

Important Information: Advent, Christmas & Epiphany

Sunday, December 3, 2017 is the first Sunday of the Advent season. Since this important first season of the year is days away from beginning, this is a good time to review exactly what this season means to us, as well as Christmas and the Epiphany.

Advent

Advent is the first season of the church year, beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continuing through the day before Christmas. The name is derived from a Latin word for "coming." The season is a time of preparation and expectation for the coming celebration of our Lord's nativity, and for the final coming of Christ "in power and glory."

Advent Year B	First reading	Psalm	Second reading	Gospel
First Sunday of Advent December 3, 2017 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Isaiah 64:1-9	Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	Mark 13:24-37
Second Sunday of Advent December 10, 2017 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Isaiah 40:1-11	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13	2 Peter 3:8-15a	Mark 1:1-8
Third Sunday of Advent December 17, 2017 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11	Psalm 126 or <i>Luke 1:46b-55</i>	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	John 1:6-8, 19-28
Fourth Sunday of Advent December 24, 2017 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	Luke 1:46b-55 or <i>Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26</i>	Romans 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38
<i>Italicized readings, complementary to the standard reading, may be used with, or in place of it.</i>				

(This advent calendar with readings is provided by the online Revised Common Lectionary - <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu>)

Christmas

In the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), Christmas Day is one of the seven principal feasts. The Christmas season lasts twelve days, from Christmas Day until Jan. 5, the

day before the Epiphany. The season includes Christmas Day, the First Sunday after Christmas Day, the Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and may include the Second Sunday after Christmas Day. In many parishes, the main liturgical celebrations of Christmas take place on Christmas Eve. The Book of Occasional Services (BOS) includes a variety of resources for use during Christmas, including a form for a Station at a Christmas Crèche, a form for a Christmas Festival of Lessons and Music, and seasonal blessings for use during the Christmas season.

Epiphany

The manifestation of Christ to the peoples of the earth. The winter solstice was kept on January 6 at some places during the first centuries of the Christian Era. In opposition to pagan festivals, Christians chose this day to celebrate the various manifestations, or "epiphanies," of Jesus' divinity. These showings of his divinity included his birth, the coming of the Magi, his baptism, and the Wedding at Cana where he miraculously changed water into wine. The day was called "The Feast of Lights." Celebration of the Son of God replaced celebration of the sun. Baptisms were done, and a season of preparation was instituted. It was later called Advent. The solstice was kept on December 25 by the fourth century. Jesus' birth was celebrated on this day in both eastern and western churches. The western church commemorated the coming of the Magi on January 6. The eastern church continued to celebrate the Baptism of our Lord and the Wedding at Cana on Jan. 6. In the East, the day was called "Theophany" (manifestation of God). The coming of the Magi is celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, in the BCP. The Baptism of our Lord is celebrated on the First Sunday after the Epiphany. (SOURCE: The Episcopal Church)