Ordering Our Days in His Peace
An Introduction to the Christian Church Year

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And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. . . . And God saw that it was good.”

Genesis 1:14–18

God made everything we see. He made the land and the oceans and the stars in the sky. He made you. The Bible tells us that God made everything in the whole universe for the good of humanity—His special and beloved creation. One of the things God made is time. Time helps us make sense of, or order, God’s creation. Minutes and hours order our days. The days help us order our weeks and months. And the months give order to our years.

Because we are creatures of time—we are born one day, then we grow in months and years until we die—telling the time and knowing the order of things is important. We cannot understand our own lives or any event in human history without noting what happened when. We could never understand the story of the United States without knowing that the American Revolution came before the Civil War. We could never understand a story’s end without first knowing its beginning and middle.

The same is true with the Church’s story—the story of God’s love for sinners in Jesus. This is the true story of just how much God loved the world: so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, into human history as a human being.
Preaching this Gospel, telling the story of Jesus, is the Church’s purpose. Because it has a story to tell, and because that story has a beginning and an end, the Church uses the **Church Year** to tell the story of our salvation. The Christian Church Year helps the Church tell the story of Jesus in time, that is, in order.
Three main sections make up the Church Year: the **Time of Christmas**, the **Time of Easter**, and the **Time of the Church**.

Each of these main sections of the Church Year tells a part of the salvation story. In the **Time of Christmas**, we hear the beginning of the story of Jesus, how the Father sent His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary in Nazareth. The **Time of Easter** tells us the story of what Jesus did for us: He died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead for our salvation. In the **Time of the Church**, we hear how the Spirit brings us into Jesus’ story: in the Word, which creates the faith that believes in Jesus as our Savior; in Baptism, which places us as members of the family of God, the Church; and in the **Lord’s Supper**, which strengthens us with the Word that forgives our sins. This is the story of how God loves us and desires us to live in peace with Him. This is how God orders our days in His peace.

Each part of the Church Year has something new to offer, some new piece of the story to tell. The tools the Church uses to tell us the story and draw us into it in the **Divine Service** are many: Scripture readings, specific colors, various prayers, songs, and customs. This book is designed to help you learn how to listen to the story the Church Year is telling. For this story is about God’s love for you.
But when the fullness of time had come,  
God sent forth His Son, born of woman.  

**Galatians 4:4**

The Time of Christmas invites us into the story of the Father 
sending His Son, Jesus, into the world to redeem us from the power 
of sin, death, and the devil.

**Advent**

*In those days Mary arose and went with haste into 
the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of 
Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.*

**Luke 1:39–40**
The Church Year begins with Advent, the first part of the Time of Christmas. The word Advent is from the Latin, meaning “coming into.” The story of Jesus in Advent is the story of hope coming into the world. When the time was just right, God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world. Jesus came to save you and the whole world from the power of sin and death. Jesus is the world’s only hope of salvation from these enemies.

When Mary was pregnant with Jesus, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was pregnant with a son of her own. Elizabeth’s baby would later be named John. The baby jumped inside of Elizabeth when Mary greeted her. Even before he was born, John rejoiced at meeting the hope of the world, Jesus Christ. John would grow up and be known as John the Baptist. John preached about Jesus to help other people prepare for His coming. During the Advent season we learn how to prepare to receive Jesus, the hope of the world.

“It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the promised Messiah, the very Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and calling sinners to repentance that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory.” Proper Preface for Advent