

The Circle of the Church Year

Each year, Christians move through a circle of memory and expectation to open themselves to the elusive presence of God. In the Godly Play classroom, we pay attention to this circle of movement, using a cloth wall hanging that has colored cloth "blocks" for the Sundays of the year and a golden arrow that moves from Sunday to Sunday.

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's Godly Play presentation. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

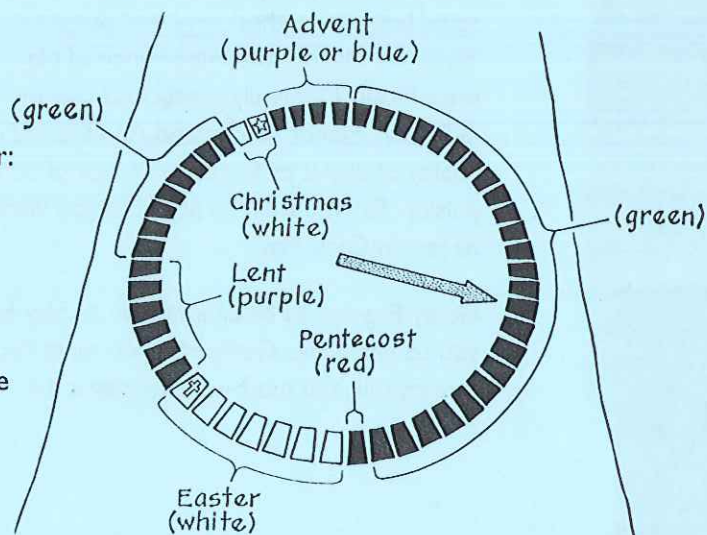
Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or

her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. Whether you read the lesson or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today's lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the presentation can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

The Presentation

There are three great times in the Church year: Christmas...Easter...and Pentecost. (Point to each of these days in the illustration as you mention them.) Each of these is a great mystery, but people can walk right through these mysteries each year, and not even know they're there.





Wondering

- **I wonder** which one of these colors you like best?
- **I wonder** which color is the most important?
- **I wonder** why the Church tells time with colors?

We need time to get ready to come close to these mysteries. There are three times for getting ready. The time for getting ready to come close to the mystery of Christmas is called "Advent." It is four weeks long.

The time for getting ready to come close to the mystery of Easter is called "Lent." It is six weeks long, even greater than the time for getting ready to come close to the mystery of Christmas.

Easter is so great that it keeps on going. You can't keep it in one Sunday. It overflows and goes on for six more Sundays.

The time for Easter is also a time for getting ready to come close to the mystery of Pentecost. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down. The Church was born. The Apostles glowed with the power of the Holy Spirit. They were more alive than they had ever been before. That's why the color of Pentecost is red like fire.

Look at all of the great green Sundays of the year. Some come between Christmas and the beginning of Lent. The rest come after Pentecost and before Advent.

It is all here. Everything we need. For every beginning there is an ending, and for every ending there is a beginning. It goes on and on, forever and ever.

Godly Play An Invitation to Godly Play

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. Today we explore the importance of *play*, since Godly Play really is play. And play, by definition, cannot be coerced. An essential quality of play is its freedom: its lack of compulsion. Do you *want* to play? Do you want to join in *Godly Play*?

Godly Play has to be an *invitation* to play. For you to enter into Godly Play, you must find it enjoyable. You must want to play it for

its own sake. You must be willing to let go of the mundane details of daily life to enter deeply into the timelessness of play.

In Godly Play, the invitation is given not for play in general but for play with the language of God and God's People: our sacred stories, parables, liturgical actions and silence. Through this powerful language, through the wondering, through the community of players gathered together, children hear the deepest invitation of all: an invitation to come play with God.