

# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

November 26th, 2023

26th Sunday after Pentecost

(Last Sunday of Liturgical/Church Year)

Reign of Christ Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *Christ in Glory*

*Apse Mosaic at the Church of the Transfiguration, Orleans, MA, U.S.*

By a commissioned mosaic artist from Ravenna, Italy - in the tradition of the mosaics  
of the early Byzantine churches in Ravenna and elsewhere

*Photo by Karemin1094*

*Wikimedia Commons.* [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apse\\_mosaic\\_Christ\\_in\\_Glory.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apse_mosaic_Christ_in_Glory.jpg)



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

**November 26th, 2023**

**26<sup>h</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**(Last Sunday of the Liturgical/Church Year)**

**Reign of Christ Sunday**

**A Service of the Word**

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“At the end of the day it’s not about what you have or what you’ve accomplished...  
It’s about who you’ve lifted up, who you’ve made better. It’s about what you’ve given back.”  
-Denzel Washington-**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*Call to Worship** (*Inspired by Psalm 100*)

One: Make a joyful noise to the Lord! Worship with gladness and singing!

**Many: God is Creator, Sustainer, Keeper, and Shepherd. Bless God’s name.**

One: Enjoy the presence of God! Give thanks and praise!

**Many: God is Sovereign and Holy. Bless God’s name.**

One: Know that God reigns! God’s kin-dom comes!

**Many: God is Healer, Redeemer, Restorer, and Friend. Bless God’s name!**

**\* Invocation**

**God who cares,  
we flourish in your compassion.  
You search for us and find us.  
You, Holy One, surround us  
with the power of your  
abundant love and utmost care.**

**Be present among us  
as we praise your name,  
bring our burdens,  
and give thanks for all  
that you are**

and all that you do.  
Amen.

\*Hymn – NCH 301 – Crown with Your Richest Crowns vs. 1, 2, 4, & 5

### A READING OF THE WORD

**First Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24**

*In today's reading from the Hebrew Scripture, the prophet Ezekiel speaks on behalf of God to a people led astray by their rulers and officials, and have gone into exile. God will become the shepherd of the people, coming to rescue them from the places to they have been taken. God will provide for them, especially the marginalized, including those in poverty and those with disabilities, but the "fat and the strong"—the people who have taken the power and wealth—will be destroyed, because all will be fed with justice. God is the one who will judge, like a shepherd determining between sheep, and will set up a shepherd over them like David, the shepherd king.*

**34** 11 For thus says Sovereign YHWH: I myself will search for my sheep; I will seek them out. 12 As shepherds seek out their flocks when their flocks are scattered in every direction, so I will search for my sheep and rescue them, no matter where they scattered on that day of full clouds and thick darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the countries and bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by its streams and wherever there is a settlement. 14 I will feed them on good pasture land, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing ground. 15 I myself will tend my flock and have it lie down, thus says Sovereign YHWH. 16 I will seek out those who are lost, I will return those who have strayed, I will bind up those who are injured, and I will strengthen those who are weak, and I will watch over those who are fat and those who are sleek. I will be a true shepherd to them.

20 Therefore, thus says YHWH to you: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep, 21 for you shove aside those who are weak with flank and shoulder; you butt them with your horns until they are scattered in every direction.

22 " I will save my flock and they will be ravaged no longer. I will judge between one sheep and another. 23 I will set up over them one shepherd to care for them: my servant David. He will care for them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, YHWH, will be their God, and my servant David will be their leader. I, YHWH, have spoken.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 100 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 100 is a call to worship and song of praise, reminding the people that God is their shepherd, and they are the sheep of God's pasture. The psalmist calls upon the whole earth to worship God. For the faithful, they are to enter the courts of the temple with thanksgiving and praise, and God's steadfast love endures for all generations.*

**100** 1 Acclaim God with joy,  
all the earth!

## **2 Serve God with gladness!**

**Enter into God's presence with a joyful song!**

## **3 Know that the Sovereign is God!**

God made us, and we belong to the Creator;  
we are God's people  
and the sheep of God's pasture.

## **4 Enter God's gates with thanksgiving and the courts with praise!**

**Give thanks to God!**

**Bless God's Name!**

## **5 For God is good;**

**God's steadfast love endures forever,  
and God's faithfulness  
to all generations.**

## **Second Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23**

*The Epistle lesson is Ephesians 1. The writer, probably not Paul but a disciple of Paul, writes of the faithfulness of the people of Ephesus and prays that they will have a spirit of wisdom and revelation as they come to know Jesus Christ. God's immeasurable power and greatness has been put to work in Jesus Christ, who has been raised from the dead, who has authority over all things, and is the head of the body—the church—and the church is the fullness of Christ on earth.*

**1** 15 From the time I first heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of the holy ones, 16 I have never stopped thanking God for you and remembering you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Savior Jesus Christ, the God of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation, to bring you to a rich knowledge of the Creator.

18 I pray that God will enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see the hope this call holds for you—the promised glories that God's holy ones will inherit, 19 and the infinitely great power that is exercised for us who believe. You can tell this from the strength of God's power at work in Jesus, 20 the power used to raise Christ from the dead and to seat Christ in heaven at God's right hand, 21 far above every sovereignty, authority, power or dominion, and above any other name that can be named—not only in this age, but also in the age to come. 22 God has put all things under Christ's feet and made Christ, as the ruler of everything, the head of the church, 23 and the church is Christ's body; it's the fullness of the One who fills all of creation.

## **Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46**

*The Gospel lesson culminates the season after Pentecost and the series of Jesus' last parables and discourse with these versions in Matthew 25, in a vision of when the Promised One comes in glory. The Promised One will judge between all the peoples of all the nations, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Those who are faithful are the ones who have lived out all Christ has taught of loving one's neighbor as themselves: feeding those who are hungry, giving water to those who are thirsty, welcoming the stranger, giving clothing to those in need, caring for those who are sick, visiting those in prison. Those who refused to do these things are the ones who will be sent into eternal punishment. The judgment is harsh, but as a final parable, it summarizes everything Jesus had taught*

*the disciples and all his followers: if you want to love God, you must love one another, especially the most vulnerable of our community, as you love yourself.*

**25** 31 “At the appointed time the Promised One will come in glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, and will sit upon the royal throne, 32 with all the nations assembled below. Then the Promised One will separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. 33 The sheep will be placed on the right hand, the goats on the left.

34 “The ruler will say to those on the right, ‘Come, you blessed of my Abba God! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world! 35 For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me; 36 naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me.’ 37 Then these who are just will ask, ‘When did we see you hungry and feed you, or see you thirsty and give you drink? 38 When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or clothe you in your nakedness? 39 When did we see you ill or in prison and come to visit you?’ 40 The ruler will answer them, ‘The truth is, every time you did this for the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it for me.’

Into that everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and the fallen angels! 42 I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. 43 I was a stranger and you gave me no welcome; naked and you gave me no clothing. I was ill and in prison and you did not come to visit me.’ 44 Then they in turn will ask, ‘When did we see you hungry or thirsty, or homeless or naked, or ill or in prison, and not take care of you?’ 45 The answer will come, ‘The truth is, as often as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.’ 46 They will go off to eternal punishment, and those who are just will go off to eternal life.”

**Reflection – “Living Justly”- Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

## **WE RESPOND**

### **\*Prayer of Response**

**Eternal Savior, there is nothing that will ever separate us from you.  
Even in these despairing, hopeless times, we trust in you that somehow,  
this will turn, this will change, this pain and suffering  
we are experiencing will come to an end and that you will lead us through.**

**We hold on to the hope of new life now, that we can be  
your disciples on earth and live by example for others.**

**We pray that we can find peace in our own lives,  
so we can live by that peace to one another.**

**Help us to remember that you are an eternal God,  
not a temporary one.**

**What we experience and know now is temporary,  
but what you have shown us—your way,  
your truth, and your life—is eternal.**

**We cling to that hope, O Sovereign of all. Amen.**

**\*Hymn of Response – NCH 454 – Lord, I Want to Be a Christian**

**Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

In Ephesians 1:18, the writer prays that, “I pray that God will enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see the hope this call holds for you—the promised glories that God’s holy ones will inherit.” God’s gifts cannot be limited to the material although they include the material. God’s riches exceed our hopes and expectations when we recognize the glory of the kin-dom. Let us acknowledge the reign of God as we share the abundance of this glorious inheritance and return a portion to support the ministry of Christ’s church in the world and among the community of believers.

**The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*Presentation of Offerings – Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*Blessing of the Gifts**

**Gracious God, thank you for the gifts we have and the blessing of sharing. Use our gifts for your glory and to meet the needs and hopes of your kin-dom. Amen.**

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

***Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino***

**Prayers of the People**

**The Lord’s Prayer (using “debts” and “debtors”)**

**Our Father, who art in heaven  
Hallowed be thy Name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power,  
and the glory,**

forever.  
Amen.

**\*Litany for Reign of Christ**

Christ, we honor you,  
**The faithful witness,**  
The firstborn of the dead,  
**The ruler of the rulers of the earth.**  
You who love us and freed us from our sins -  
**We honor you.**

For you have inspired us and taught us  
**You have revolutionized our lives.**  
You have enlivened our hearts.  
**You have exemplified and embodied Love.**

In your wisdom you made us to be a kin-dom  
**A community of priests.**  
And your rule is forever;  
**Your peace, your goodness, unending.**

You came to testify to the truth  
**The truth of God's loving nature.**  
And we who listen to your voice  
**Also make this testimony**  
With our voices  
**With our actions**  
With our being -  
**That God is Love.**

Love has established the world  
**And it shall not be moved.**  
Amen.

**GOING FORTH**

**\*Parting Hymn -- NCH 573 -- Lead On Eternal Sovereign**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Now, from where God has gathered us, let us go.

**All: To discover that those who are strangers and those who are homeless,  
Those who are prisoners and those who are hospice patients and  
everyone else are our siblings in life and faith.**

One: Now, from where we have been fed, let us go.

**All: To join Jesus in serving those who thirst for righteousness**

as well as those who hunger for justice.

One: Now, from where we have been one, let us go.

**All: To find those who have been tossed aside,  
gathering them up to bring them  
to the Spirit's goodness and peace. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

### Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts are adapted from *Care: Service Prayers for the Reign of Christ Sunday*, written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ.
- (2) Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 26th, 2023*, written by Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 16th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) Litany for the Reign of Christ is adapted from *Litany for Reign of Christ (Proper 29, Year B)* by Rev. Fran Pratt, and posted to <http://www.franpratt.com/litanies/2018/11/21/litany-for-reign-of-christ-proper-29-year-b>. Reposted November 23rd, 2018 on the website of *Global Christian Worship*. <https://globalworship.tumblr.com/post/180431873395/litany-for-reign-of-christ>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 26/Trinity25/Proper 29/Ordinary 34-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 16th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**

**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**

**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**

**Keith Konet, Council President**

**Beverly Wurm, Administrative Assistant**





## NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### God is Still Speaking...

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you will find a spiritual home in this United Church of Christ congregation. WELCOME!

**Tithes and Offerings** - Checks and Money Orders can be made payable to: "Zion United Church of Christ" and placed in the offering basket or mailed to:

**Zion United Church of Christ  
c/o Keith Konet  
1039 Bridlewood Drive  
Copley, OH 44321**

Questions: Contact Keith Konet at 330.604.6939

### Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

### Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Street)/home. The days and hours are:

#### Fall Schedule :

Tuesday– 9am – 1pm

Wednesday – 10am-2 pm

Thursday – 9am – 1pm

Beverly can be reached at: [zionchurchtremont@gmail.com](mailto:zionchurchtremont@gmail.com) or by phone at: 216-273-7561 (church) or 216-310-6810 (mobile).



### Today (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn

to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



### **The Hanging of the Greens follows Worship Today (Sun. Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>) including a Chili & Cornbread Lunch**

Start the holiday season with us this Sunday, November 26 with our annual church decorating for Advent and Christmas (Hanging of the Greens)!

Join us as we bring out our beautiful Advent and Christmas decorations following worship on Sunday. Meet new and old friends while enjoying a turkey chili and cornbread lunch, hot coffee & tea, and warm hearts to fill the day.

Whatever time you can give will be appreciated.

Many hands help make the job very easy and fun!

**The "hanging of the greens"** is a Western Christian ceremony in which many congregations and people **adorn their churches with Advent and Christmas decorations**. This is done on or directly before the start of the Advent season, in preparation for Christmastide. The service involves the placement of evergreen vegetation in the church. Items such as the evergreen wreath, in Christianity, carry the religious symbolism of everlasting life. As such, during the liturgy, "Biblical passages and other readings help explain the significance of the holly, the cedar, the Advent wreath, the Chrismon tree, and any other special decorations". Christmas trees are frequently set up during the hanging of the greens, although they are sometimes left bare until Christmas Eve.

Outside of a formal liturgy, in many countries, such as Sweden, people start to set up their Advent and Christmas decorations on the first day of Advent. In the Western Christian world, the two traditional days when Christmas decorations are removed are Twelfth Night, and if they are not taken down on that day, Candlemas, the latter of which ends the Christmas-Epiphany season in some denominations.



### **Advent Sundays at Zion Church**

- Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion
- Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ
- Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent
- Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

## The Advent Wreath

**The Advent wreath is a Christian tradition that symbolizes the passage of the four weeks of Advent in the liturgical calendar of the Western church.** It is traditionally a Lutheran practice, although it has spread to many other Christian denominations including the United Church of Christ.

**It is an evergreen wreath with four candles, sometimes with a fifth, white candle in the center.**

Beginning with the First Sunday of Advent, the lighting of a candle can be accompanied by a Bible reading, devotional time and prayers. An additional candle is lit on each subsequent Sunday until, by the last Sunday of Advent, all four candles are lit. Some Advent wreaths include a fifth, Christ candle which is lit at Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The custom originated in family settings but has also become widespread in public worship.

More recently, some Eastern Orthodox families have adopted an Advent wreath with six candles, symbolizing the longer Christmas fast in Orthodox tradition, which corresponds to Advent in Western Christianity.

### Christian symbolism in the Advent wreath

Advent wreaths are circular, representing God's infinite love, and are usually made of evergreen leaves, which "represent the hope of eternal life brought by Jesus Christ". Within the Advent wreath are candles that generally represent the four weeks of the Advent season as well as "the light of God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus Christ" although each of the candles can be attributed its own significance as well. The four candles of the Advent wreath specifically symbolize the Christian concepts of hope, peace, joy and love, with these candles being lit subsequently throughout each week of the Advent season. Many Advent wreaths also have a white candle in the center to symbolize the arrival of Christmastide, which is known as the 'Christ candle'. It is first lit on Christmas Eve, the beginning of Christmastide and may be lit throughout the rest of the Christmas season. The Christ candle is colored white because this is the traditional festal color in the Western Church. An additional layer of meaning names the first candle as the Messiah or Prophecy candle (representing the prophets who predicted the coming of Jesus), the second is the Bethlehem candle (representing the journey of Joseph and Mary), the third represents the shepherds and their joy, and the fourth is the Angel's candle, representing peace.

**In many Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, the most popular colors for the four surrounding Advent candles are violet (or blue) and rose, corresponding with the colors of the liturgical vestments for the Sundays of Advent.** For denominations of the Western Christian Church, violet is the historic liturgical color for three of the four Sundays of Advent as it is the traditional color of penitential seasons; **blue has been historically used too, as it represents hopefulness, reflective of the theme of Advent surrounding the First Coming of Jesus and Second Coming of Jesus.** Rose is the liturgical color for the Third Sunday of Advent, known as *Gaudete Sunday* (from the Latin word meaning "rejoice ye", the first word of the introit of this Sunday); it is a pause in the penitential spirit of Advent. As such, the third candle, representing joy, is often a different color from the other three.



## You are Invited to A Christmas Party

**OWLS CLEVELAND – Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors** are hosting a Christmas Party on **Wednesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 11:30am** at **Zion Church** (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup> Street).

RSVP for a free lunch to 216.310.6820 (Bev).

## A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

**Will be held on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm.** We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.



You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.

## Please Remember in Prayer

- The Universal Church, its members and mission,
- The nation and all in authority, the leaders of our nation - federal, state, and local.
- For democracy and our democratic institutions and norms in the United States.
- The welfare of the world and the concerns of the local community.
- The interrelationship of Gospel values and civic engagement.
- Ministries of the United Church of Christ and of Zion Church.
- The leaders of our church: local, regional, and national, including The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for our Living Water Association UCC, Association General Minister, The Rev. Nayiri Karjian, and Association Faith in Action Minister, The Rev. Michael Howard.
- The ministers and missionaries of the world.
- Those who are refugees and immigrants.
- For children separated from their parents at detention camps along our southern border.
- For racial and religious justice and reconciliation in the United States and around the world.
- Mother Earth and the global reflection on climate disruption.
- For peace, justice, and freedom throughout the world and particularly for the peoples of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the United States.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the

state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen

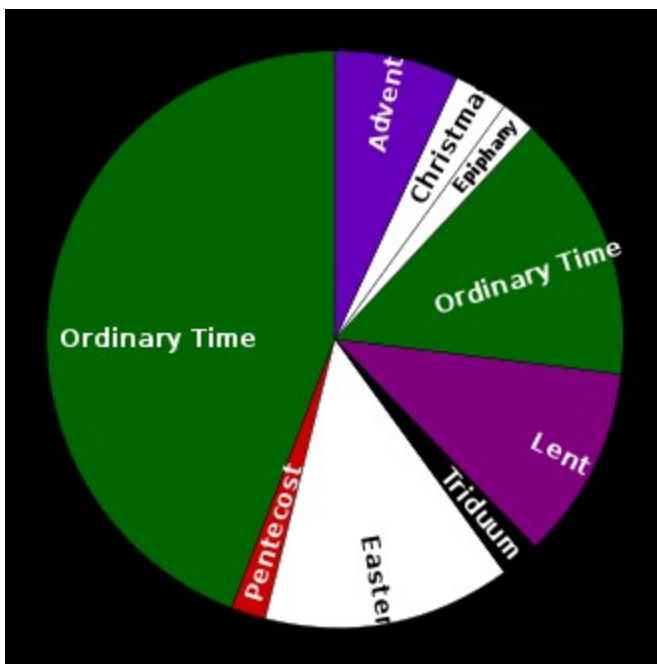


infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 215 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages (13 Israelis, 10 Thai nationals, and 1 Filipino national were released from captivity on Friday – 39 Palestinians held prisoner by Israel (mostly women and teenage boys) were released on Friday as well. More than 14,800 Palestinians have been killed in numerous air

strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. During a temporary ceasefire, which began Friday, trucks from Egypt are delivering medical supplies, fuel, and food to Gaza. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 612 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. In 2022 a total of 648 mass shootings. In 2021 a total of 693 mass shooting incident occurred across the US, in 2020 a total of 611, in 2019 a total of 417, with 337 incidents in 2018. While we pray for the families and friends of those whose lives have been taken in violent acts – and we pray for those injured in body, mind, soul, and spirit—and for their neighborhoods and communities across the United States – We know that our words and prayers are not enough. We must repent for our collective inaction and commit to tirelessly working toward meaningful gun violence prevention.
- For those affected by the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and the various variant surges: for all those who are infected and/or sick, and those who are grieving, for all who are affected, all around the world, for essential workers and frontline workers...we pray for comfort, for safety, for health and for wholeness.
- The residents and management of the San Sofia Apartments who share a campus with us.

- Those anticipating surgery, recovering from surgery, or undergoing medical procedures, tests, or treatments.
- Those living in assisted living or in a nursing home
- Those who are homebound and those who are caregivers
- Those who suffer or are in any trouble, and the departed.
- Those on our church prayer list:
  - Patti Augustine (*health concerns*) and family. Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)



## The Liturgical Year, Also Called the Church Year or Christian Year

Consists of **the cycle of liturgical seasons** in some Christian churches that determines when feast days, are to be observed, and which **portions of Scripture are to be read either in an annual cycle or in a cycle of several years (a lectionary)**.

**Distinct liturgical colors** may be used in connection with different seasons of the liturgical year. The dates of the festivals vary somewhat among the different churches, although the sequence and logic is largely the same.

The Church's Year is characterized first, by **the weekly festival of the Lord's Day** (a feature which dates from the dawn of the Church's life and the age of the Apostles) and, secondly,

by the **annual recurrence of fasts and festivals, of certain days and certain seasons of religious observance.**

The liturgical cycle divides the year into **a series of seasons**, each with their own mood, theological emphases, and modes of prayer, which can be signified by different ways of decorating churches, colors of paraments (*altar and pulpit cloths*) and vestments for clergy, scriptural readings, themes or preaching and even different traditions and practices often observed personally or in the home. **In churches that follow the liturgical year, the scripture passages for each Sunday (and even each day of the year in some traditions) are specified in a lectionary.**

After the Protestant Reformation, Anglicans and Lutherans continued to follow the lectionary of the Roman Rite. Following a decision of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church revised that lectionary in 1969, adopting a three-year cycle of readings for Sundays and a two-year cycle for weekdays.

Adaptations of the revised Roman Rite lectionary were adopted by Protestants, leading to the publication in 1994 of the **Revised Common Lectionary for Sundays and major feasts**, which is now used by many Protestant denominations, including also Methodists, United Church of Christ, some Reformed, etc. **This has led to a greater awareness of the traditional Christian year among Protestants, especially among mainline denominations.**

## **Liturgical Colors and the seasons of the church year**

The use of colors to differentiate liturgical seasons became a common practice in the Western church in about the fourth century. At first, usages varied considerably but by the 12th century Pope Innocent III systematized the use of five colors: **Violet, White, Black, Red and Green**. The Lutheran and Anglican churches that emerged from the Reformation retained the traditional colors but they disappeared entirely (along with most other ritual) from the worship of the Reformed churches. During the 20th century, the ecumenical Liturgical Movement prompted the rediscovery of ancient Christian ritual—including the traditional colors of the Western church. To these have been added **Blue and Gold**—colors that were used in some Western rites before the 12th century.

**Briefly, the colors express emotions and ideas that are associated with each of the seasons of the liturgical year.** Violet is the ancient royal color and therefore a symbol of the sovereignty of Christ. Violet is also associated with repentance from sin. White and Gold symbolize the brightness of day. Black is the traditional color of mourning in some cultures. Red evokes the color of blood, and therefore is the color of martyrs and of Christ's death on the Cross. Red also symbolizes fire, and therefore is the color of the Holy Spirit. Green is the color of growth. Blue is the color of the sky and in some rites honors Mary.

**Congregations in the United Church of Christ have the freedom to use any combination of colors (or no particular colors) as seems best to them. The use of traditional colors, however, connects us to the wider Body of Christ and provides worship planners with visual aids that mark the transition from one season to another. Colors can be used in altar and pulpit decorations, vestments, banners and tapestries.**

## Advent

Advent is a season of spiritual preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ (Christmas) and looks forward to the future reign of Christ. Rather than personal penitence, the central theme of the season is eschatological expectation (that is expectation of the end of the present age, human history, or the world itself – and in Christian belief the return of Christ). Advent is a preparation for, rather than a celebration of Christmas, so Advent hymns should be sung instead of Christmas carols. The first Sunday of Advent is not the beginning of the Christmas season. The Christmas celebration begins on Christmas Eve and continues for the next “twelve days of Christmas.”

**Purple** is traditionally Advent’s liturgical color, associated both with the sovereignty of Christ and with penitence. **Deep Blue** is also sometimes used to distinguish the season from Lent. As the color of the night sky, Blue symbolizes Christ who in one ancient Advent song is called the “Dayspring” or source of day. As the color associated with Mary, Blue also reminds us that during Advent the church waits with Mary for the birth of Jesus.

## Christmas and Christmas Season

The Lectionary readings for **Christmas and the following twelve days (culminating in the feast of the Epiphany)** invite the church to reflect on the Incarnation (or embodiment) of God as a human being: “The Word became a human being and lived among us, and we have seen his glory...” (John 1:14). In Christ, God enters human history and identifies fully with the human condition.

The traditional colors of the season are **White or Gold**, symbolizing joy in the light of day.

## Season after Epiphany

The season following Epiphany continues the theme established on Epiphany Day: the spread of the Good News of Christ from its source in the Jewish community to all nations on earth. The Lectionary therefore explores the mission of the church in the world. **The theme of this season (along with the sequence of readings from the Gospel) continues in the season after Pentecost**, so both seasons together can be called the “Time of the Church” or “Ordinary Time” (from “ordinal” or counting). The traditional liturgical color for both seasons, **Green**, is the color of growth.

## Lent

The traditions of Lent are derived from the season’s origin as a time when the church prepared candidates, or “catechumens,” for their baptism into the Body of Christ. It eventually became a season of preparation not only for catechumens but also for the whole congregation. Self-examination, study, fasting, prayer and works of love are disciplines historically associated with Lent. Conversion—literally, the “turning around” or reorientation of our lives towards God—is the theme of Lent. Both as individuals and as a community, we look inward and reflect on our readiness to follow Jesus in his journey towards the cross. The **forty days of Lent** correspond to the forty-day temptation of Jesus in the wilderness and the forty-year journey of Israel from slavery to a new community.

On **Ash Wednesday**, ashes are placed on the foreheads of the congregation as a symbol that we have come from dust and one day will return to dust. It is one of many Lenten and Easter customs that remind us of our historical connection with Jewish tradition. With this sobering reminder of life’s



fragility, we begin a spiritual quest that continues until the **Easter Vigil**, when new members of the church are often baptized and the entire congregation joins in a reaffirmation of baptismal vows. **Most of this time of preparation is symbolized by the color Violet, though the season is bracketed by the mourning Black of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.** As an alternative to Violet, some churches have begun to use **brown, beige or gray (the colors of rough unbleached cloth like burlap)** to reflect the season's mood of penitence and simplicity. The somber colors are a reminder of the unbleached "sackcloth" worn by mourners and penitents in the Jewish tradition.

## **Holy Week**

During Holy Week, the congregation follows the footsteps of Jesus from his entry into Jerusalem (**Palm/Passion Sunday**) through the Last Supper (**Maundy Thursday**) to his death on the **Cross (Good Friday)**. **Red, the color of blood and therefore of martyrs, is the traditional color for Palm/Passion Sunday and the next three days of Holy Week.** On Maundy Thursday, White or Gold symbolizes the church's rejoicing in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But at the end of the Maundy Thursday celebration, the mood changes abruptly: all decorations are removed and the Holy Table is stripped bare. The church becomes as empty as a tomb. **On Good Friday, either Black or Red** is customary—**although the use of no color at all is also appropriate.** The Red of Holy Week is sometimes a deeper red than the brighter scarlet color associated with Pentecost.

## **Easter and Pentecost**

Instead of finding a sealed tomb, the women who had come at dawn on Sunday are surprised by an angel who announces astonishing news: "Jesus has been raised from the dead" (Matt. 28:7). The heavenly messenger invites the mourners to see the empty tomb and then go and tell the disciples that the Crucified One is alive!

**The season from Easter to Pentecost is also called the Great Fifty Days,** a tradition inspired by the Jewish season of fifty days between Passover and Shavuot—the feast celebrating the giving of the Torah to Moses.

The liturgical color for this season is celebratory **White or Gold**. **When the season ends on Pentecost Sunday, White is replaced with Red.** This color reminds the congregation of fire—the symbol of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit overpowered the barriers of culture and race. **The first Sunday after Pentecost celebrates the Trinity, and the color again is White or Gold.**

## **Season after Pentecost**

This longest season of the liturgical year is a continuation of the "Time of the Church" that began on the Sunday after Epiphany (Ordinary Time). It explores the mission of the church and uses the color of **Green**, symbolizing growth. During this season, the Lectionary offers two options for readings from Hebrew Scripture: the first, topical option selects readings thematically related to the Epistle or Gospel texts. The second, sequential option reads through an entire book of Hebrew Scripture in sequence.

## **Other Holy Days and observances**

**Pentecostal Red is also the traditional color for Reformation Day on October 31. White or Gold is the color for All Saints Day on November 1 and is also an alternative to Green on the last Sunday after**

**Pentecost—the feast of the Reign of Christ.**

During other observances, the tradition is to use Red on commemorations of martyrs and other saints. As the color of the Holy Spirit, it is appropriate for ordinations. The colors of Christmas, White or Gold, are also customary on other feast days that celebrate the Incarnation or Resurrection of Christ (Holy Name, Baptism, Presentation, Annunciation, Visitation, Ascension and Transfiguration). Black for centuries was the traditional color for funerals, but in the past fifty years many liturgical churches have preferred to use White or Gold—the colors of Easter and therefore of Resurrection hope.