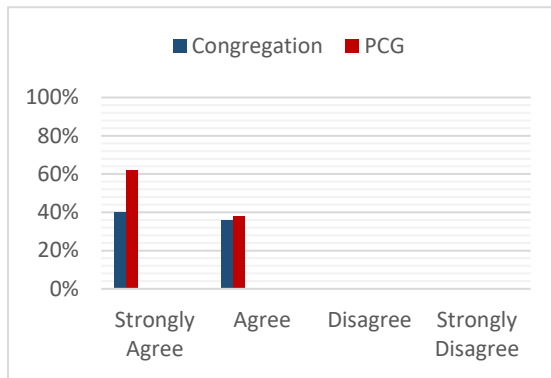


No Answer: Congregation 17%

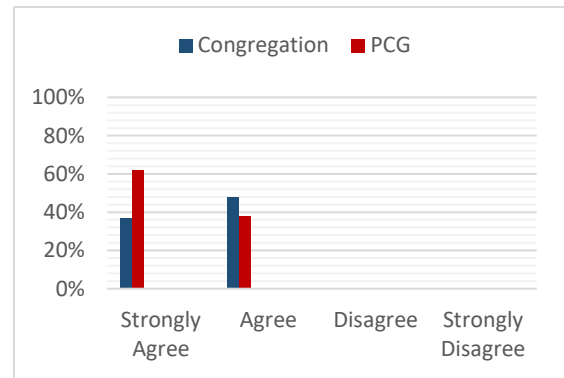
Epiphany



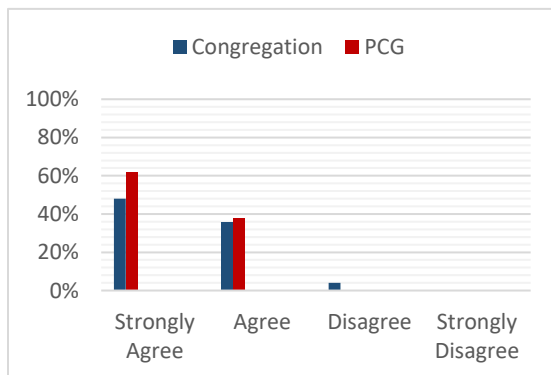
No Answer: Congregation 7%

Lent

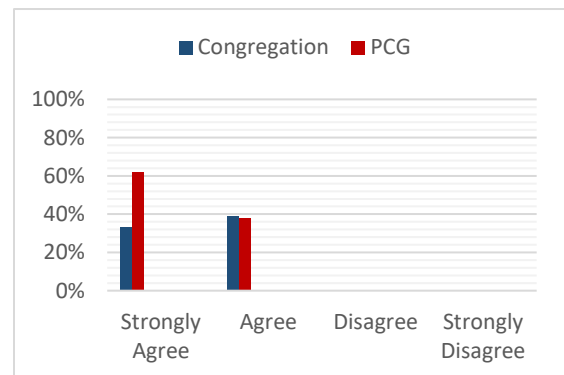
No Answer: Congregation 24%

Holy Week (Triduum)

No Answer: Congregation 15%

Easter

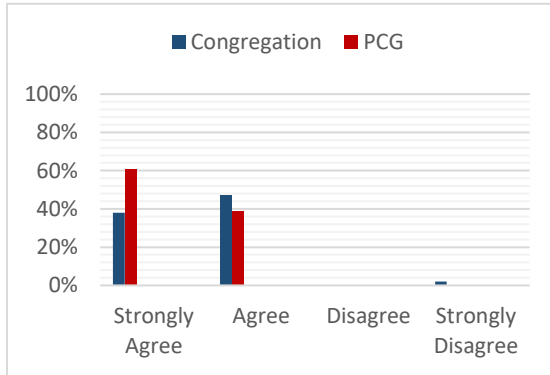
No Answer: Congregation 12%

Pentecost/Ordinary Time

No Answer: Congregation 28%

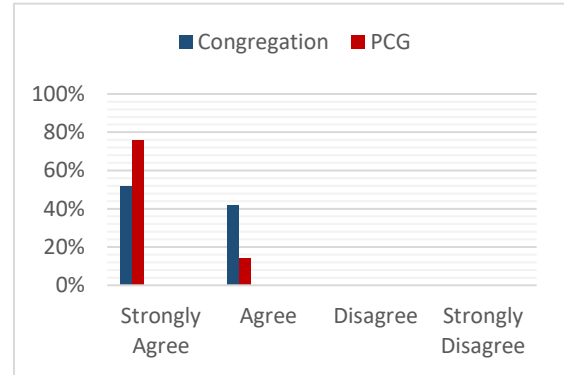
6. I found the sermon to be a clear and thorough presentation of _____ spirituality?

Marking Time



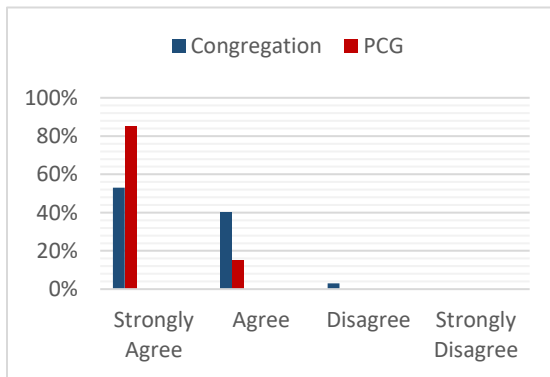
No Answer: Congregation 11%

Advent



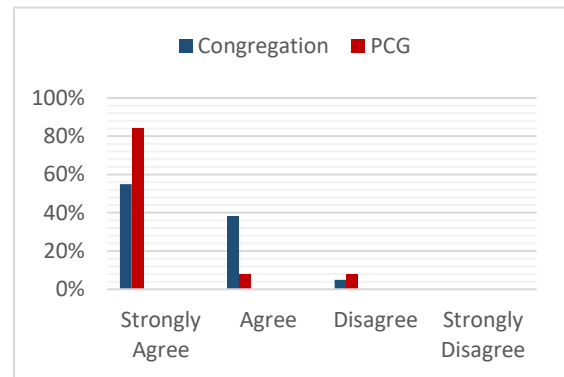
No Answer: Congregation 5%

Christmas

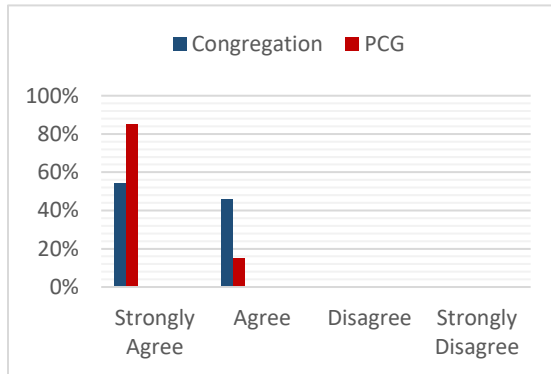


No Answer: Congregation 3%

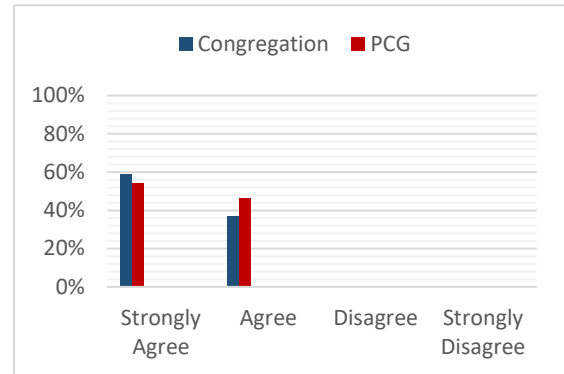
Epiphany



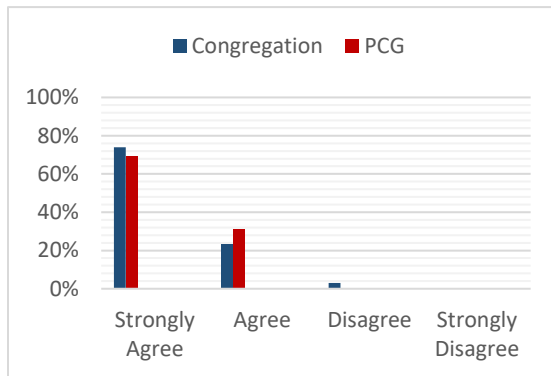
No Answer: Congregation 2%

Lent

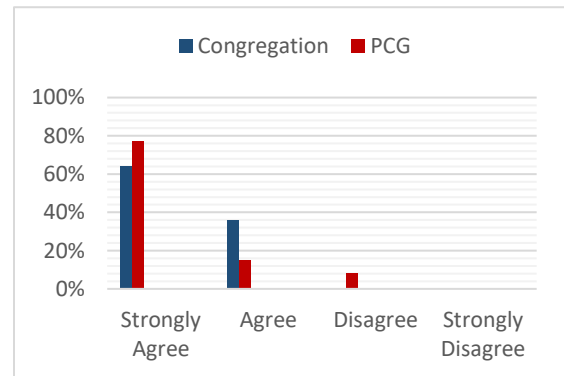
No Answer: 0%

Holy Week (Triduum)

No Answer: Congregation 4%

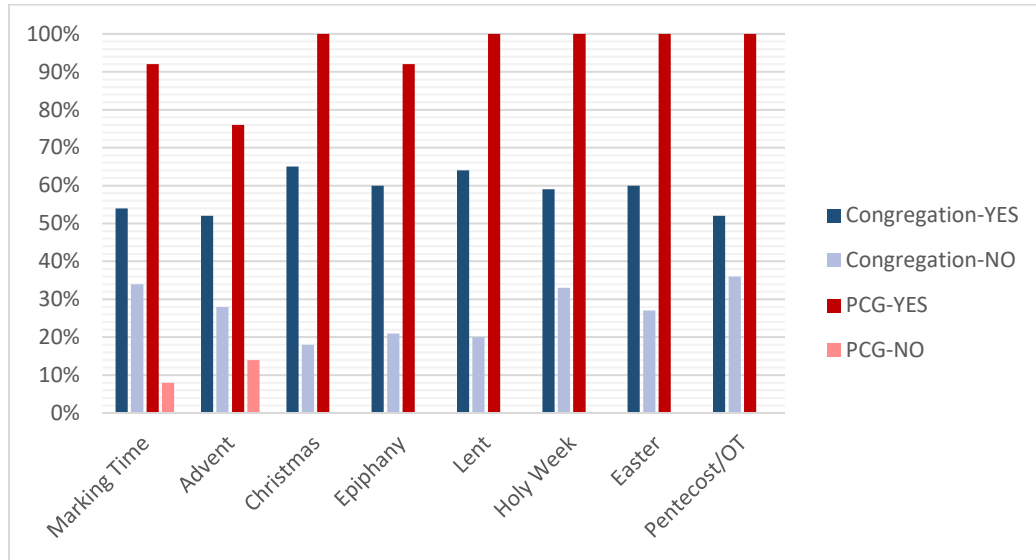
Easter

No Answer: 0%

Pentecost/Ordinary Time

No Answer: Congregation 5%

7. I completed the outline in the study workbook pertaining to the sermon.

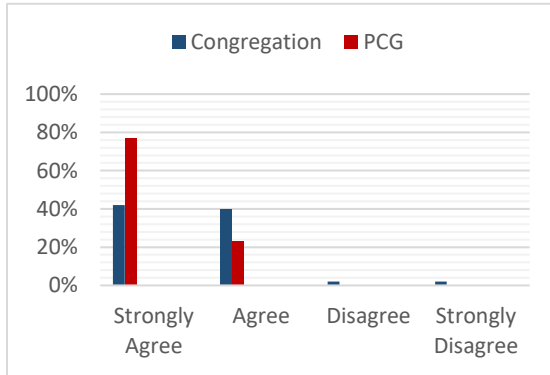


No Answer: Marking Time- Congregation 11%
 Advent- Congregation 19%
 Christmas- Congregation 17%
 Epiphany- Congregation 19%; PCG 8%

Lent- Congregation 16%
 Holy Week- Congregation 8%
 Easter- Congregation 13%
 Pentecost/OT- Congregation 12%

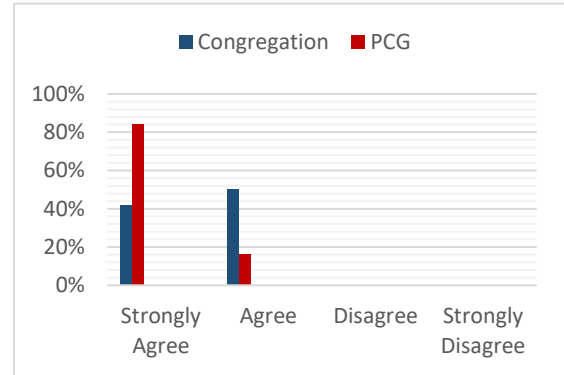
8. I understand the spiritual purpose of _____ in the Christian year.

Marking Time



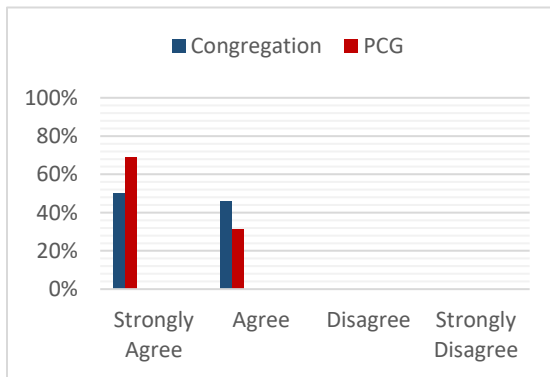
No Answer: Congregation 11%

Advent



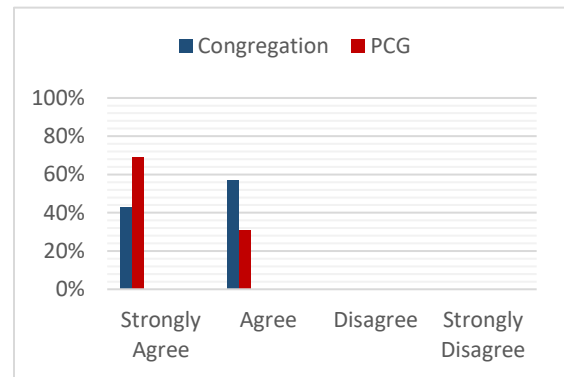
No Answer: Congregation 8%

Christmas



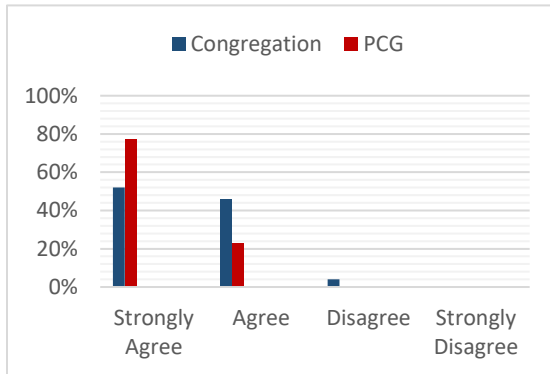
No Answer: Congregation 4%

Epiphany



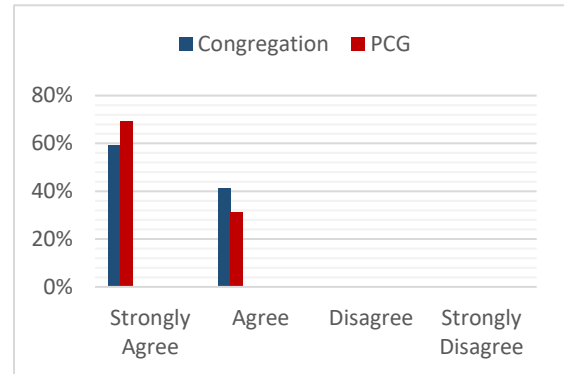
No Answer: 0%

Lent



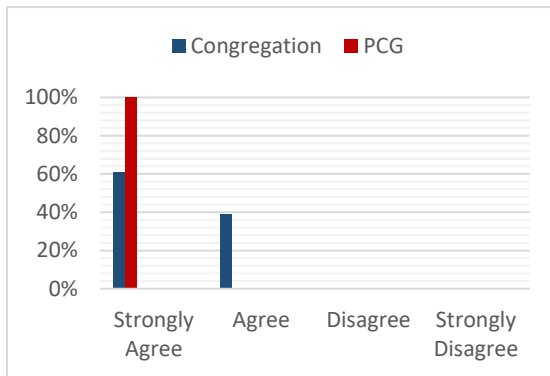
No Answer: 0%

Holy Week (Triduum)



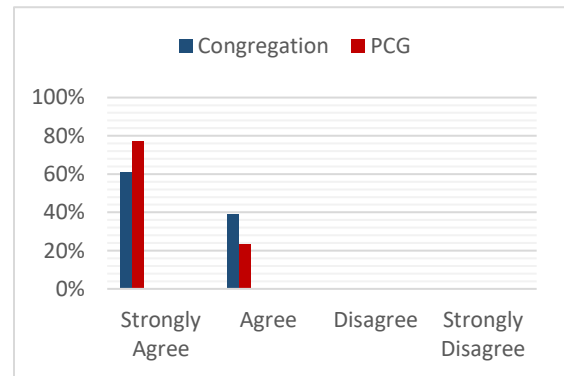
No Answer: 0%

Easter



No Answer: Congregation 21%

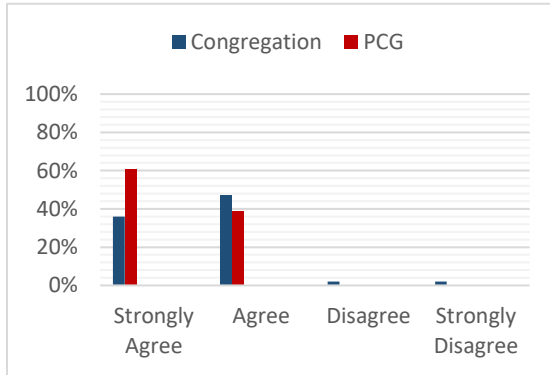
Pentecost/Ordinary Time



No Answer: Congregation 5%

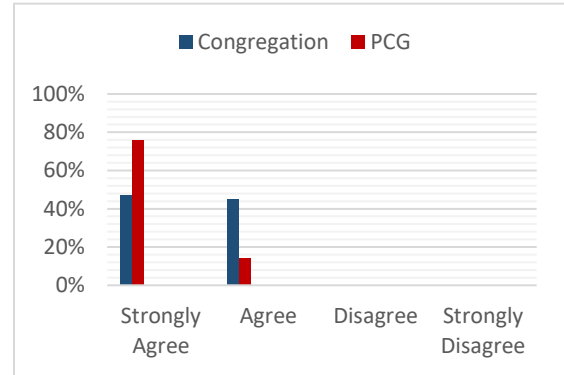
9. The worship service contributed to my overall understanding of _____.

Marking Time



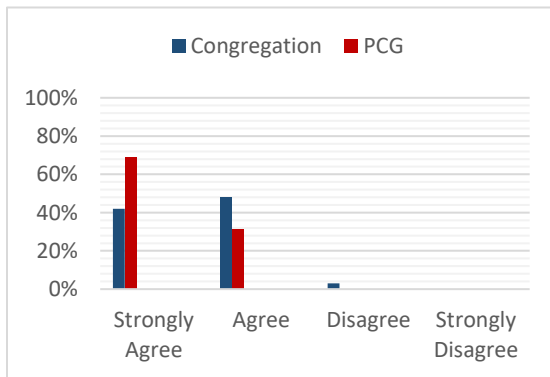
No Answer: Congregation 11%

Advent



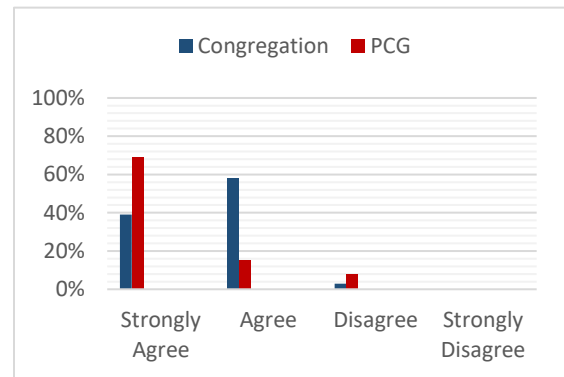
No Answer: Congregation 8%

Christmas

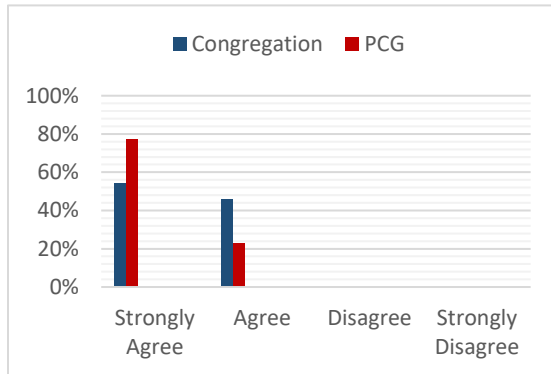


No Answer: Congregation 6%

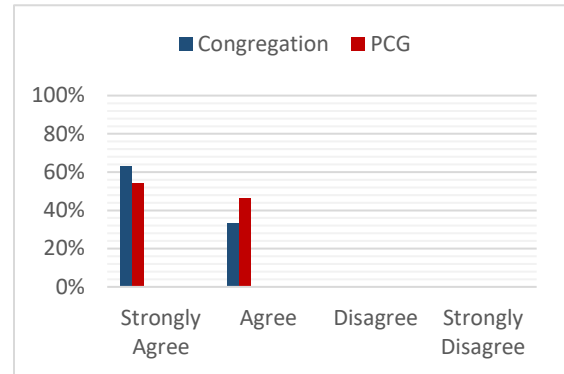
Epiphany



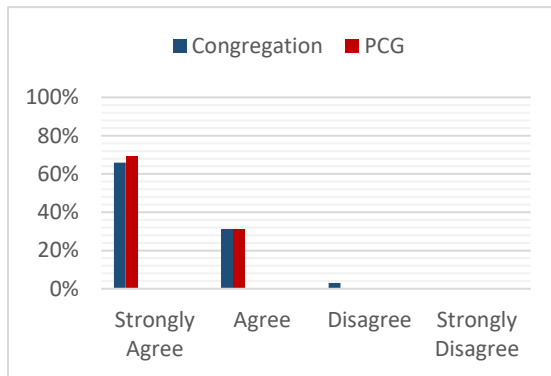
No Answer: PCG 8%

Lent

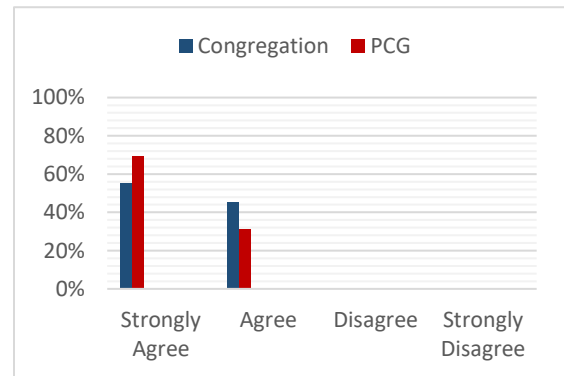
No Answer: 0%

Holy Week (Triduum)

No Answer: Congregation 4%

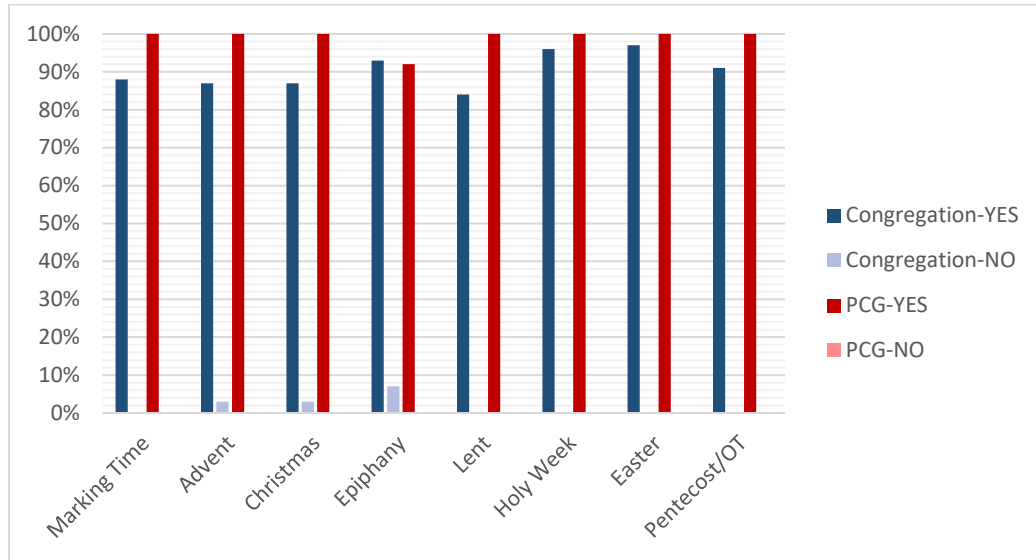
Easter

No Answer: Congregation 21%

Pentecost/Ordinary Time

No Answer: Congregation 5%

10. I would like our church to observe _____ in our spiritual worship.



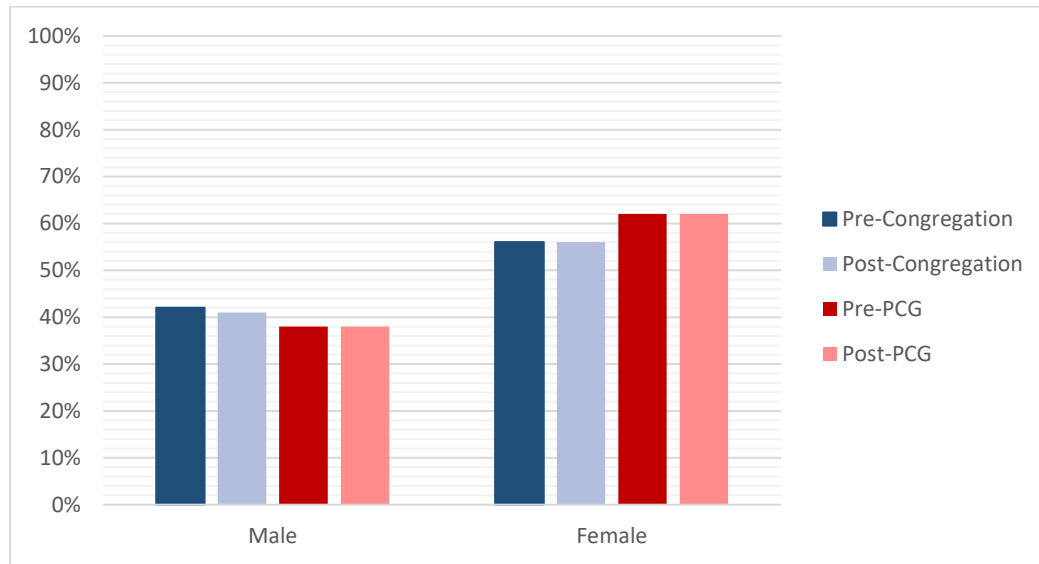
No Answer: Marking Time- Congregation 12%
 Advent- Congregation 10%
 Christmas- Congregation 9%
 Epiphany- PCG 8%

Lent- Congregation 16%
 Holy Week- Congregation 4%
 Easter- Congregation 3%
 Pentecost/OT- Congregation 9%

APPENDIX E.2

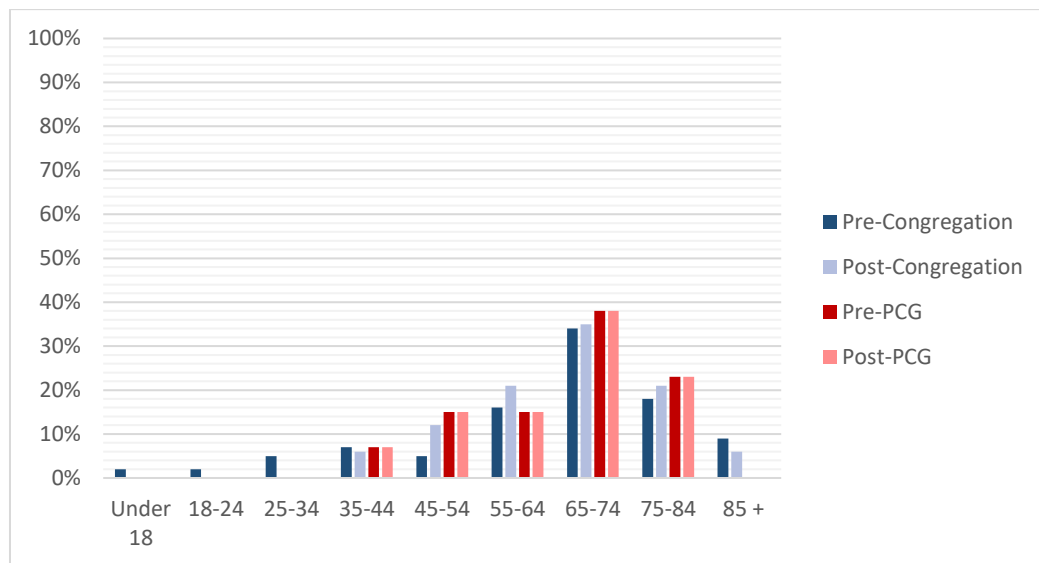
PRE- AND POST- PROJECT SURVEYS

1. What is your gender?



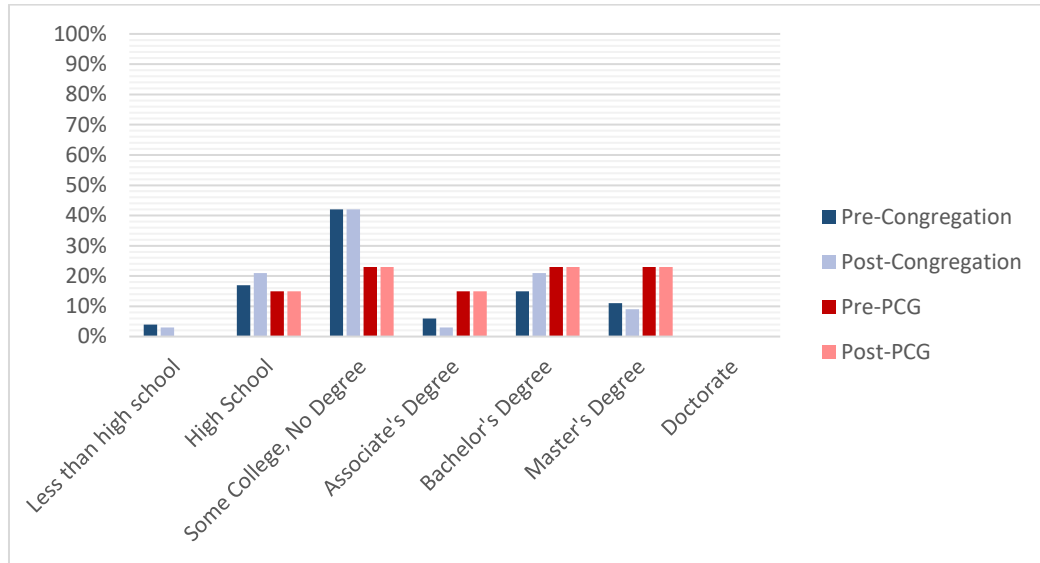
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 2%; Post-Congregation 3%

2. What is your age?



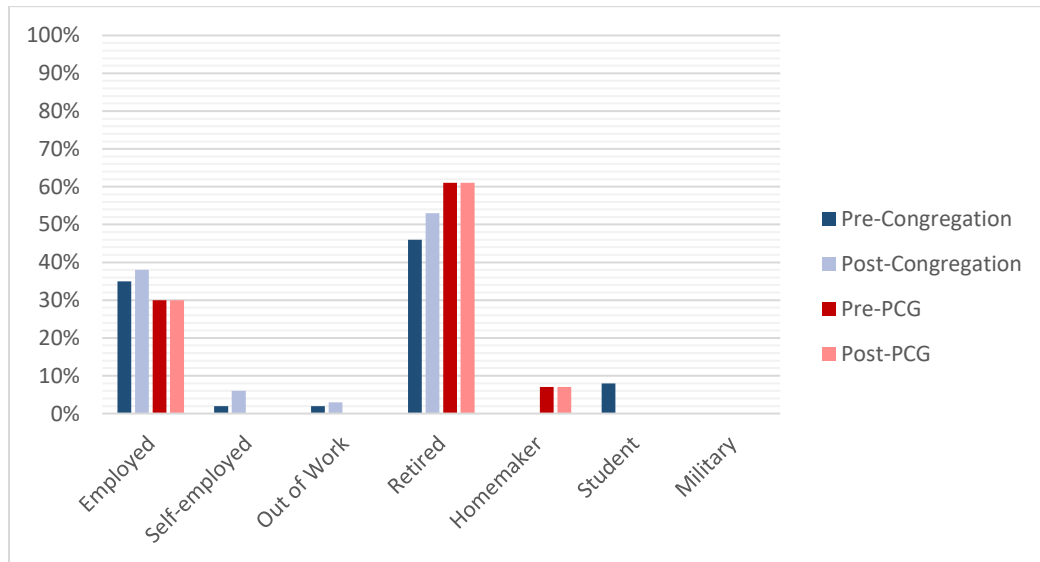
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 2%

11. What is your highest level of completed education?



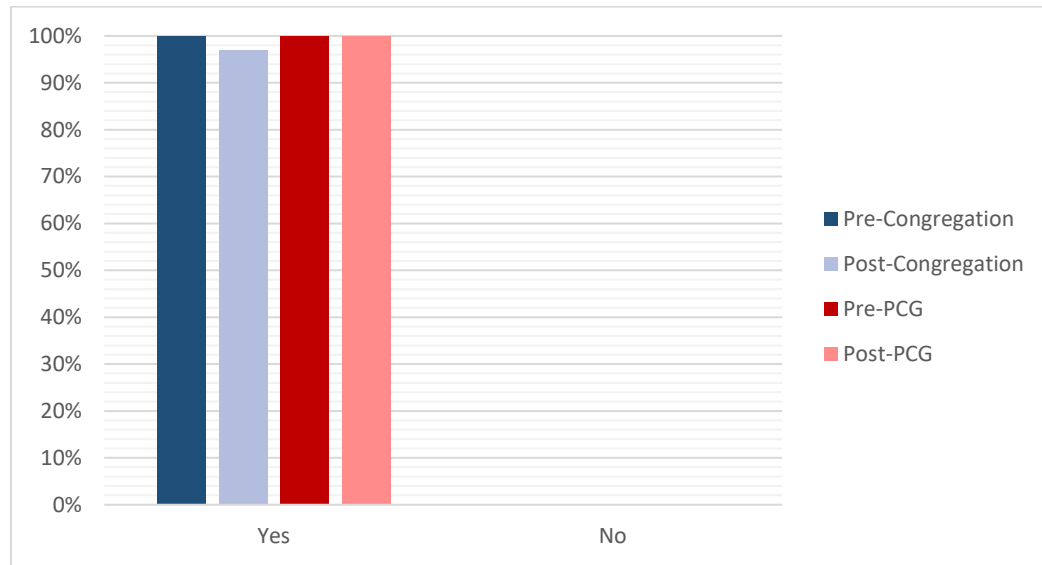
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 2%

12. What is your employment status?



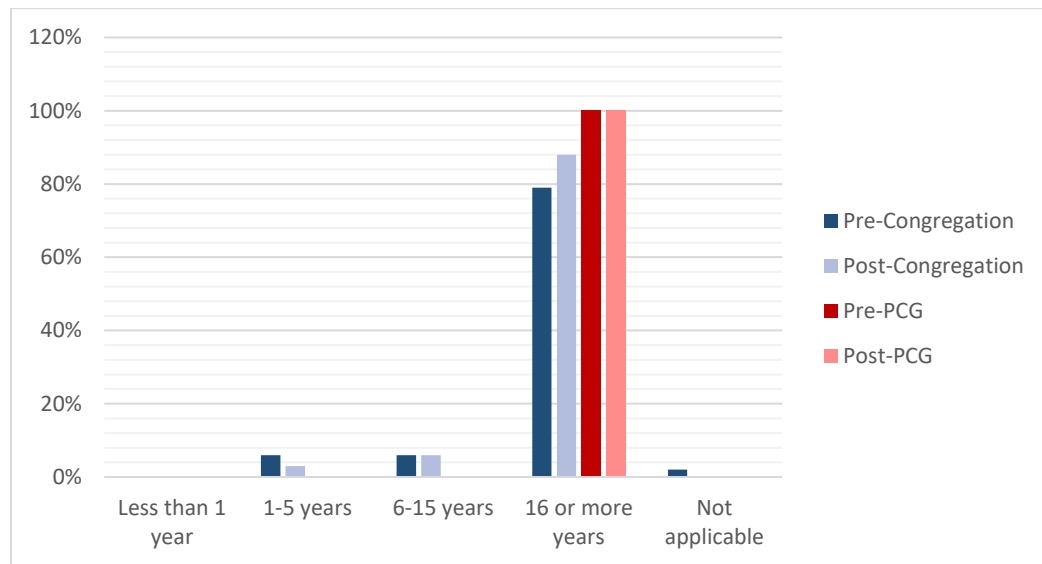
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 2%

13. Do you call yourself a Christian?



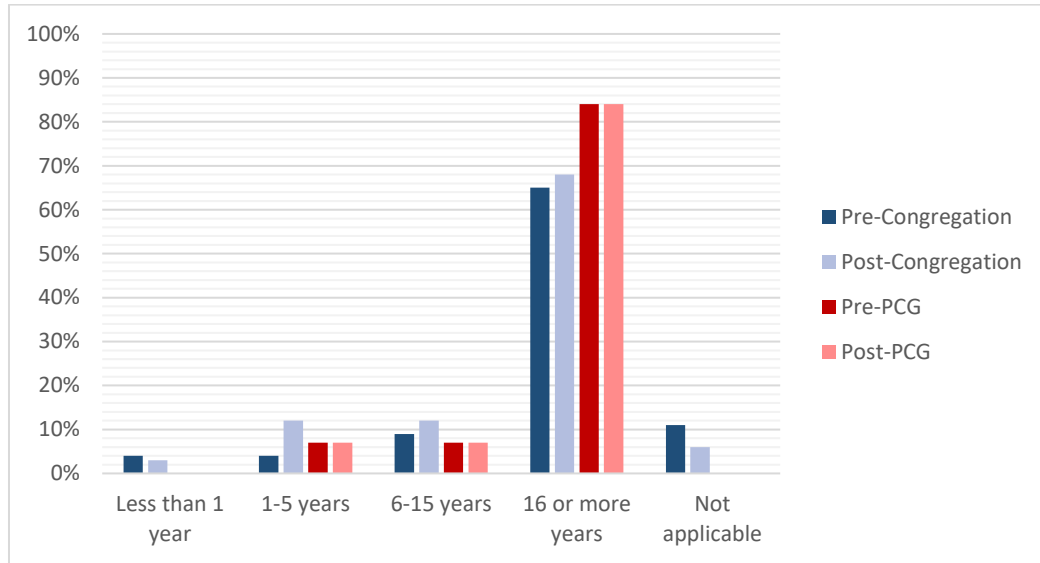
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 4%; Post-Congregation 3%

14. If you answered “yes” to the previous question (#5), how many years?



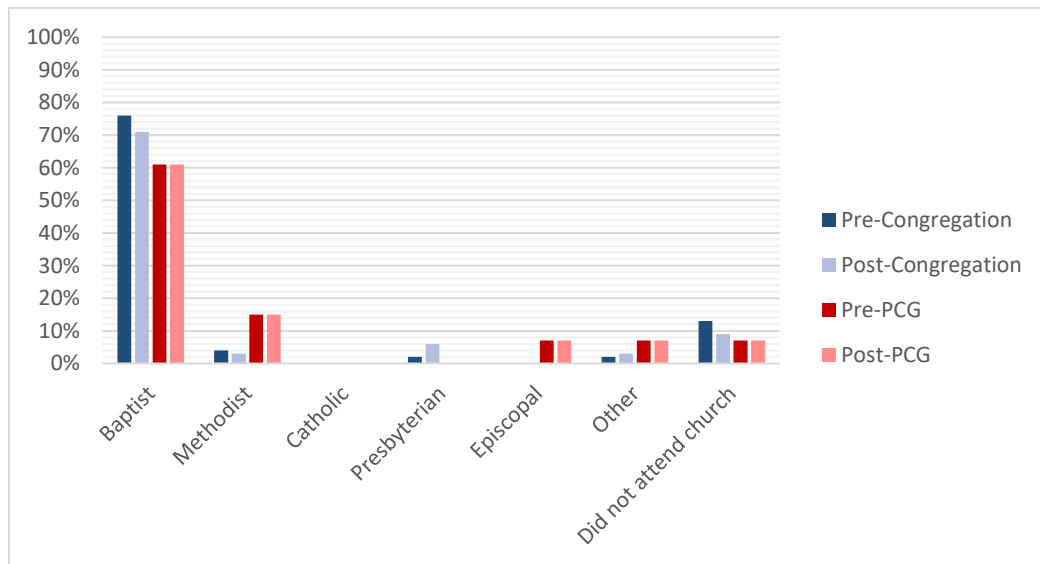
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 4%; Post-Congregation 3%

15. How many years have you been a member of Calvary Baptist Church?



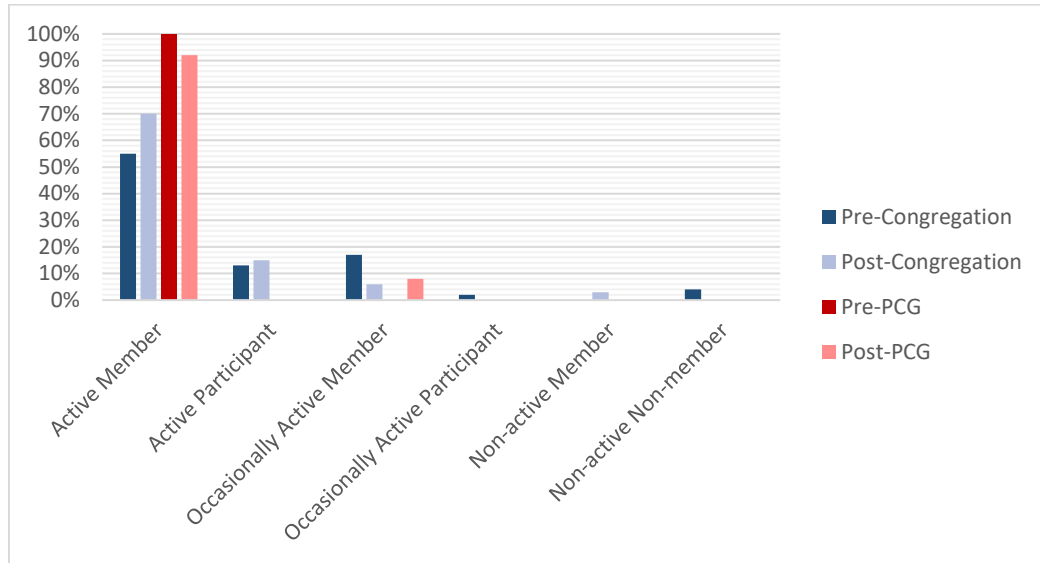
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 4%

16. Before joining this congregation, what type of congregation were you a part of?



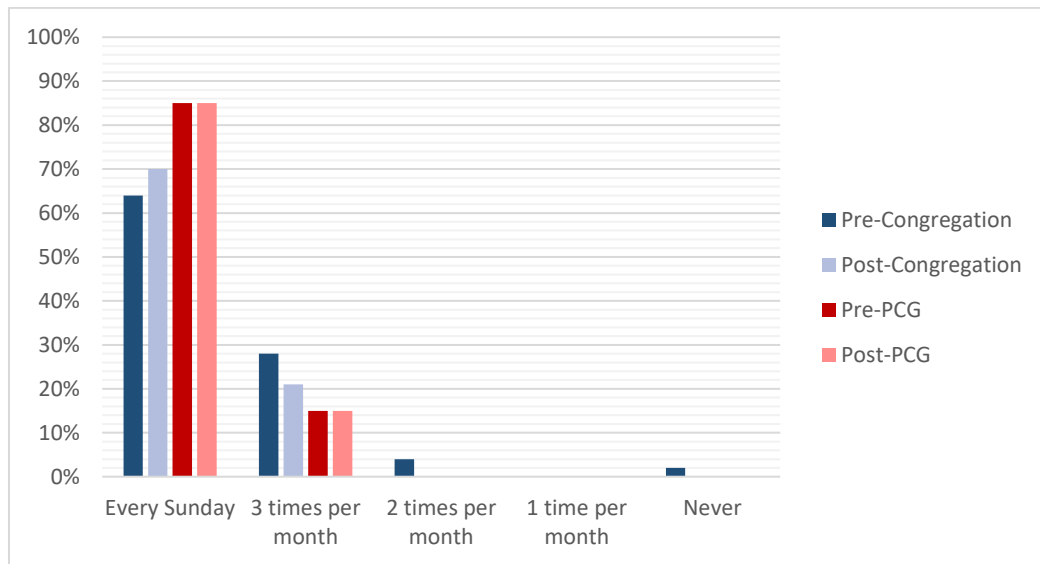
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 4%; Post-Congregation 3%

17. How would you classify your involvement in the church?



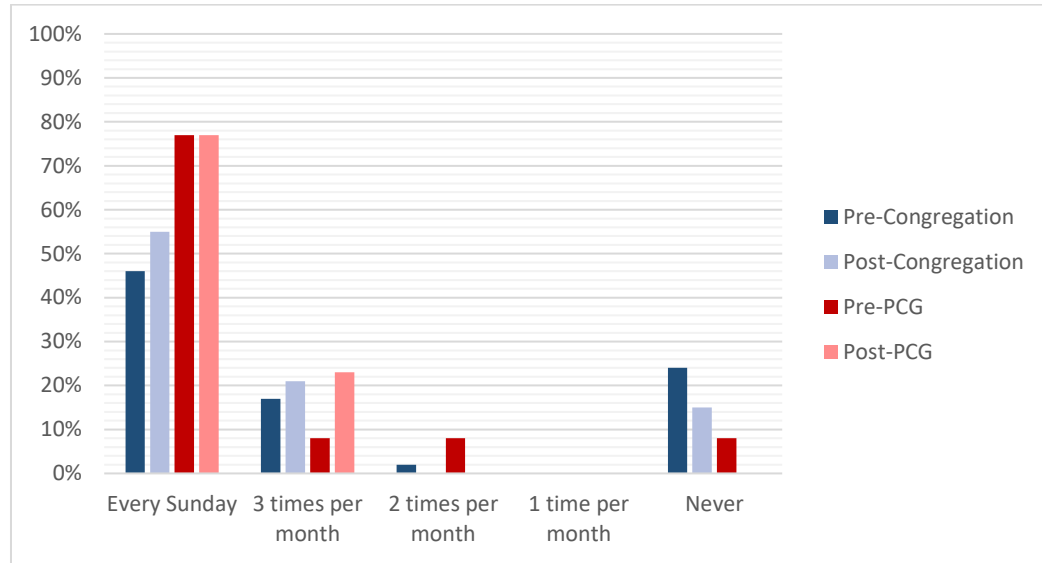
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 6%; Post-Congregation 6%

18. How often do you attend Sunday morning worship at Calvary?



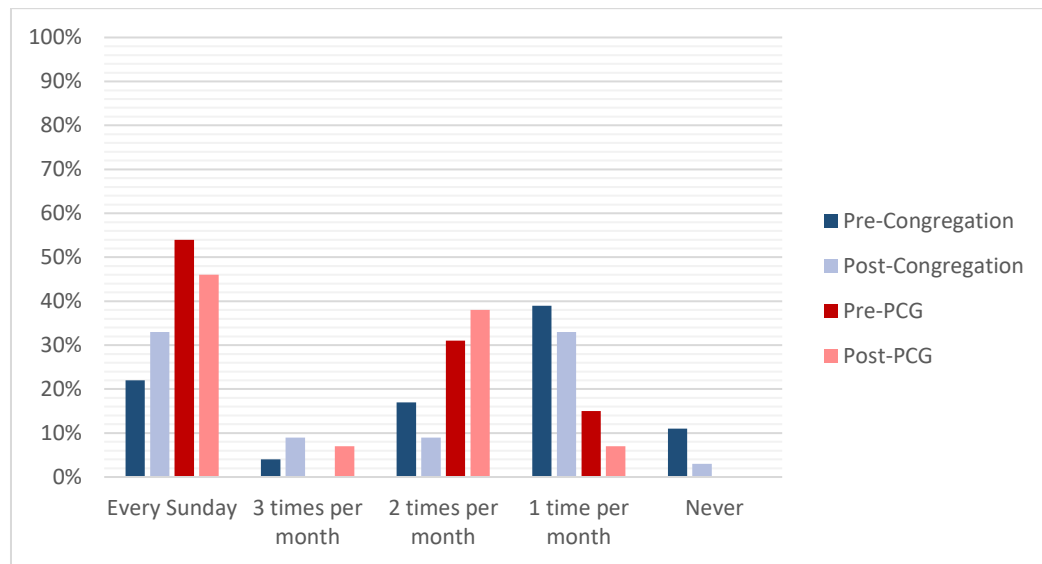
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 2%; Post-Congregation 9%

19. How often do you attend a Sunday School class at Calvary?



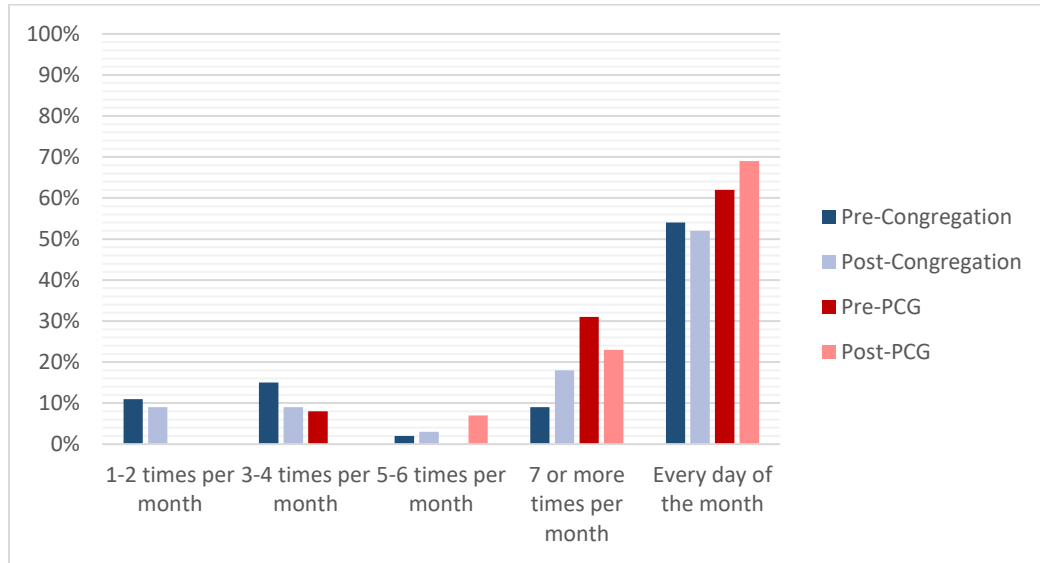
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 9%

20. How often do you tithe or give an offering to Calvary?



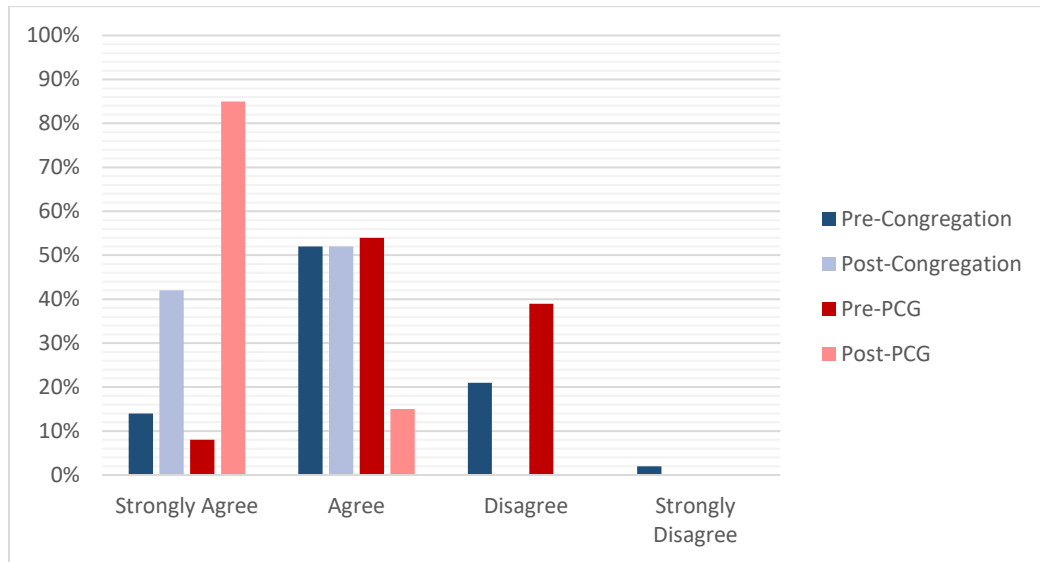
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 7%; Post-Congregation 12%

21. How often do you spend personal time in prayer and/or Bible study?



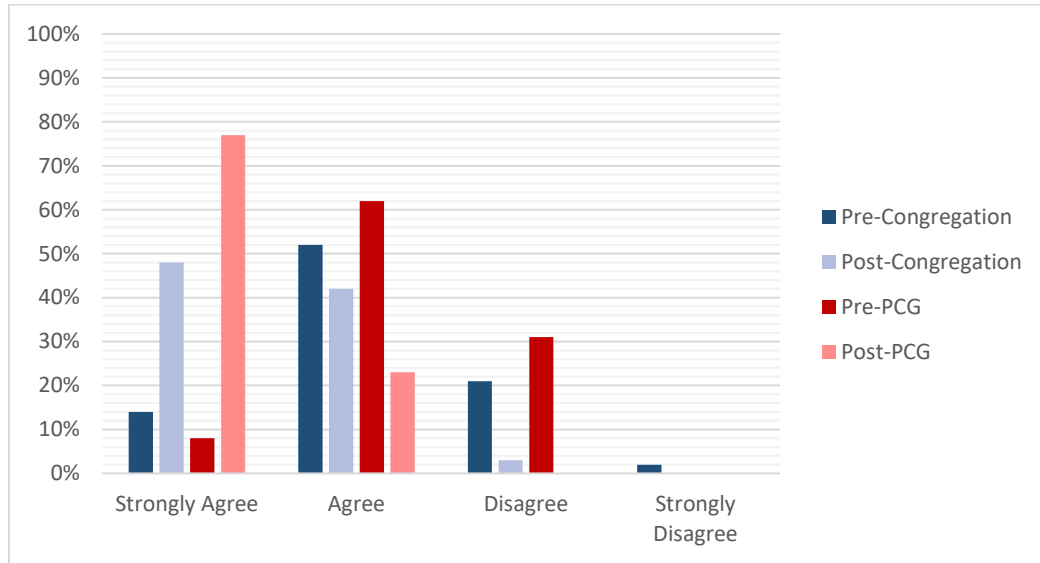
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 9%; Post-Congregation 9%

22. I have a strong understanding of the Christian year.



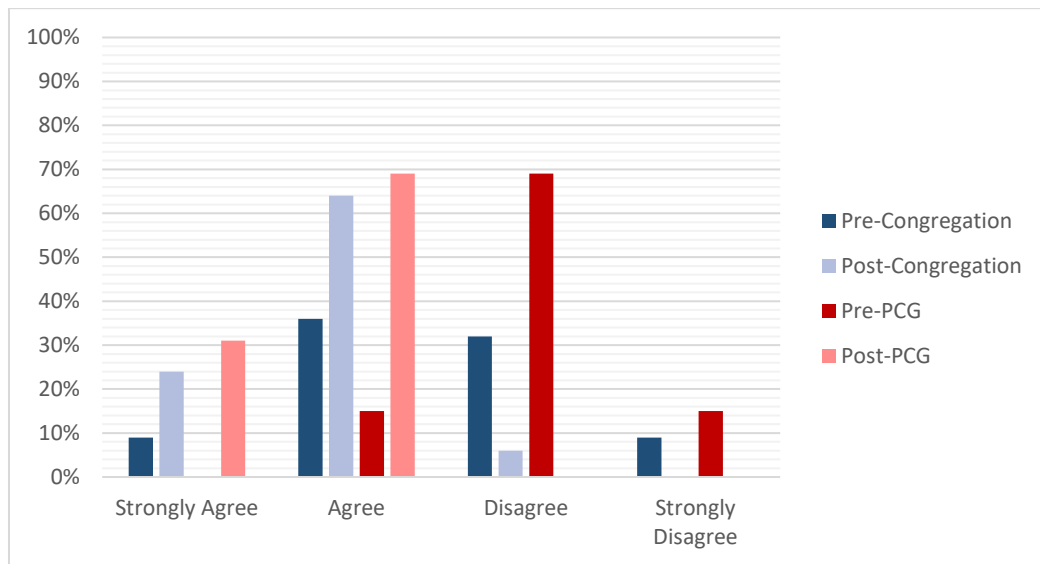
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 6%

23. I understand the purpose of the Christian year.



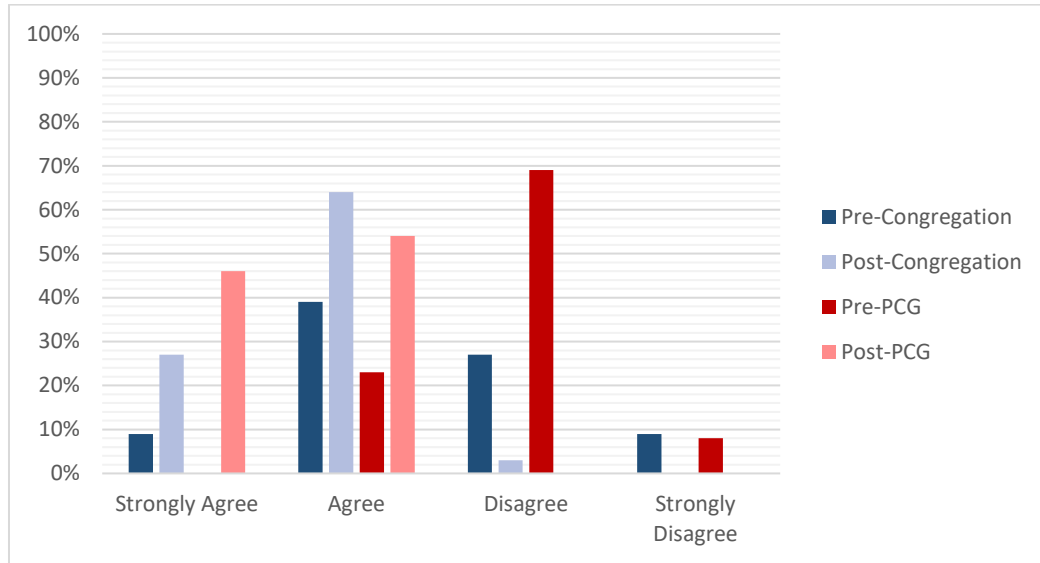
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 6%

24. I know the colors of the Christian year and their meaning.



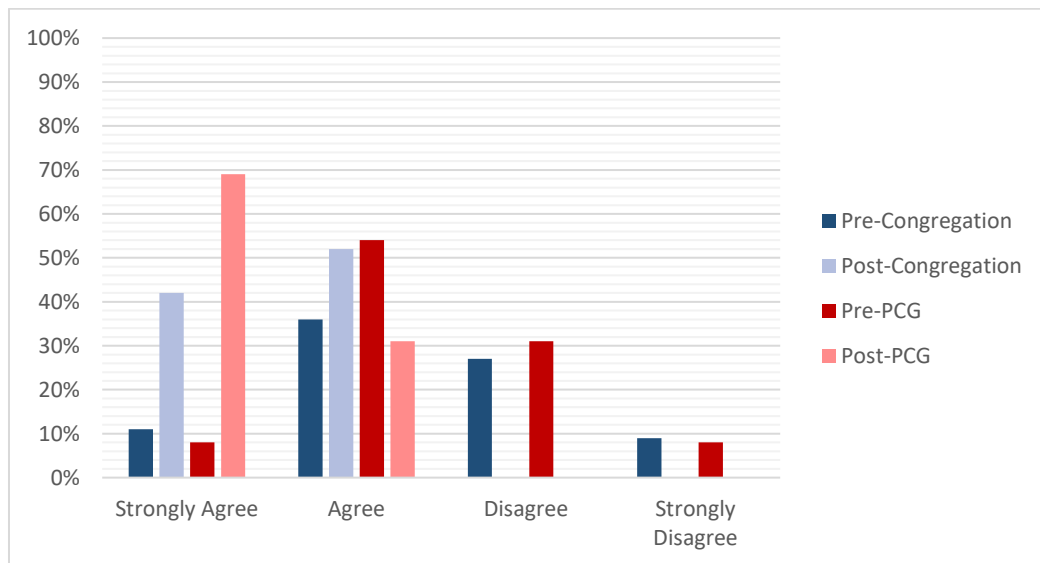
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 14%; Post-Congregation 6%

25. I know the symbols of the Christian year and their meaning.



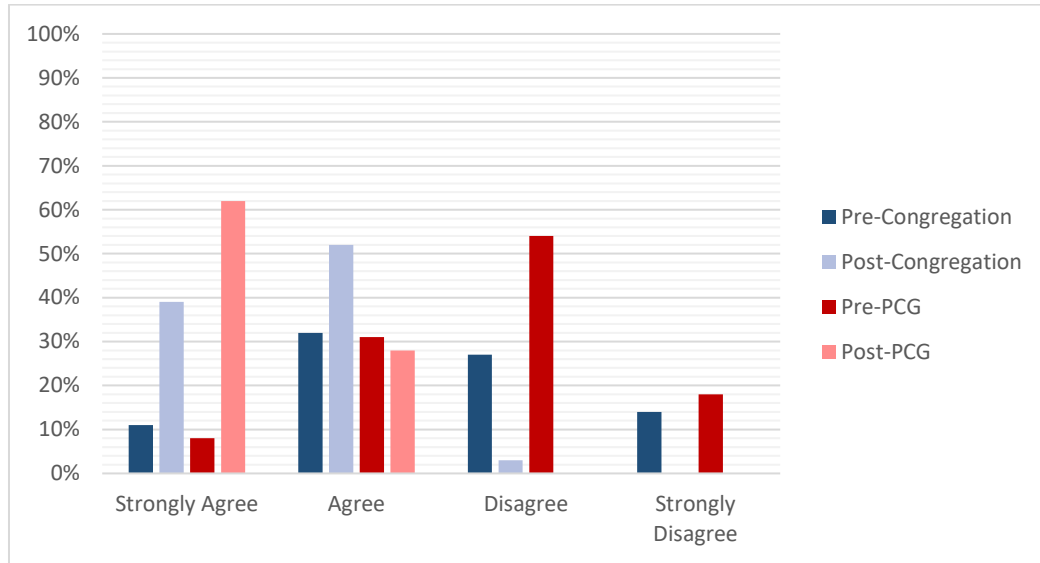
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 16%; Post-Congregation 6%

26. I know the cycle of the Christian year.



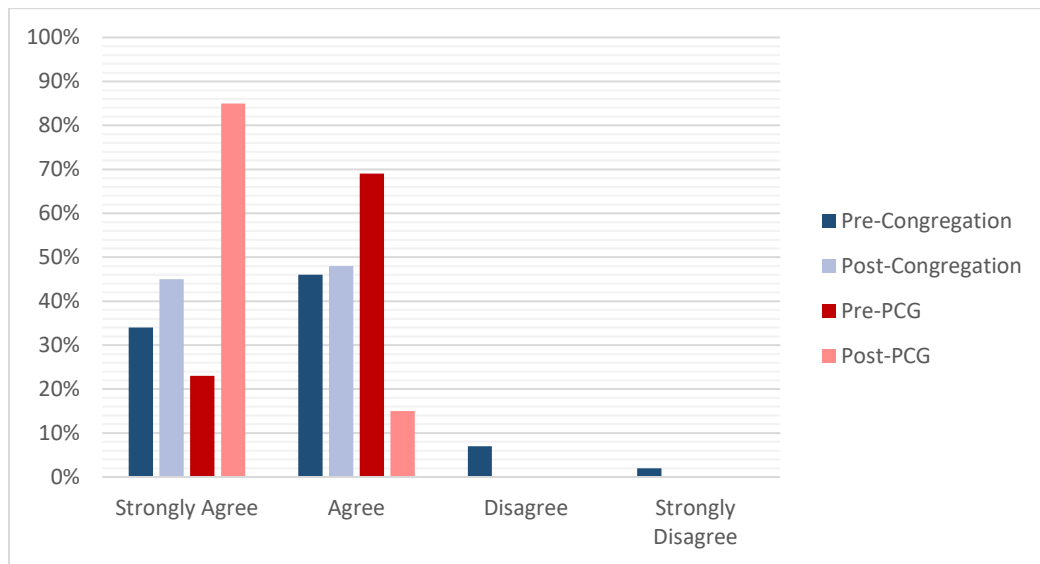
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 16%; Post-Congregation 6%

27. I understand Marking Time in the Christian year.



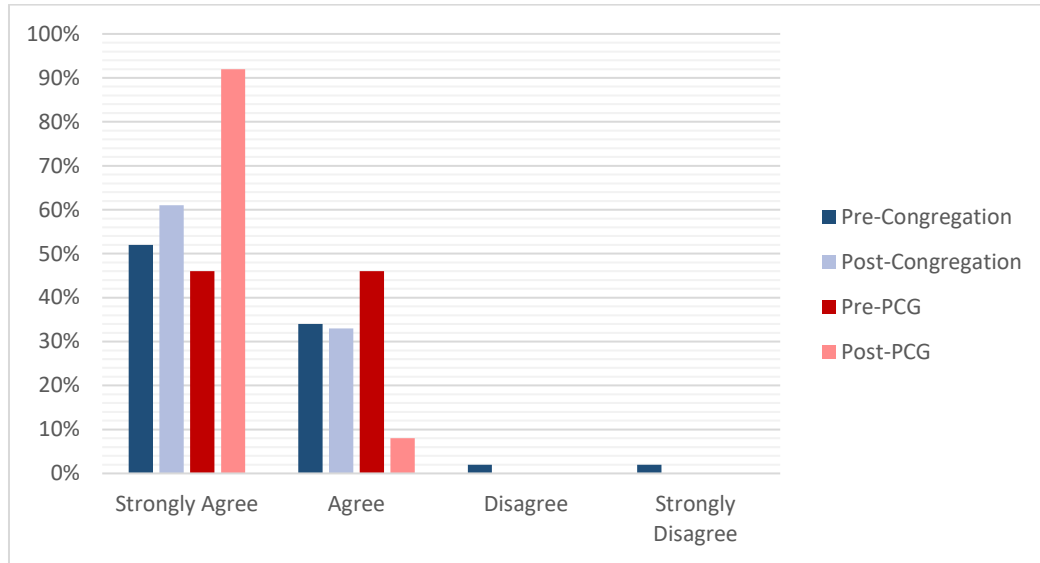
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 16%; Post-Congregation 6%

28. I understand the spiritual purpose of Advent in the Christian year.



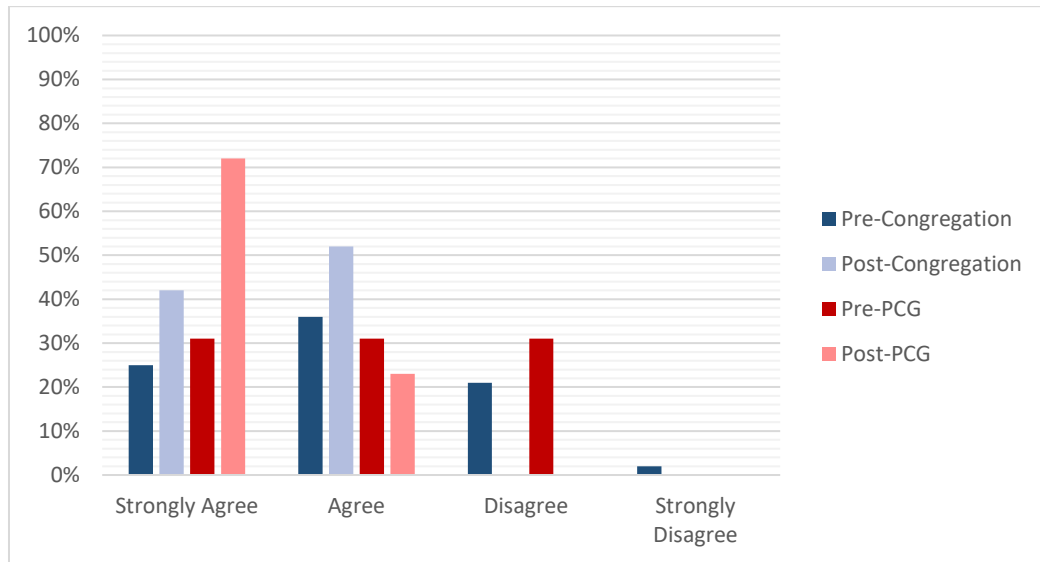
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 6%
Pre-PCG 8%

29. I understand the spiritual purpose of Christmas in the Christian year.



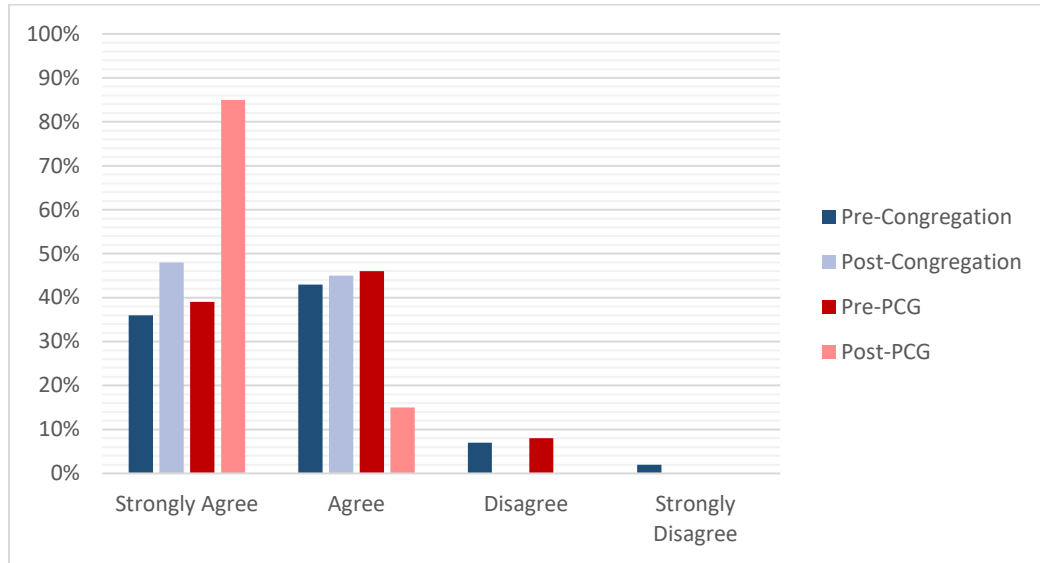
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 9%; Post-Congregation 6%
Pre-PCG 8%

30. I understand the spiritual purpose of Epiphany in the Christian year.



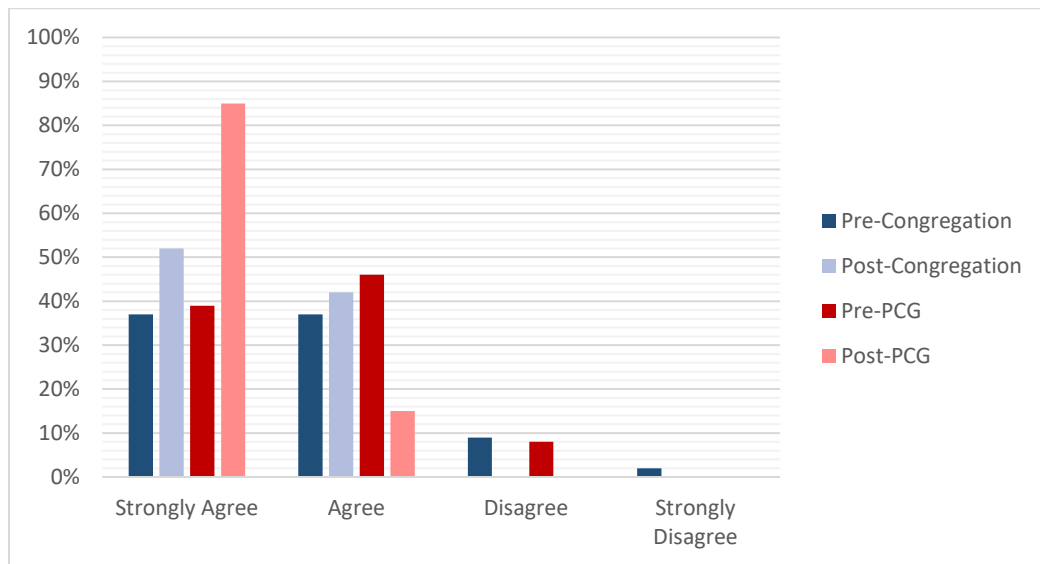
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 16%; Post-Congregation 6%
Pre-PCG 8%

31. I understand the spiritual purpose of Lent in the Christian year.



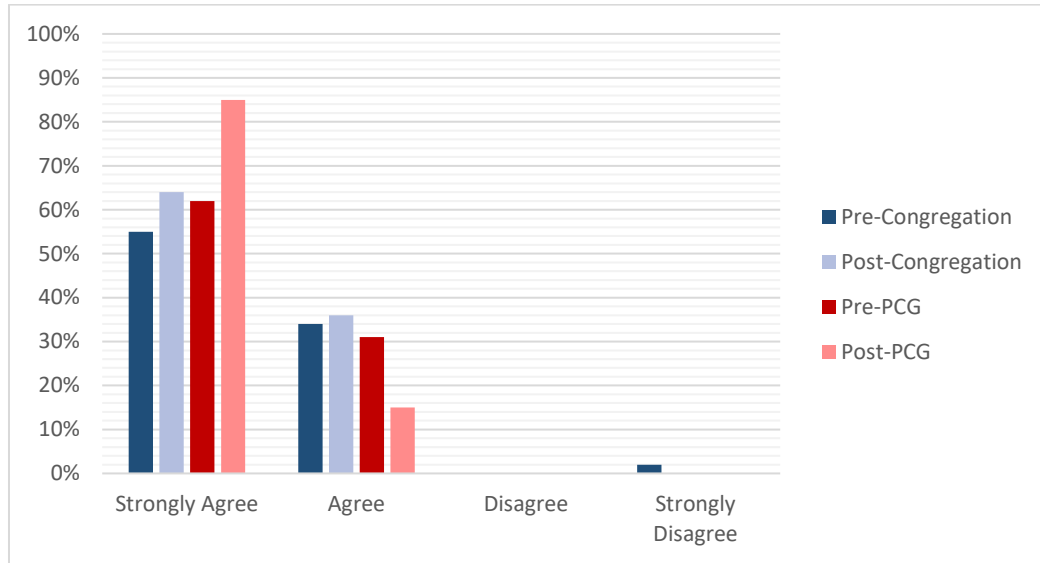
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 6%
Pre-PCG 8%

32. I understand the spiritual purpose of Holy Week in the Christian year.



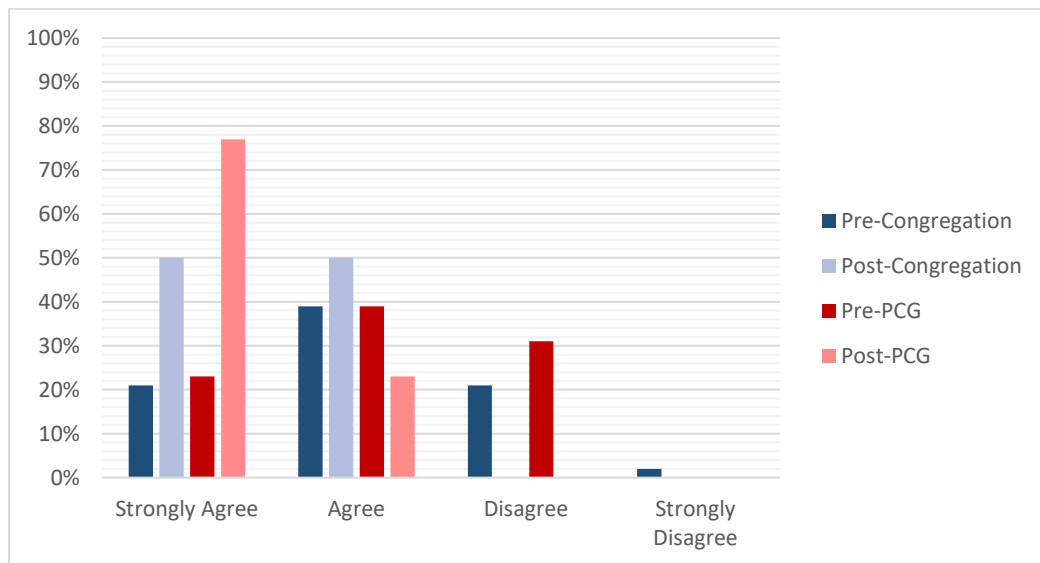
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 14%; Post-Congregation 6%
Pre-PCG 8%

33. I understand the spiritual purpose of Easter in the Christian year.



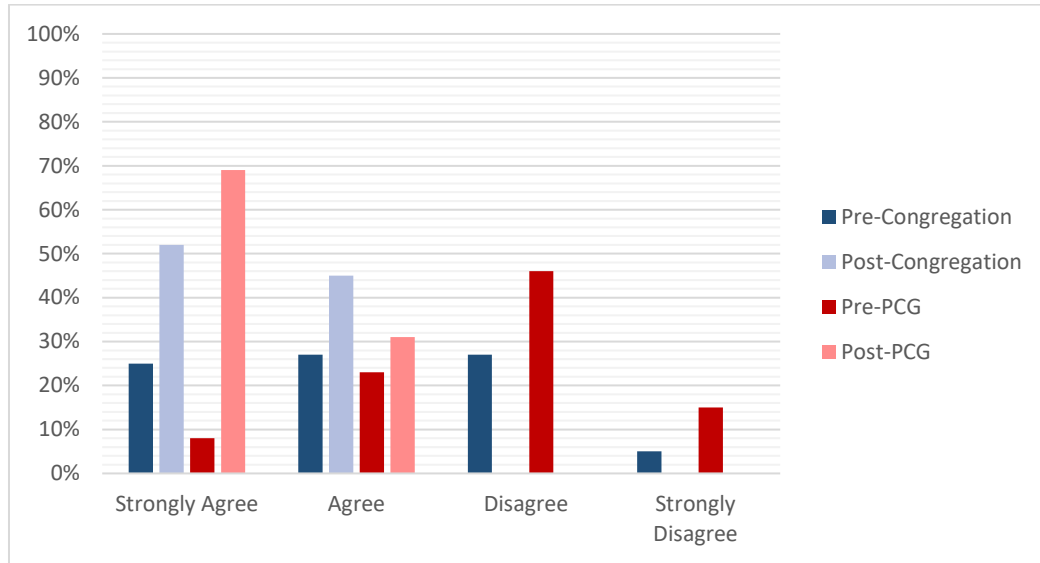
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 9%
Pre-PCG 8%

34. I understand the spiritual purpose of Pentecost in the Christian year.



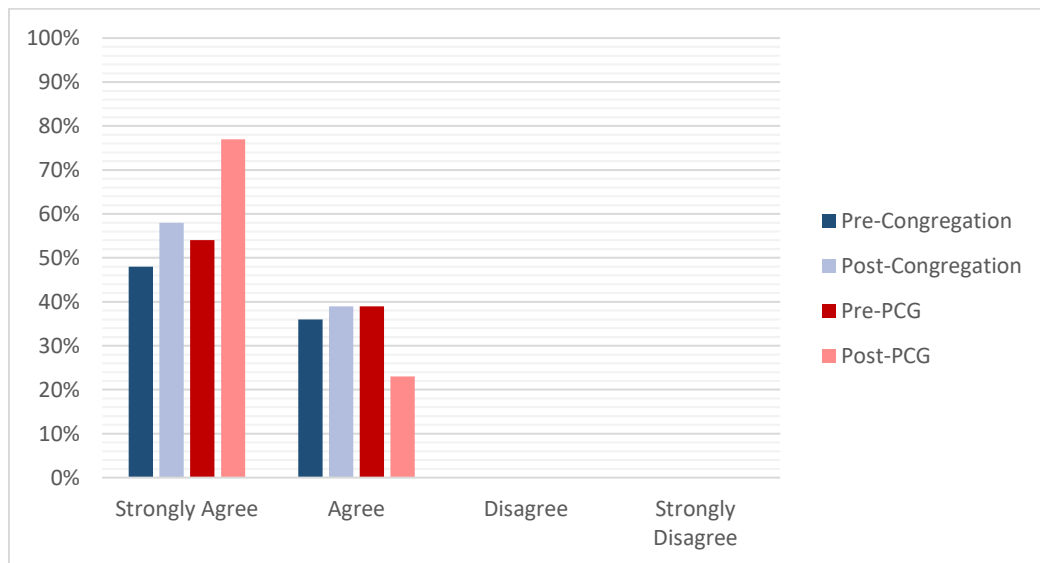
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 18%
Pre-PCG 8%

35. I understand the spiritual purpose of Ordinary Time in the Christian year.



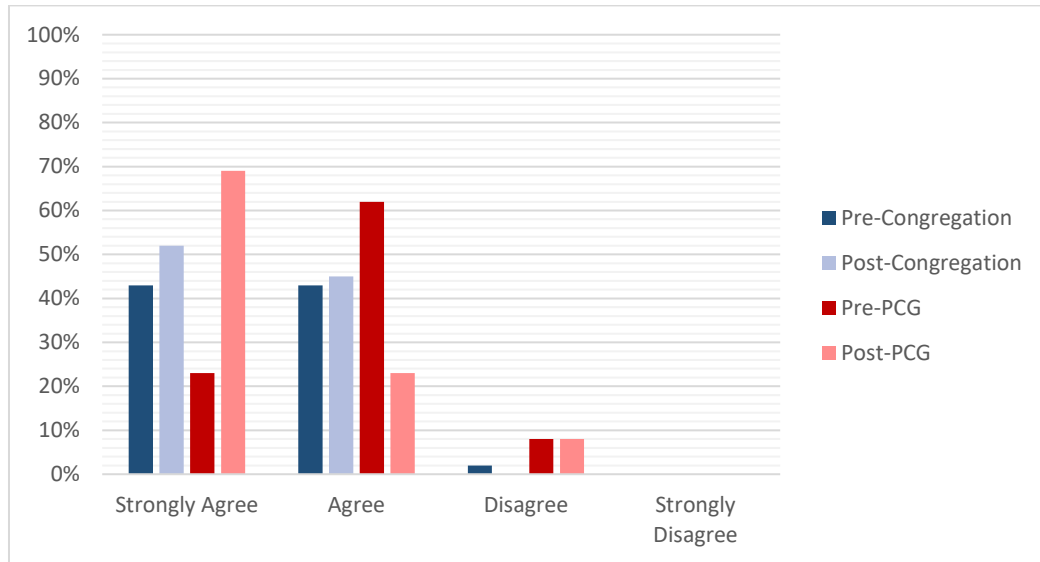
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 16%; Post-Congregation 3%
Pre-PCG 8%

36. I consider our church part of the global community of faith in Christ.



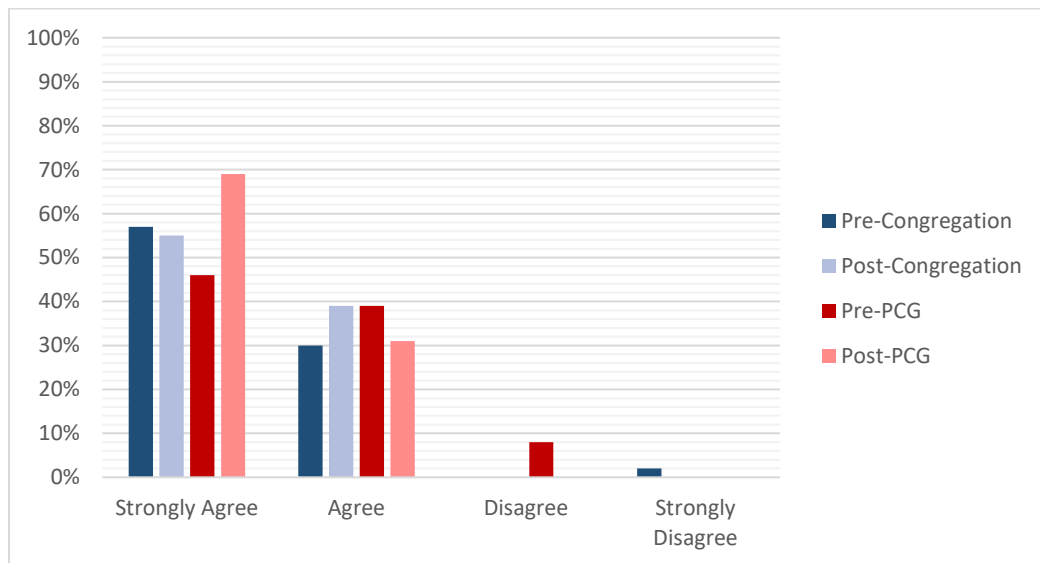
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 16%; Post-Congregation 3%
Pre-PCG 8%

37. I believe observing the Christian year in worship will provide a renewed spiritual growth.



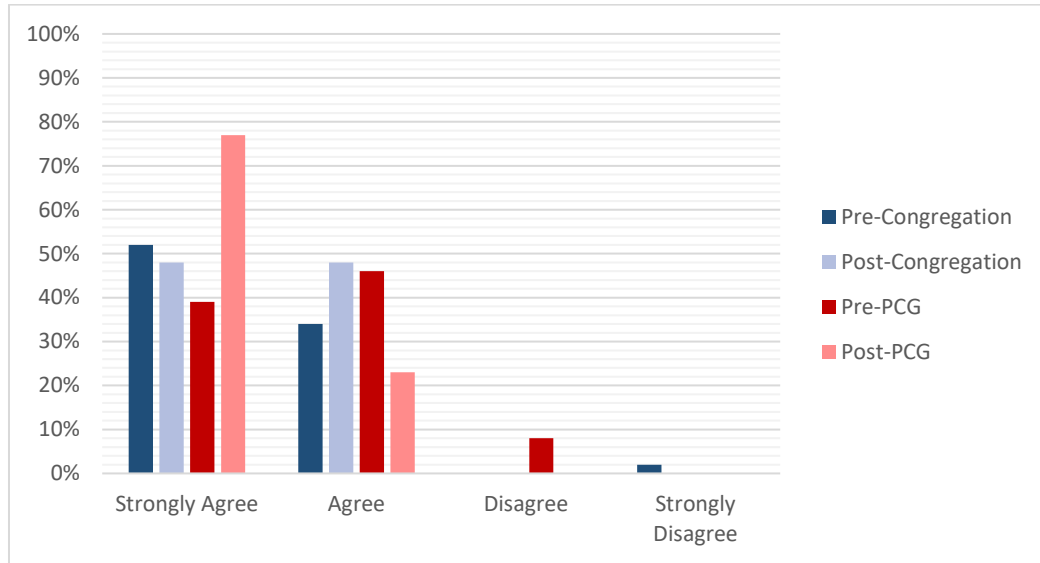
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 3%
Pre-PCG 8%

38. I believe studying the Christian year will broaden my understanding of Scripture.



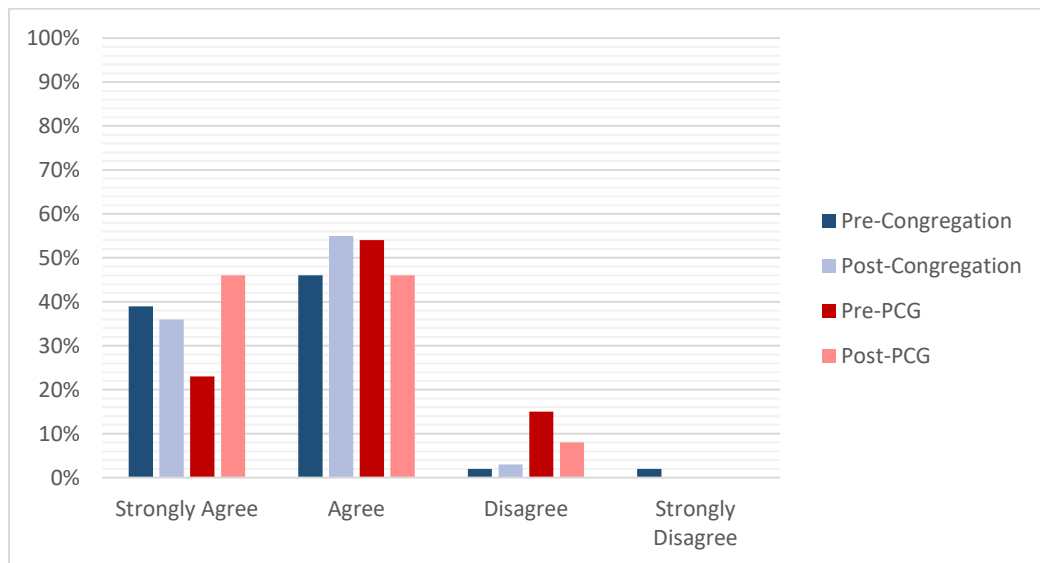
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 6%
Pre-PCG 8%

39. I believe learning the Christian year will be an exciting and healthy experience.



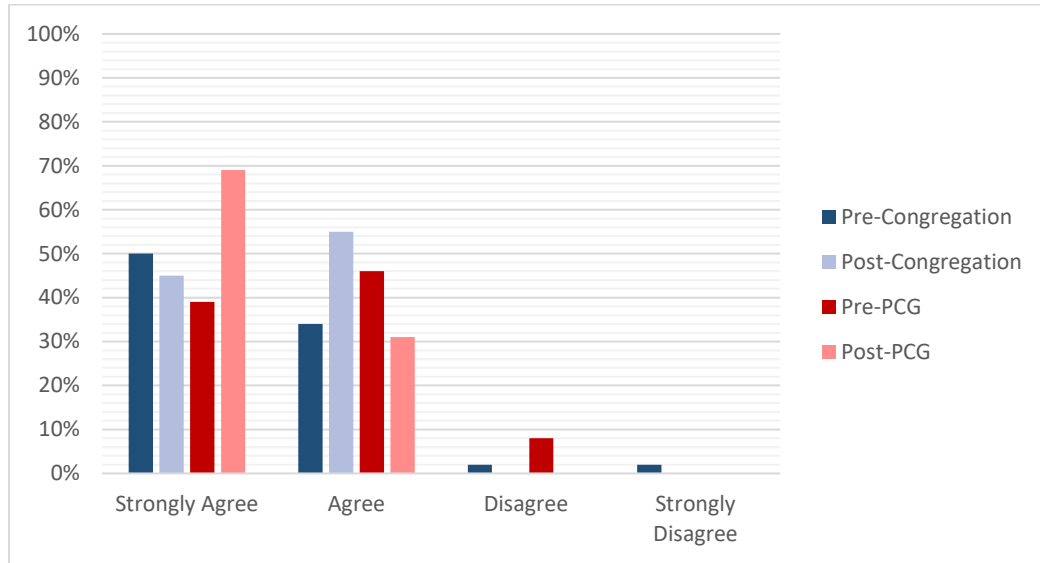
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 3%
Pre-PCG 8%

40. I believe observing the Christian year will connect our church to the larger faith community.



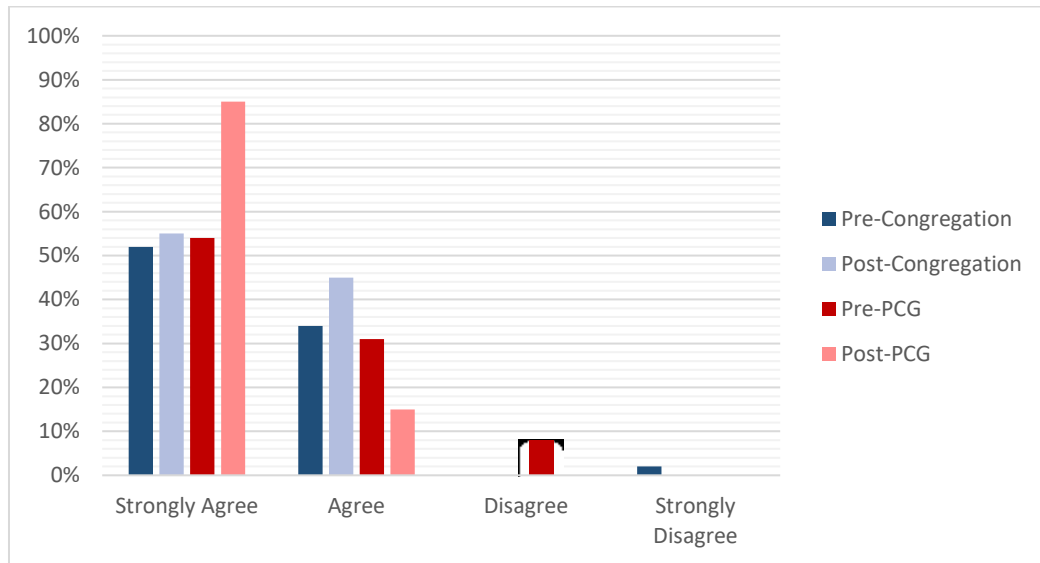
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%; Post-Congregation 6%
Pre-PCG 8%

41. I believe observing the Christian year will add value to our worship.



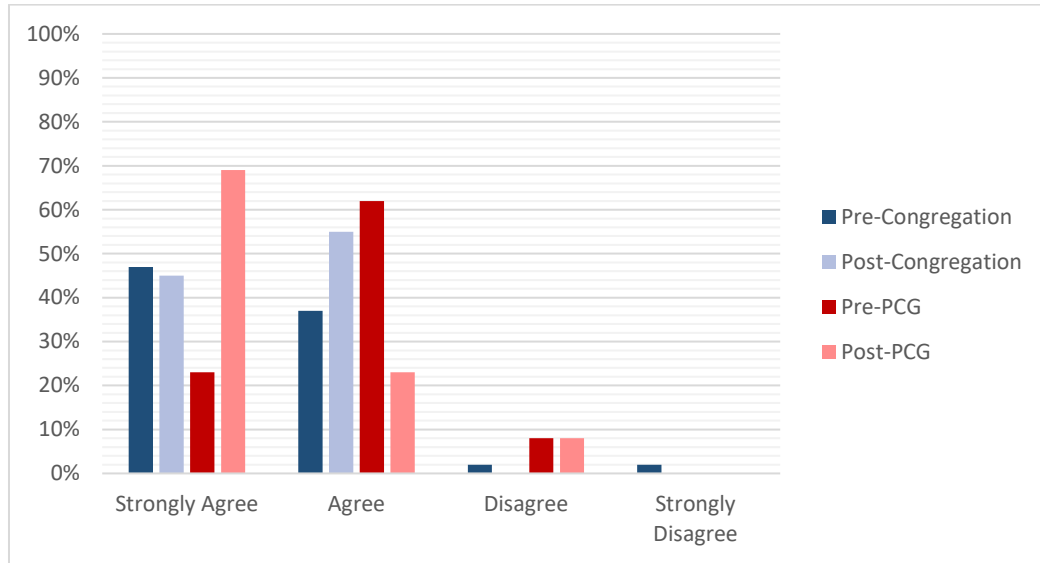
No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%
Pre-PCG 8%

42. I believe observing the Christian year will help my growth as a follower of Jesus.



No Answer: Pre-Congregation 11%
Pre-PCG 8%

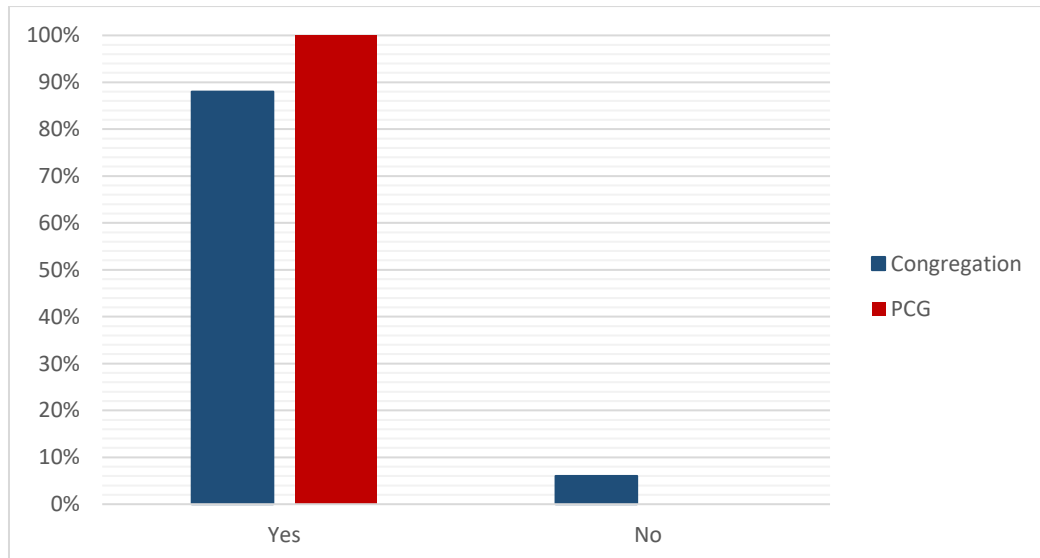
43. I would like to see our church observe the Christian year more closely in worship.



No Answer: Pre-Congregation 12%
Pre-PCG 8%

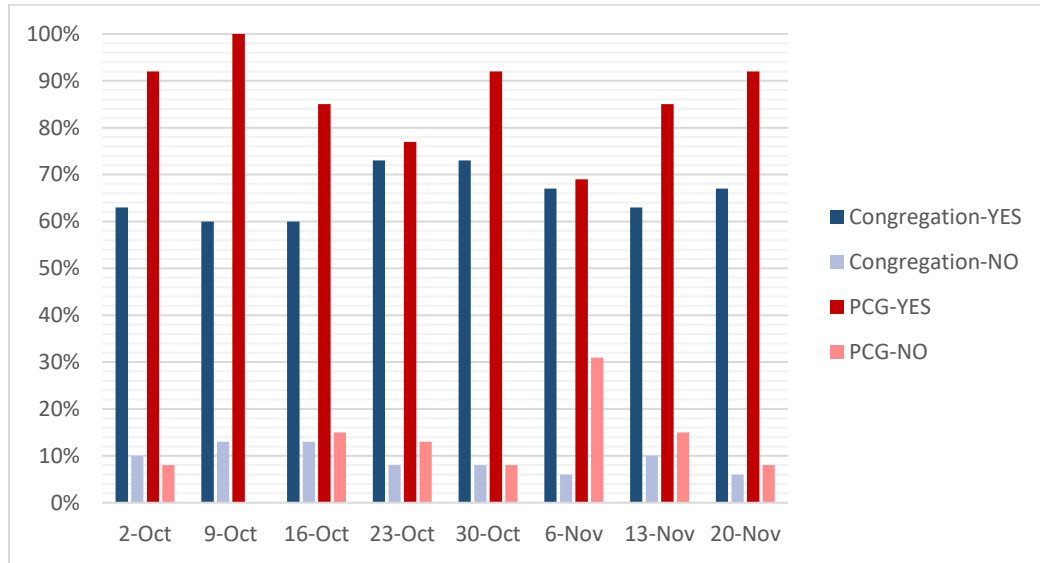
The following questions only appeared in the Post-Project Survey.

44. I received a copy of the study workbook.



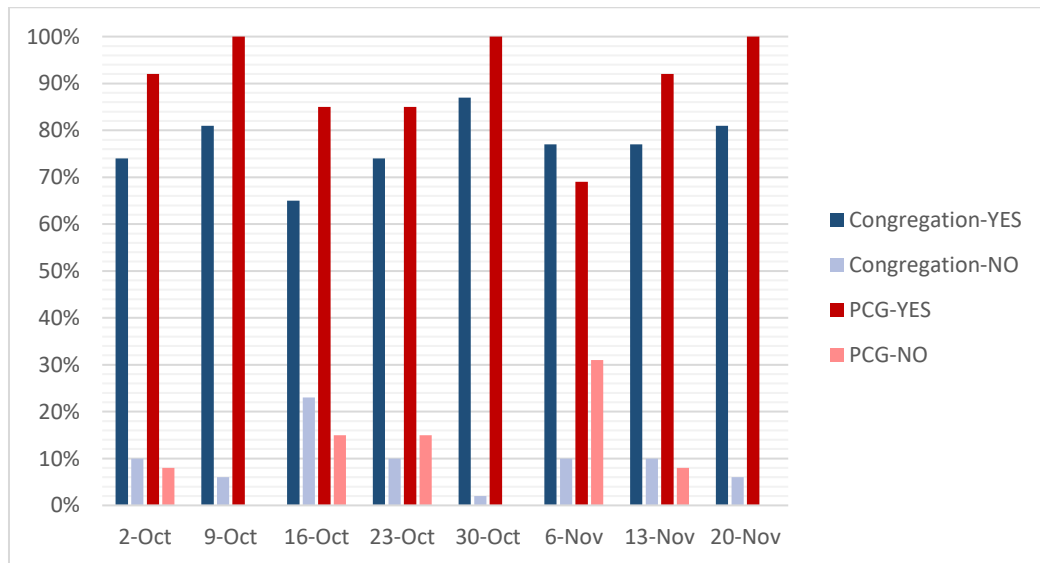
No Answer: Congregation 6%

45. Check every date you attended Sunday School in the past eight weeks.



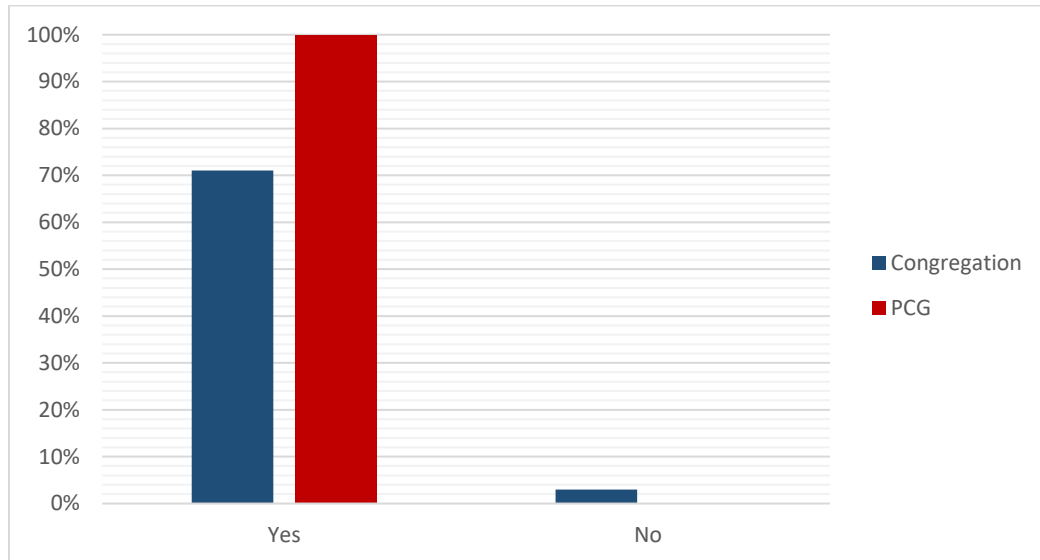
No Answer: Congregation 27%
Pre-PCG 8%

46. Check every date you attended worship in the past eight weeks.



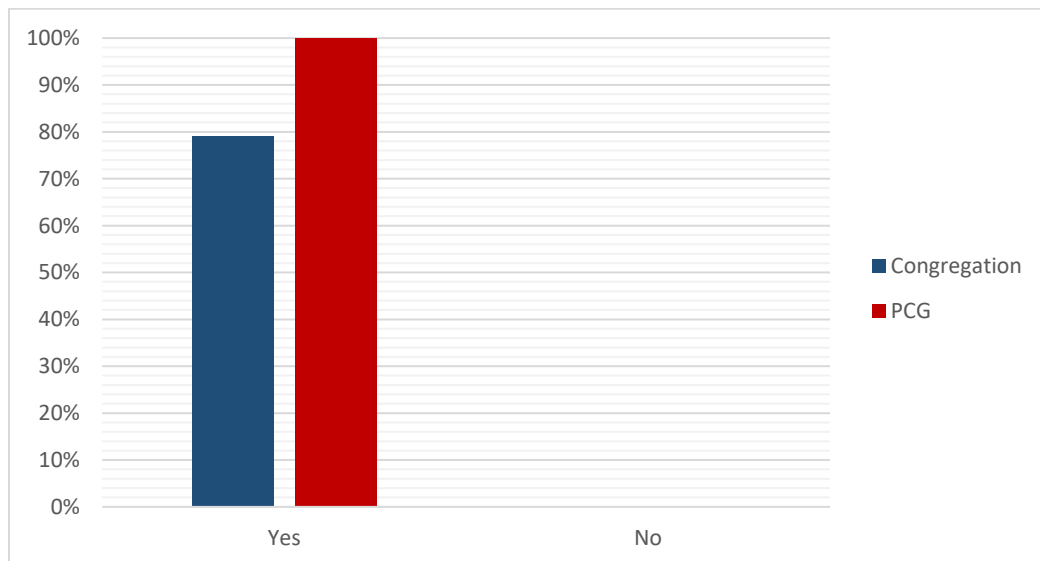
No Answer: Congregation 13%

47. My Sunday School leader taught from the Bible Study lessons provided in the workbook.



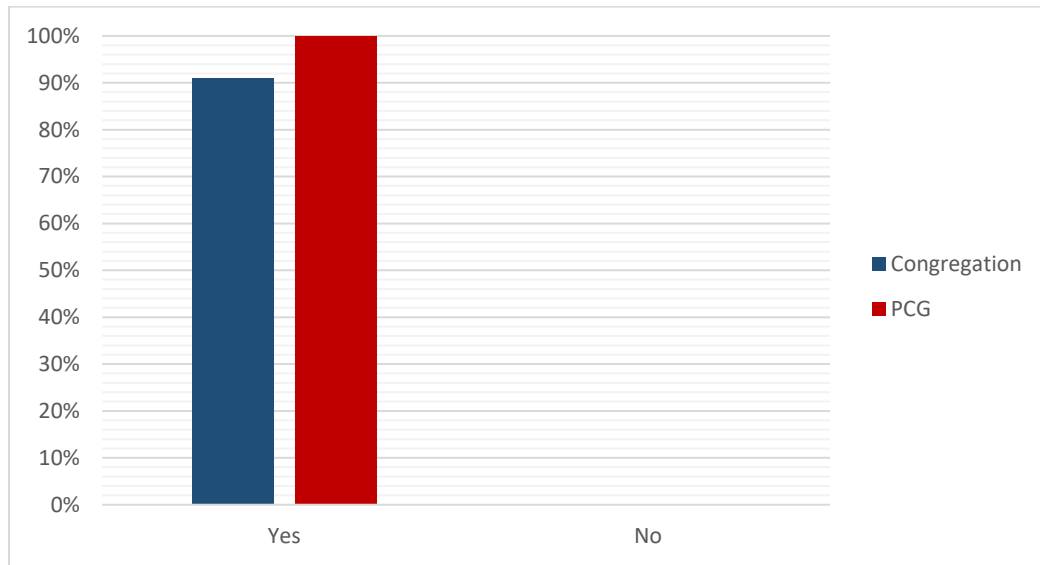
No Answer: Congregation 26%

48. Did you find this teaching contributed to your understanding of the Christian year?



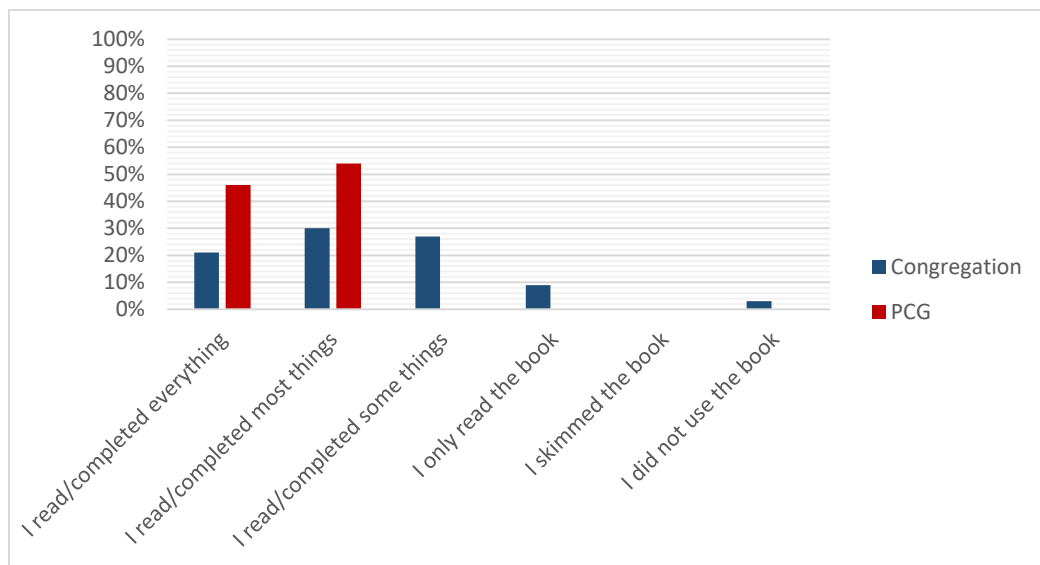
No Answer: Congregation 21%

49. Did you find the sermons contributed to your understanding of the Christian year?



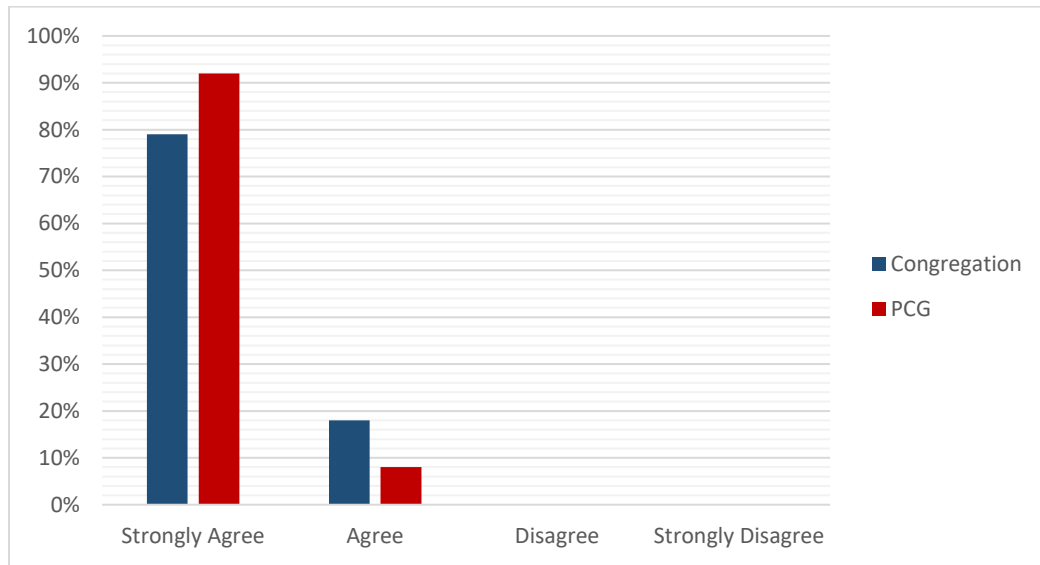
No Answer: Congregation 9%

50. Which phrase best describes your use of the study workbook?



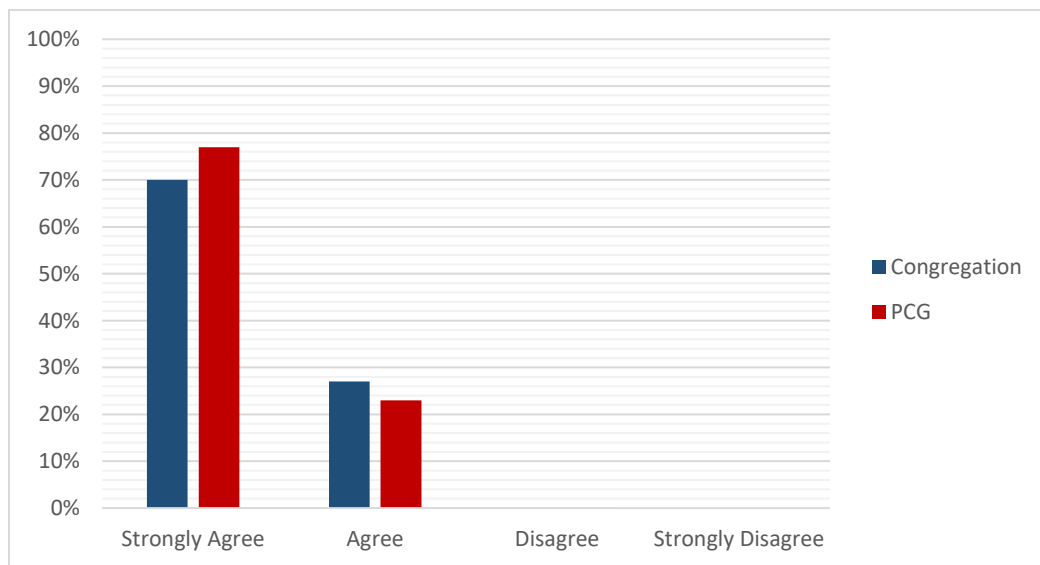
No Answer: Congregation 9%

51. Pastor Jeff seemed prepared for this project.



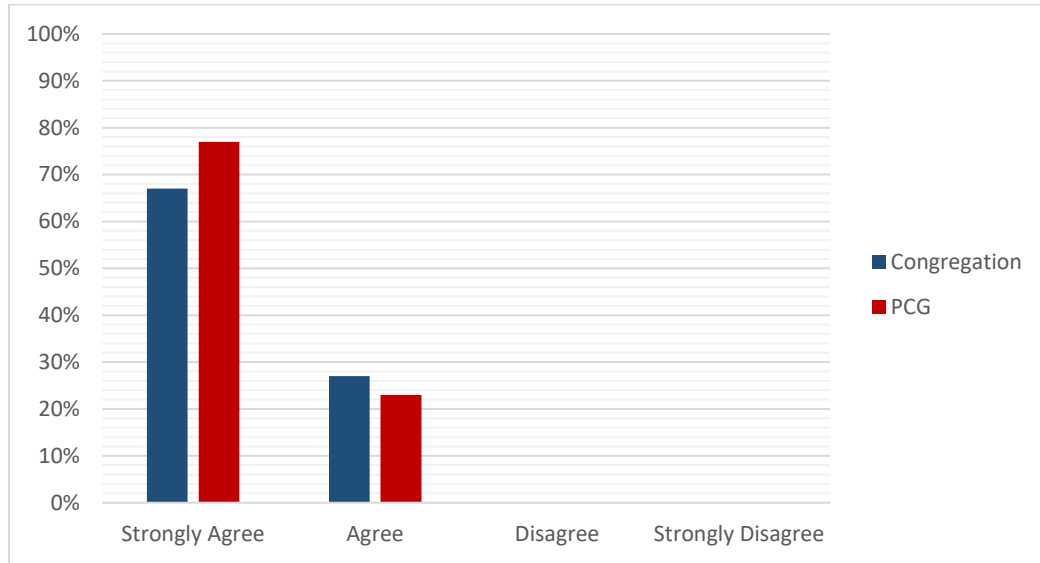
No Answer: Congregation 3%

52. Pastor Jeff's sermons were easy to understand.



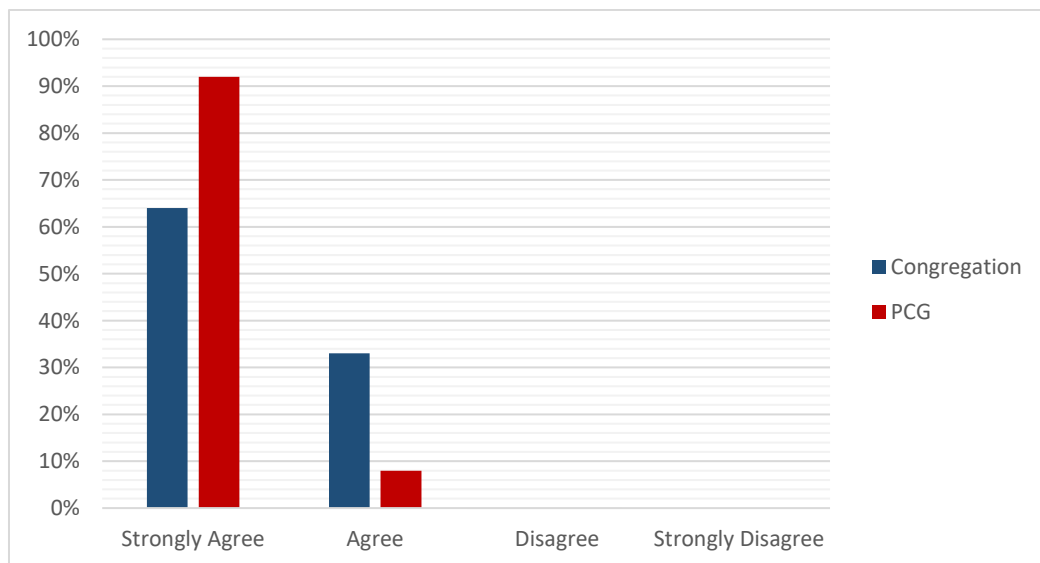
No Answer: Congregation 3%

53. Pastor Jeff's writing style in the workbook was easy to understand.



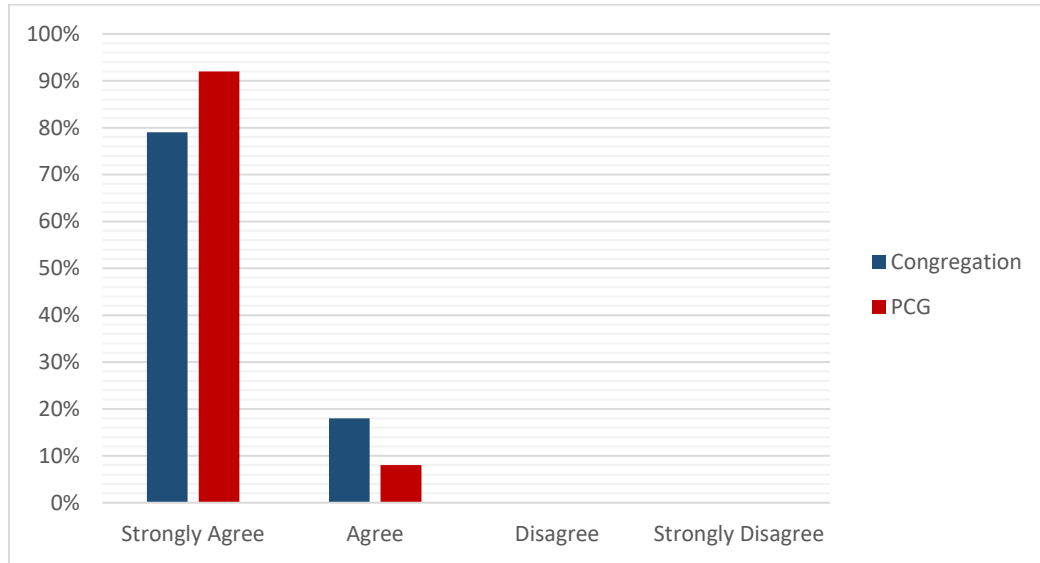
No Answer: Congregation 3%

54. Pastor Jeff was effective in teaching the Christian year.



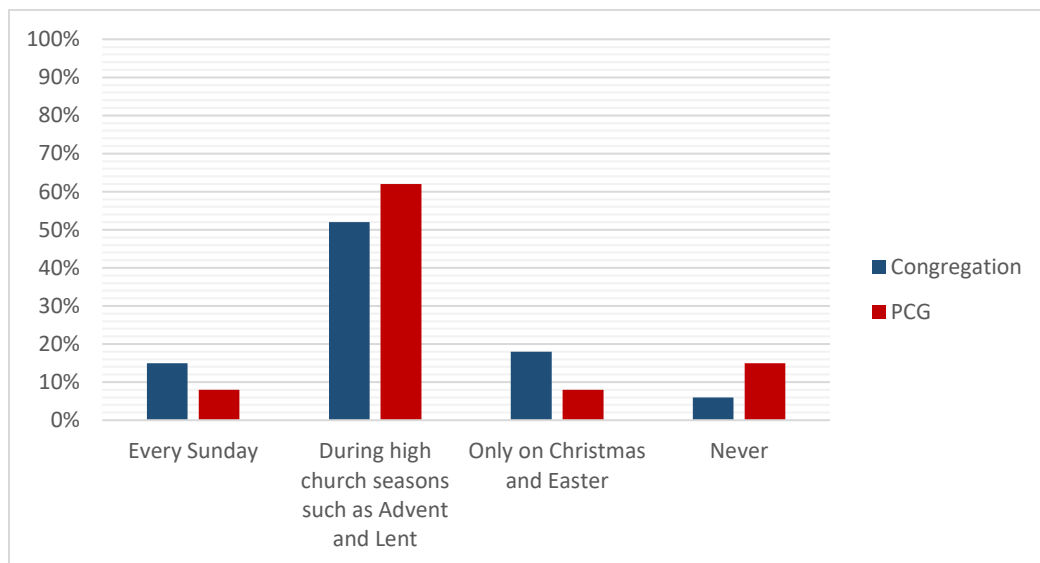
No Answer: Congregation 6%

55. Pastor Jeff has a strong knowledge of the Christian year.



No Answer: Congregation 3%

56. I wish Pastor Jeff would wear a robe and stole...



No Answer: Congregation 9%; PCG 8%

57. Please write any final comments you have regarding the Bible Study lessons.

- Very helpful to have Sunday School lessons connected to the sermons
- Fully comprehensive!
- Learned from, enhanced my understanding and greatly enjoyed
- They were really great for my growth, thank you
- Very easy to understand
- Have enjoyed thoroughly
- I need to go back and read what I missed
- The pastor was prepared
- Blessed to be a part of the study
- Unfortunately, I missed the last 2 weeks of the study but the remainder were informative and “brought home” the purposes and deep meaning of each “event”
- They were easy to understand and interesting
- Very enlightening!
- It could have been set up to also have home group studies during the week, that would have brought us closer together. This would allow more discussion outside church time and Sunday School time.
- PCG #1—It was very informative; I appreciate all the wonderful information
- PCG #3—Taking on every one of the eight was a bit much. Learning about each one in its season would be my preference
- PCG #4—Thanks for the lessons!
- PCG #5—It was a great journey
- PCG #6—I enjoyed having SS lessons coincide with the sermons
- PCG #7—I loved them!
- PCG #8—Very informative, challenging us spiritually for greater personal commitment to live and share our faith every day. Shows how much we have in common with many other denominations
- PCG #9—Broadened my knowledge of the Christian year, thus helping me walk more closely with God
- PCG #10—Some of the Scriptures used were hard to know what you were asking of us and what to write down. I had a hard time with some of them and so did the rest of the class. Overall it was a great study.
- PCG #11—I enjoyed the lessons, I found them interesting and well written
- PCG #12—Lessons were good but a little on the light side for teaching material
- PCG #13—They were informative and inspiring

58. Please write any final comments you have regarding Pastor Jeff's sermons series, including Pastor Jeff's preaching ability.

- Appreciate "answers" to previous week's sermon in bulletin
- I enjoyed all
- Excellent
- Completely prepared and enthusiastic
- You were really prepared; I'm proud of you big guy
- Well done!
- Love the text book style
- This was a great series. I gained new perspective on something I thought I knew well
- I believe it was well thought and researched out. Pastor Jeff did a fine job
- Very good lesson
- I believe Pastor Jeff taught us well and also I know he spent a lot of time preparing the sermons for us
- There appeared to be an improvement in Jeff's "preaching," he spoke with much more authority and "down to earth" terminology.
- The sermon series was awesome and just wonderful. The details were so interesting and I learned an in depth meaning of the Christian year
- I would like to hear Jeff preach "the meat" of Scripture relating it more to our lives and how we need to apply Scripture to our lives. Sometimes we need to hear what we already know but need a reminder
- Jeff's sermons are always interesting and I would like to see him a little more relaxed and move more, do not be attached to the pulpit
- PCG #1—Pastor Jeff is an excellent speaker/pastor. I always understand and look forward to his messages
- PCG #3—Great and thoughtful! And excellent delivery
- PCG #4—You did a great job! Your preaching ability is very strong, wise, knowledgeable and applicable
- PCG #5—He stepped up his game!! Did a great job—seriously
- PCG #6—I found myself listening in the sermons for the answers to fill in my workbook. I think I missed some points in the sermon because of that
- PCG #7—Very easy preaching style and very easy to understand and relate to
- PCG #8—Has thorough knowledge of subject, enthusiastic, and on presentation and content!
- PCG #10—I truly loved studying the different seasons of the Christian year. The colors and traditions really made it come alive to me. Jeff did a great job in his sermons to help me understand how it all comes together
- PCG #11—I felt like Jeff did a great job. He was well prepared for each sermon and I could tell he had a passion for the subject matter, especially Advent and Christmas
- PCG #12—Sermons were excellent and went along with the book
- PCG #13—very good!

59. Please write any final comments you have regarding the workbook.

- Very informative
- Beautiful; well done!
- Loved the layout, will keep it always as a reference guide
- It was a great study book, thanks for your hard work
- This book was very interesting and gave me information on Advent
- Just what I needed
- Very cool
- The workbook helped me understand better
- Very good
- Very pleased to have this as an outline for review through the coming years and will pass it on to our son and family
- It is something I can always go back and reuse and restudy to find things I have missed from passed times
- PCG #1—Excellent book. I will keep it always and review each season.
- PCG #3—Excellent artistic presentation and information
- PCG #4—Well prepared, especially the ideas of implementation in our own lives. It is a solid resource that I can reference always when I worship through the Christian year
- PCG #5—It is a great reference to go by when studying the different seasons
- PCG #6—Easy to understand
- PCG #7—Very well thought out and beautiful layout; something I will keep
- PCG #8—Very well planned. Beautiful, thought provoking. Lots and lots of facts
- PCG #10—Great job on the workbook!
- PCG #11—I plan to keep the workbook and refer back to it throughout the year
- PCG #13—Excellent

60. Please write any final comments you have regarding this overall project.

- Great learning project which contributed much to spiritual growth
- It was great!
- Much appreciated and helpful for the future!
- So well worth the hard work that must have gone into its research and writing. Made me look forward to each Sunday's teachings
- I understand the purpose of the study and learned things I did not know
- You did great!
- Very interesting and I understand more about Advent
- I believe it is what I needed
- I enjoyed it
- Was put together by a man that loves God; great job Jeff!
- Great study!
- Jeff's time spent in preparation, study, and putting together the book was well done. Could see this being used in other churches for sermons and studies
- Very enjoyable, informative, and helpful
- PCG #1—Was thrilled to read and understand the Christian calendar. Never heard any of this information before
- PCG #3—I learned a lot!
- PCG #4—I have a much stronger understanding of the Christian year, its ability to keep me growing spiritually and a greater appreciation for your love of it!
- PCG #5—Well planned; very informative
- PCG #6—It helped me understand the Christian year much better
- PCG #7—Educational; very Spirit filled
- PCG #8—Excellent study; adaptable to all age groups. Bible study in workbook helped explain where and how these events and celebrations grew from prophesy till present time. Makes it all more meaningful and personal.
- PCG #10—Loved being a part of it!
- PCG #12—Good project for our church
- PCG #13—Educational and inspiring!

61. Please write any final comments you have regarding the future of our congregation's spiritual worship.

- Continue to repeat information so we don't forget
- Heart felt and Holy Spirit led!
- Hope we can use what we've learned about the Christian year to understand what being a follower of Christ meant to the early church and what it can and should mean to us today
- I believe there is a great future here in this church and thank you for letting me be involved
- Our spirit and hope in Christ Jesus will carry us into the future
- I would like to see a question and answer format in our bulletin each week, just like we had in our study book
- Together we can grow
- I hope it grows
- I love this church
- I do not understand why we do not grow in numbers
- I pray that our church will take to heart the teachings we have heard and learned and that each and every one of us will have a deeper walk with Jesus
- The church needs to relax more and not worry about dotting every "i" or crossing every "t." The message of Christ is never to be changed. The gospel never at any time needs to be watered down. The worship needs to reflect what the community needs to hear in messages, music, and opportunities to serve—working to show the agape love Jesus asked of Peter to do that one morning over breakfast
- PCG #1—I personally feel closer to God through this study and plan to use it throughout the year
- PCG #2—Be careful this does not become a ritual
- PCG #3—I long for more excitement and energy in our worship
- PCG #4—I look forward to seeing how the lessons/purpose you taught us will be implemented in our worship. May we grow deeper in our Christ likeness by worshipping through the Christian year
- PCG #5—Would like to hear more sermons related to the series
- PCG #7—The congregation as it is now seems stuck in time. The future is uncertain. A few may be ready for the next God movement but others maybe faltering on a line. The sweet spirit of God is here, but some are still stuck in the box or boat. We must look outside the box and to walk on water we must get out of the boat
- PCG #8—Hopefully we can all have deeper and closer personal relationships with Jesus and each other as a result of studies like this one
- PCG #10—I hope we can use more of these in our worship services in the future. I loved Ash Wednesday last year. It makes each season more special to me. Thanks for the great workbook. It was so pretty and put together very well!

- PCG#11—I feel like following the Christian year more closely will help our church gain a better understanding of our faith
- PCG #12—We should incorporate these teachings into our worship throughout the year
- PCG #13—Let's practice what we've learned!

APPENDIX E.3

Positive Control Group Post-Project Interview

1. What part(s) of this project contributed the greatest to your overall understanding of the Christian year?
 - PCG #1—The workbook/Sunday School book; the vast information for each Sunday and the information made each subject have more meaning
 - PCG #2—I'm being made aware of the concept of walking with Jesus through his life on earth and trying to relate to his experiences was a spiritual blessing
 - PCG #3—Details such as symbols, colors, as well as the history of church practice
 - PCG #4—The workbook lessons—taking the time to individually read and study. These lessons, partnered with the SS lessons/discussion and the reiteration of the Christian year in the sermons provided significant understanding
 - PCG #5—Actually all parts. I've known about the seasons but enjoyed how each transitioned to the next.
 - PCG #6—The workbook was very helpful and was a good reference for questions I had. Also the sermons were helpful.
 - PCG #7—The printed material taught in Bible study and the sermon together enhanced the experience. The workbook was my favorite tool.
 - PCG #8—The study book is excellent! Something there for everyone, wherever we may be in our spiritual journey. The individual Bible study and "connect" activities were challenging. It was a great way to reinforce the message and have time to think about how we really live and worship in the seasons.
 - PCG #9—Sunday School was a precursor to the sermon. I think both were needed and worked closely together, thus reinforcing the theme each Sunday
 - PCG #10—I liked all of the chapters, especially Holy Week. The Triduum is such an important event in a Christians life, a time for meditation and reflecting. I love our Maundy Thursday service, Lenten service and Easter Sunday service
 - PCG #11—The lessons and the history portions of the workbook. The SS lessons afforded opportunity for group discussion
 - PCG #12—I believe the sermons along with the study guide helped me the most. I learned more about each of the seasons of the Christian calendar than I knew previously. It helped me to have a deeper understanding and appreciation for each of the seasons.
 - PCG #13—The workbook, the SS lesson and the sermon

2. What part(s), if any, of this project did you find confusing or inadequate?

- PCG #1—Some of the questions asked were hard to know how to reply
- PCG #2—To study and talk about some of the seasons that last for many weeks and review them in one week was somewhat difficult
- PCG #3—During your sermons, I often wondered how non-believers would react to what you said. I enjoy your sermons, one or two were particularly moving for me as a believer. I heard clearly how I am to respond and live daily as a follower. But how could a non-believer be compelled to follow Jesus through the year?
- PCG #4—Some of the workbook questions did not always seem to lead to easily found answers, so sometimes they were a little confusing. Nothing seemed inadequate. Also, the survey questions that asked about worship and the sermons—the entire worship service—seldom contributed to my understanding of the Christian year. The sermon alone did that for me.
- PCG #5—The marking time was somewhat confusing and needed a little bit more to be able to understand better.
- PCG #6—I think the Sunday School lessons could have been better. For instance, discussion of colors and symbols representing each segment of the Christian year.
- PCG #7—The sermon on Easter seemed like the hardest one to follow when trying to follow sermon notes.
- PCG #8—Some parts seemed very “academic,” and I felt I was in a college history class again. But each part of the project—book, Sunday School lesson, sermon, all worked well together and provided varied ways to learn and apply the information.
- PCG #9—Some of the questions in the workbook left me guessing exactly what you were asking
- PCG #10—Some of the Scripture were hard to understand, but overall I loved it. I guess I did not know what you asking of us on some of the questions
- PCG #12—I found the teaching guide to be a little short on teaching recommendations as compared to the traditional guides I use. Otherwise I thought it was an excellent project.
- PCG #13—Sometimes I wasn’t sure how to answer a question in the book

3. What part(s), if any, of this project frustrated you?

- PCG #2—Trying to learn and memorize all the terms and length of the seasons was a challenge
- PCG #4—Everything was clear (expectations, lessons, sermons, etc.) which prevented any frustrations
- PCG #5—Nothing about it frustrated me. It was actually refreshing approach to study.
- PCG #6—Some of the questions in the workbook were difficult for me to answer. Also, while listening to the sermon for the answers to the workbook, I was so intent listening for the answers that I missed part of the sermon.
- PCG #7—The rigidness of the morning worship; the sameness of style of music.
- PCG #8—a) Trying to learn all the colors and symbols of the seasons! (I'm a hands on learner). B) No real frustrations—the same information was presented several ways in different chapters which was both helpful and maybe a little frustrating.
- PCG #9—Some of the questions in the workbook which left me guessing for the answer
- PCG #10—Scriptures and a few of the questions in the SS lesson
- PCG #12—I didn't find any part of the project to be frustrating other than what I mentioned in question two above.
- PCG #13—I found it hard to focus on Holy Week and Easter when it wasn't that time of year

4. What question(s), if any, do you have in reference to the information you received?
- PCG #1—Very pleased with all the material
 - PCG #2—Too much emphasis placed on filling in the blanks and requests for ideas, suggestions for worship services/events. I have not surveyed individuals but suspect many did not fill in the blanks in the study guide
 - PCG #5—No questions really. Just want to know how you came out with a grade and wonder if we can tie more Sunday School and preaching lessons together.
 - PCG #6—I wonder how you might celebrate a particular season, when you are well into the season. For instance, how would you celebrate the season of Ordinary time when you are three months into the season (other than just being aware of the meaning of the season).
 - PCG #7—I know I may have some but can't think of one at the moment. The info received was great.
 - PCG #8—Most questions were answered in sermons and other materials.
 - PCG #12—My only question is what comes next? Will we incorporate any of these events into our worship at Calvary over the coming year? What can we add to our current celebrations of these events?

5. How has this experience enhanced or impaired your understanding of the Christian year?

- PCG #1—It has definitely enhanced my understanding. Each season will mean more to me.
- PCG #2—I feel that this has enhanced and enlightened my understanding
- PCG #3—The overall picture of the Christian year helped me put all the holy days in perspective with each other for the first time. And I learned about some days in the calendar for the first time. Learned a lot of symbols and colors.
- PCG #4—This experience has definitely enhanced my understanding of the Christian year. Most all of the info was new to me. I now see that the Christian year is more than a calendar but an opportunity to learn about Jesus' life, walk with him, and witness for him as the year progresses
- PCG #5—It has greatly helped me understanding it and singing songs related to each season made it even better.
- PCG #6—It has completely opened a new thought process for me. I really wasn't aware of what comprised the Christian year. Again, the workbook and sermons helped me a great deal.
- PCG #7—I have been enhanced by this experience. I have learned many things I did not know before. The workbook was a good tool to look further into history and traditions of many of the celebrations such as Easter and Christmas and Common Time.
- PCG #8—Having attended an Episcopal church for a while, I felt some things there were too formal. But, certainly enhanced. Made me appreciate that every day is a Holy day, not just the one day we choose to celebrate, and that we share this experience with the world of other Christians.
- PCG #9—It greatly enhanced my understanding of the Christian year. I was familiar with all seasons except Ordinary Time. I also never knew there was a "Christian calendar year."
- PCG #10—It has really helped me to understand it and the reason why we celebrate it. It has enhanced it and made it more important to me as a Christian
- PCG #11—It has enhanced my understanding by leading me to Bible verses that referenced the reasons why we celebrate different seasons in the Christian year. I also very much enjoyed the portions on colors, symbols, and words and more creative ways to worship each season
- PCG #12—My understanding of the meaning and importance of the Christian year has been deepened and broadened through this study
- PCG #13—It has definitely enhanced my understanding of the Christian year

6. Has participating in this project changed your approach to worship and spirituality? If so, in what way(s)?

- PCG #1—Yes, I have a better understanding and I feel closer to Christ.
- PCG #2—I am not sure at this point in time. I want to say yes, but based on these eight weeks one aspect that I don't care for is the responsive readings. If this is an indication of them being weekly, then my answer would lean to no.
- PCG #3—For the last few years I have been doing daily readings/ meditations study for Advent and Lent seasons. I have challenged myself to walk more fully during Holy Week—not just meditating on how Jesus lived and what he said but especially to create more celebrations of the resurrection (and Pentecost). Finding contemporary and old hymns that celebrate the living Christ will be one way I can be more celebratory. Other Holy days could be included as well.
- PCG #4—Not yet, but I think now as the Christian year commences (Advent), the opportunity to experience these seasons with new insight, wisdom, and knowledge will enhance my spiritual life.
- PCG #5—It certainly cleared up some smoky areas for me.
- PCG #6—It will make me more aware of the particular season we are in and the meanings associated with the particular season.
- PCG #7—Not sure really how to answer this or put into words. I love to learn about how to honor Christ.
- PCG #8—believe it has made me more conscious of the fact that Jesus is with me always, every day and everywhere. He was divine, but He was also human. Going through the church year (His life) in this way has made me feel closer to Him and thankful for the example he set for us to follow.
- PCG #9—It has. I have realized that I am paying more attention to both Sunday School and worship.
- PCG #10—I think spiritually it has made me want to spend more time reading my Bible and learning more about each Holy Season
- PCG #11—It has enhanced my spirituality and given it more meaning
- PCG #12—I believe I will have a better understanding and appreciation for each season as we worship throughout the year
- PCG #13—It gave me a better understanding of the seasons; for example, Ordinary Time

7. In what way(s) could this project be improved for future use?

- PCG #2—Use of additional study materials or actually extending the study to the actual year but this would probably be better done in a small group study
- PCG #3—I would enjoy more info on how the church came to include and celebrate these days; more history. Have you thought of adapting the handbook for inclusion in a new member class? Maybe a handbook for a new believer?
- PCG #4—Perhaps if time allowed (full year) teaching the seasons at the beginning and then allowing the weeks/months of implementation. This is obviously harder for Holy Week but the length of other seasons might allow for that. The think more at the end of each workbook lesson was usually really rich, maybe allowing time for answers to be discussed or encouraging SS teachers to begin the new week by reflecting on the previous one
- PCG #5—maybe props or some type of visual things on the screen. Possibly an outline of what sermons will be about put in *Crosspoints* so we could study scripture prior to the service.
- PCG #6—More emphasis on the season we are studying in Sunday School.
- PCG #7—More info in the workbook; where and why on symbols and colors; more scripture
- PCG #8—Could be adapted to use with any group, age—from children through college, for Sunday School or as a weekly study course. The spiritual message is strong, lots of ideas for personal spiritual development already. Smaller groups could have discussions, hands on for younger groups.
- PCG #9—I know I couldn't improve upon it
- PCG #10—Maybe incorporate more Scripture and information in the SS lesson. Some of the questions in the study guide were hard, but overall I did try to complete them each week
- PCG #12—A little more work on the teaching guide would be helpful. More background information and recommendation on how to involve class members

8. Are there additional comment(s) you would like to include?

- PCG #2—In this series of sermons you read more from your notes than you normally do when preaching
- PCG #3—Good luck!
- PCG #4—The reinforcement of SS lessons and sermons was great! Maybe doing more of that in the future so that consistency across the classes/lessons/messages exist. Your hard work, knowledge, passion is evident—well done!
- PCG #5—Jeff did a fantastic job putting all this together and adding reference material in each section was a plus.
- PCG #6—A yearly calendar, filled out, according to the particular time of season would have helped me understand the timing of each season. It would help me to see it and fix the timing in my mind.
- PCG #7—Teaching from the workbook in Bible Study along with the sermon, excellent!
- PCG #8—I have thoroughly enjoyed this project! It was well planned, all parts interesting and inspiring sermons. The suggestion for ways we could “celebrate” each season were very good and I will use these through the year.
- PCG #9—Thanks for having enough faith in me to allow me to participate in your PCG.
- PCG #10—I hope we will do more of the observances in church. You have done a great job bringing these events to light in your sermons. It has really been a blessing to me. Maybe something on Holy Saturday.
- PCG #11—I would like us to keep the sermon outline moving forward. I also would like to see us put into practice some of the creative ways to observe each season
- PCG #12—I enjoyed the project and the sermons and feel I learned a great deal from this study
- PCG #13—I feel fortunate to have been part of this study

APPENDIX F

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

This includes my pastor articles from the October, November, and December *Crosspoints* church newsletter.

F.1 October *Crosspoints* Article

F.2 November *Crosspoints* Article

F.3 December *Crosspoints* Article

APPENDIX F.1

OCTOBER CROSSPOINTS ARTICLE

Cross. *points*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
OCTOBER 2016

Tell Me the Story of Jesus

The Rev. Jeffrey C. Hayes

I'm not so young as to never experienced a good ole' fashioned Hymn Sing. In the small country church I once pastored, every fifth Sunday in a month we broke from our normal schedule and enjoyed gathering around the piano to sing hymns and tell stories. Usually those stories revolved around the hymns. "I can remember singing this one as a kid!" Morris would say. "I learned this one in Training Union," Mrs. Bodiford would echo. Music has a way of forming us. In the church, hymns have always been a way of forming us spiritually because they relate Scripture, teach faith and doctrine, and tell stories. One of my favorite hymns is the Fanny Crosby classic "Tell Me the Story of Jesus." Crosby is credited with over nine-thousand hymns and "Tell Me the Story..." is one of her most beloved.

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.
Tell how the angels, in chorus,
Sang as the y welcomed His birth,
"Glory to God in the highest!
Peace and good tidings to earth."*

*Tell of the cross where they nailed Him,
Writhing in anguish and pain;
Tell of the grave where they laid Him,
Tell how He liveth again.
Love in that story so tender,
Clearer than ever I see;
Stay, let me weep while you whisper,
Love paid the ransom for me.*

*Fasting alone in the desert,
Tell of the days that are past;
How far our sins He was tempted,
Yet was triumphant at last.
Tell of the years of His labor,
Tell of the sorrow He bore;
He was despised and afflicted,
Homeless, rejected and poor.*

*Refrain:
Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.*

If you listen closely to those lyrics, you will hear words of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Good Friday, and Easter—all seasons of the Christian year. That's not surprising given Crosby's formative years in Methodist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches, all of which follow the liturgical seasons. Like many of the hymns she wrote, the seasons of the Christian year have

Continued on page 2

Sunday Worship

October 2
Tell Me the Story of Jesus:
Marking Time
Exodus 12:1-28, Romans 6:1-14

October 9
Tell Me the Story of Jesus:
Advent
Isaiah 64:1-9, Revelation 22:16-17

October 16
Tell Me the Story of Jesus:
Christmas
John 1:1-18

October 23
Tell Me the Story of Jesus:
Epiphany
Matthew 2:1-12, 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

October 30
Tell Me the Story of Jesus:
Lent
Psalm 51:1-17, Mark 8:31-38

October Meetings

October 4
6:30 Deacons

October 10
6:00 Leadership Team

Continued from page 1

the power to form us spiritually into better followers of Jesus. The seasons relate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and how our lives can be transformed through the saving work of God in Christ.

I am excited that our church will be studying the Christian year over the next two months. Throughout October and November, we will walk through eight major seasons in the Christian year and consider how each teaches us what it means to live in Jesus. This study is not about history and tradition—though both are certainly components of the Christian year. And it is not about an arbitrary list of holidays (from the old English for “holy days” mind you). More, it is about our growing wiser, growing holier, growing into the likeness of the one we claim to worship. The seasons of the Christian year convey how the people of God are intricately woven into the story of God’s saving work in Christ. To accomplish that, the Christian year immerses us, year after year, in the story of God’s saving acts until we become exactly who we say we are—followers of Jesus.

Therefore, I encourage you to be a part of our journey! Join a Sunday School class, participate in worship, and study the workbook (available in the church office or on the organ window sill). Along the way there will be many opportunities to pause and reflect. Each Sunday there will be “Think More” questions to help you marinate on the various seasons and their meaning, as well as reflect on how your faith in Jesus is becoming a daily reality. And since this is an integral part of my doctoral studies, I will need your assistance with evaluation instruments following each sermon. That is just the nature of running an “official” experiment, so please be patient with me during the next two months. There are a number of requirements I must fulfill as part of my project, but the larger benefit will be our spiritual growth as a church. I am extremely grateful for the support each of you have extended in this process. I am eager to walk this road with all of you!

If the mood strikes you, wear the color of the season on each specific Sunday, such as a Christmas tie on the Sunday we look at Christmas, a purple dress for Lent, or your best Easter white on Easter Sunday. (Who cares if it’s past Labor day!) None of that should sound strange. After all, our worship of Jesus’s birth, life, death, and resurrection should permeate every day of our lives.

*Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness,
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Thomas O. Chisholm

SHOEBOX PACKING PARTY



Mark your calendar for November 16
5:30 Chili and Cornbread Dinner
6:00 Packing Party Fun

Please continue to collect items to put in the shoeboxes.

We are taking a group to Charlotte on Friday, December 9th to help at the OCC processing center from 1-6PM. We can take 12 people and currently have 7 signed up. If you are interested in going with us, please call the church office to reserve your spot.



The Fall Celebration of the Buncombe Baptist Association will be held on Monday, October 3 at Mount Carmel Baptist Church. A light meal will be served at 5:30PM and the program will begin at 6:20PM. If you would like to attend, please register by calling 252-1864 or emailing Nancy Owen at: n-owen@buncombebaptist.org.



Pastor Jeff will be preaching a revival for Godwin Heights Baptist Church, Lumberton, NC, October 23-26.

ONE NIGHT ONLY SPECIAL EVENT
Tuesday, October 25th

CHRIS TOMLIN
PRESENTS
WORSHIP
NIGHT

★ IN AMERICA ★

AN EVENING OF UNITY AND PRAYER
FOR OUR COUNTRY

featuring
Chris Tomlin, Max Lucado, Louie Giglio,
Matt Redman, Phil Wickham, Tasha Cobbs,
Matt Maher & Kim Walker-Smith



Tickets available only at ChrisTomlin.com

APPENDIX F.2

NOVEMBER CROSSPOINTS ARTICLE



CALVARY
BAPTIST CHURCH

531 Haywood Road
Asheville, NC 28806

Jeff Hayes
Senior Pastor

Jim Burnett
Music Director

Susan Hocking
Organist

Vicki Sorenson
Office Administrator

Charlene Shelton
CEC Director

Aaron DeWeese
Custodian

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Church Host

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TELL ME THE

Story of Jesus

A STUDY IN THE SEASONS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

At the beginning of October I purchased two mums from Lowes: one yellow and the other burgundy. Neither plant had many blooms at the time I brought them home. Faithfully, however, Benjamin and I went outside after dinner each evening and watered the flowers. Benjamin always insisted we water the yellow mum first, yellow being his favorite color. Soon the buds began to unfold, revealing their exquisite colors. We have enjoyed their majestic blooms for the last few weeks; Benjamin enjoying the yellow one especially.

Dare I say studying the Christian year has been like that experience. When we began on October 2nd, most of us had few blooms to speak of when it came to understanding the various seasons. But as our souls have been watered and nurtured each Sunday, buds of life have begun to open. I am grateful for how many of you have expressed the significance of this study for your spiritual life. So goes the purpose of the Christian year, nourishing the soil of our lives over and over again until the story of Jesus springs forth royal blooms of faith such as love, mercy, and grace.

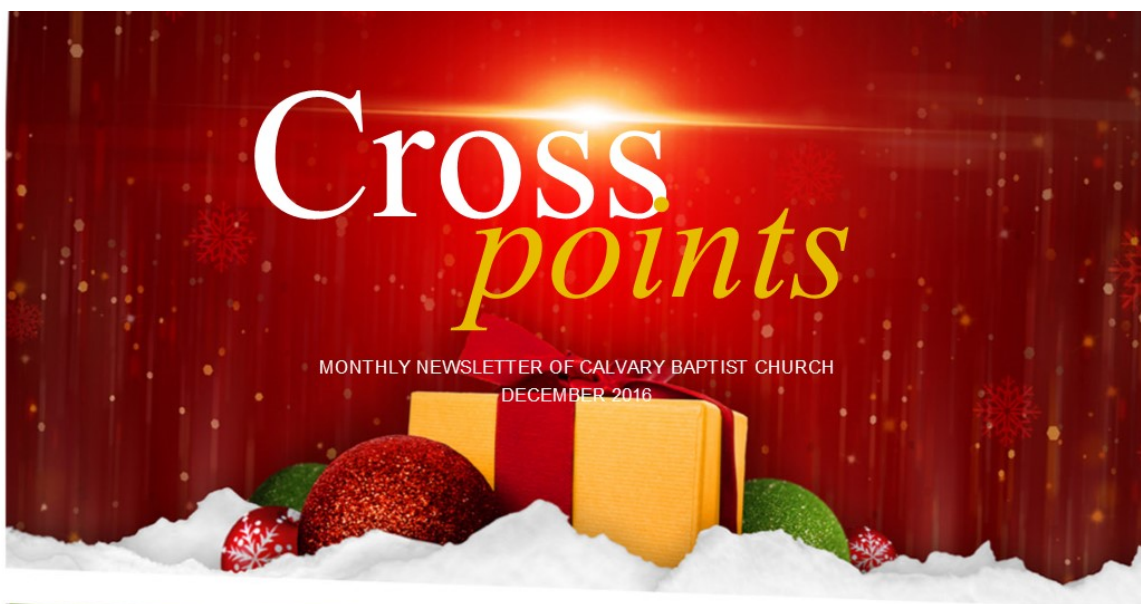
Indeed, the Christian year is a guide to spiritual maturity and a path to a life well lived—a life that follows the pattern of Jesus. It leads us to reflect on the profound moments of Jesus' life and then apply the lessons we learn to our own. During Advent we prepare for the birth of Jesus and our own renewal as his followers. At Christmas we celebrate the joy of Jesus' birth who is God-with-us, born into our lives and communities. Through the season after Epiphany we are reminded of our own baptism and calling as we read of Jesus' baptism and his call of disciples. Lent summons our need for confession, repentance, and commitment to die with Christ. Easter and the Great Fifty Days that follow celebrate the resurrection of Christ and our own ultimate resurrection over death. At Pentecost we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to carry out Christ's commands. Ordinary Time, especially, teaches us how to live in Christ as we learn what it means to be the church—Christ's body—continuing his redemptive work in the world.

It is through all these seasons, worship expert Robert Webber asserts, that "Christ is formed within us." I truly believe following the Christian year is one of the best ways for us to be formed spiritually and I am thankful you are willing to explore the seasons with me. There is so much more for us to experience as we finish our study this month. I look forward to watering the soil with each of you as we seek to flourish in our relationship with Jesus. ~Pastor Jeff



APPENDIX F.3

DECEMBER CROSSPOINTS ARTICLE



What is Your God Story?

The Rev. Jeffrey C. Hayes

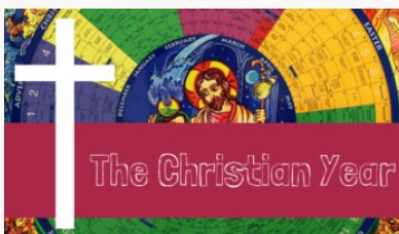
Last month a new film titled *Hacksaw Ridge* hit theaters with much acclaim. The film tells the true story of Pfc. Desmond T. Doss, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor following WWII, despite his refusal to carry a weapon on religious grounds. His bravery during the war saved the lives of seventy-five soldiers in the Battle of Okinawa—without ever firing a shot! It is a great film, but an even better story!

Most of us have a love/hate relationship with story. We love a good story on the silver screen or one we read in a good book, but once those stories have ended we snap back to reality, to our story, which feels less sensational or exciting as the ones in movies or best-selling novels. It is then we hate story, because we do not know how to translate the hustle and bustle of our daily story into something magical, soul-stirring, and gut-wrenching.

The truth, however, is that each of us have a great story. It is a story with intriguing plot twists mixed with moments of love, redemption, comedy, drama, and adventure. And unlike movies or books, which have a beginning, middle, and end, your story is ongoing. What makes your story so special? Because God is in your story! Better yet, God *is* your story.

Over the past two months we have walked through the seasons of the Christian year. If you have learned nothing else, then I hope you have learned that Jesus lives in, with, and through you—that his story is your story—and it's fantastic! And by following the pattern of the Christian year, we witness how our story and the story of Jesus mesh into one transform-

Continued on page 2



Sunday Worship

December 4

Second Sunday of Advent
Malachi 3:1-4

December 11

Third Sunday of Advent
Zephaniah 3:14-20

December 18

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Micah 5:2-5a
Choir Christmas Cantata

December 24

Christmas Eve Candlelight with
Missio Dei and SOMA Churches
5:30PM

December 25

Christmas Day Communion
11:00AM (No Sunday School)

December Meetings

December 6

6:30 Deacon Meeting
Coffee House

December 11

Quarterly Business Meeting
following Worship

December 12

6:00 Leadership Team Meeting

Continued from page 1

ing experience to be shared with the world. St. Francis is famous for coining the phrase, "Preach the Gospel continuously, and when necessary use words." I would augment his words slightly and say, "Preach the Gospel by living your story."

Living our God story starts by intentionally living our lives for Jesus, aligning every joy, every sorrow, every desire and disappointment, every success and season to his character. As I shared in the final sermon of this series, people are silently asking of us each day, "Are you Jesus?" I believe if we live the Christian year with consistency, then the answer will be a resounding "Yes!" The Christian year places our focus exactly where it need be—the story of Jesus—and, thus, places our story exactly where it need be—living as Jesus.

How might you incorporate a stronger telling of God's story in your life? How might a deeper focus on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection enrich your spirituality? As we begin a new year in the church calendar this month, may God continue to be ever-present in the story of our church.

During our quarterly business meeting on December 11th I will give a debriefing statement regarding my project. This statement will detail some of the results from the evaluations over the past eight weeks. Preliminary results show a strong favor toward observing the Christian year in our worship alongside a growing interest in learning more about the seasons. Many of you gave insightful comments in the post-survey regarding how the project impacted your spirituality as well as how the study might be improved. As I have reiterated throughout the project, the most important result is our desire to find ways to follow Jesus closer in our lives. I believe the Christian year gives us a great opportunity to do that in and out of worship.

Thank you for walking this journey with me. I look forward to celebrating Advent, Christmas, and all the seasons with each of you. ~Pastor Jeff

OCC SHOEBOXES

We had a great turnout for our Shoebox Packing Party. To date we have packed 392 shoeboxes! Thank you all so much for your year round participation in collecting items and blessing so many children with your generosity. We have a team that will be going to Charlotte on December 9th to volunteer at the Processing center.



THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED DEC. 26-JAN. 2

CHRISTMAS CAROLING



We are Christmas caroling at the Baptist Retirement Home on December 21. The van will be leaving the church at 10:00am. ALL ARE WELCOME to join us!

Christmas at the Cove December 14 \$35.00

We still have 2 tickets available. All tickets must be paid for in advance. We purchased 20 tickets and have 6 tickets paid for. If you want to go, please send in your money to reserve your spot ASAP!



CHOIR CHRISTMAS CANTATA SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18



The Heart of Christmas tells the timeless story that we remember each year in a creative, profound way -- by probing the hearts of those most directly involved in St. Luke's account of that first Christmas. This touching cantata uses a masterful variety of musical styles, from blues and bluegrass to the warmly melodic and chorally traditional. The choir has been preparing for this rich presentation of the Christmas message and we look forward to their leading us in worship.

DRIVER NEEDED

We are in need of a driver to rotate Sunday's to pick up Joseph and Cheryl Rehmatullah and bring them to church then back to their home. For more information please contact Fred Duyck at 777-5764.



APPENDIX G

NOTRE DAME STEP CERTIFICATE

		
<p>Certificate of Completion</p>		
<p>This document certifies that</p>		
<p><i>Jeffrey C Hayes</i></p>		
<p>has earned 25 contact hours</p>		
<p>for successfully completing the course requirements of</p>		
<p><i>The Liturgical Year</i></p>		
<p>from the University of Notre Dame Satellite Theological Education Program.</p>		
<p><u>October 7, 2016</u></p> <p>Date</p>		<p></p> <p>Director Satellite Theological Education Program</p>

APPENDIX H

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for participating in this Doctor of Ministry project entitled “Tell Me the Story of Jesus: A Study in the Seasons of the Christian Year.” I know your time is valuable and the devotion you gave to this project enabled the results listed below.

In this project the goal was to expose participants to eight seasons in the Christian year, including their history and significance toward spiritual formation. Based on the structure of the project, I expected to find a greater degree of affirmation for the Christian year from the Positive Control Group versus the congregation. This proved to be correct.

In comparing the pre- and post- project surveys, the results detailed:

1. Our church largely consists of retired, older adults between 65-84 years of age, the majority possessing a high school degree or some college, no degree, and a greater number of females versus males.
2. Everyone who completed the surveys calls themselves “Christian” and over 93% have done so for sixteen years or longer. The same can be said for how many years most people have been members of Calvary. There was not a single ‘No’ answer given to the question asking about one’s Christian faith.
3. Pertaining to specific questions on the Christian year, the PCG averaged a 386% positive increase to each question and the congregation averaged a 114% increase.
4. In particular, the PCG showed over a 950% increase in their overall understanding of the Christian year and the congregation showed over a 200% increase. This data is affirmation of the project’s thesis regarding the Positive Control Group versus congregation.
5. Significant increases were shown from both groups in their understanding of each season’s spiritual purpose.
6. Over 85% of the PCG “Strongly Agree” that observing the Christian year will help their growth as followers of Jesus. This was true for 55% of the congregation, with another 45% stating they “Agree.” There were zero negative answers to this question.
7. Both the PCG and congregation unequivocally felt the Sunday School lessons contributed to their knowledge of the Christian year.
8. Some individuals expressed the SS lessons could have been more thorough.
9. Numerous comments indicated a positive response for having the Sunday School lessons and weekly sermon coincide.
10. In reference to the study workbook, there were many positive comments. One repeated statement, however, was that some of the Sunday School lesson questions were confusing.
11. Many people commented how much they appreciated having a weekly sermon outline, with the majority of individuals completing the sermon outlines.
12. There were considerable comments indicating positive spiritual growth had occurred throughout the project.

13. An unexpected finding showed increased involvement from PCG participants in the life of the church. These individuals exhibited greater attendance in Sunday School, worship, tithing, and personal Bible Study/daily prayer.
14. The post-survey indicates that 45% of the congregation “Strongly Agrees” with observing the Christian year and 55% “Agree.” The PCG data shows 69% “Strongly Agree,” 23% “Agree,” and 8% “Disagree.”

In tallying the weekly evaluations, the results detailed:

1. On average, there was a 72% retention rate of individuals present in worship who completed the evaluations each week.
2. The majority of participants would like to observe the eight seasons presented in this project. When asked about each season individually, the data shows 93% or above were in favor of observing the specified season. Only Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany produced negative responses, all of which were 7% or lower in disagreement.
3. The PCG showed a 100% approval across the board for observing each season, except for a 92% approval rating for observing Epiphany.
4. An overwhelming majority felt the workbook, Sunday School lessons, worship, and sermon contributed to their understanding of each season.

Because of this project, I propose the following actions for our church:

1. Observing the Christian year in our annual worship cycle.
2. Continuing to study the history and spiritual purpose of the Christian year, possibly through an ongoing small group or the Pastor’s Bible Study.
3. Entertaining the prospect of having Sunday School lessons coincide with the weekly sermon. This can be considered at each SS teacher’s discretion.
4. Creating a weekly sermon outline to be included in the worship bulletin.
5. Continuing to find ways to incorporate the Christian year in our spiritual formation.

I hope this clarifies the results of the project. If you would like to read my entire Doctor of Ministry report, including the full results of all surveys and interviews, you may request to do so by contacting me at jeff@xxxxx.com or xxx-xxxx. Surveys and interviews are available immediately. The final report will not be available until February 1, 2017. All results will be grouped together; therefore, individual results are not available. All participants, including their names and responses, will remain anonymous. If you have any additional questions regarding this project, please contact me at the information provided above.

Thank you again for your participation!

Jeff Hayes
Facilitator

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