

Liturgical Colors and Their Meaning

From the ELCA website

Today, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provides a system of colors for use by its congregations; they serve to adorn the worship space, and to call attention to the nature of the season or festival being celebrated. A brief summary of their usage, according to the church year, follows.

Advent: Blue is associated with Advent, suggesting hope. This association originated in Scandinavia, probably because purple dye was too expensive for churches to use. Some churches use purple in Advent, a color associated with royalty as the church awaits the newborn king.

Christmas: White, calling to mind the purity of the newborn Christ, and to our light and joy in him. Some also use Gold.

Epiphany of Our Lord: White (see Christmas).

Baptism of Our Lord: White (see Christmas).

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

Transfiguration of Our Lord: White (see Christmas).

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

Lent: Purple is typically associated with Lent, suggesting repentance and solemnity.

Palm Sunday: Scarlet is the preferred color of this first day of Holy Week, as it suggests the deep color of blood. (Scarlet is not the same as the red color used for Pentecost and other church celebrations). Purple may also be used.

Days of Holy Week: Scarlet or purple may be used for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week. Maundy Thursday: For this fourth day of Holy Week, celebrated as the institution of the Lord's Supper, scarlet or white is used. Good Friday: The altar is stripped on Maundy Thursday night and no colors are used on Good Friday.

Easter Vigil: White or Gold suggests of joy in the Resurrection is used on this night.

Easter Day: Gold or white is suggested for this day. The gold color symbolizes that this day is the "queen of feasts," unique in the entire church year.

Sundays of Easter: White suggests the joy of the resurrection.

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

The Holy Trinity: White is suggested, the expression of joy in the mystery of the Triune God.

Other Sundays after Pentecost: Green is used, to indicate our growth in faith as we follow the teachings and ministry of Christ. This is a long season, and some churches use a lighter green in summer and a darker green in fall.

Christ the King: The final day of the church year uses white, a festive color suggesting light, joy, and the celebration of our Lord. Lesser festivals and commemorations are white, unless a martyr is celebrated, in which case bright red is suggested.