

Happy New Year!

Reasons to Celebrate the Seasons

# ...during Festival Days

## **Ascension Day**

Color: White

Date: Forty Days after Easter Day

Bible Reference: Acts 1:6-11

## **The Day of Pentecost**

Color: Red

Date: Fifty days after Easter Day

Bible Reference: Acts 2:1-4

## **Holy Trinity**

Color: White

Date: First Sunday after Pentecost

Bible Reference: Titus 3:4-6

## **Reformation Day**

Color: Red

Date: Oct. 31 or the closest Sunday to it

Bible Reference: Romans 3:23-26

## **All Saints' Day**

Color: White

Date: Nov. 1 or the Sunday closest to it.

Bible Reference: Ephesians 2:19-20

## **Christ the King Sunday**

Color: White

Date: Last Sunday in the Season of Pentecost

Bible Reference: 1 Timothy 6:13-16

# Whatza Cookin'?!

## SIR-FACTORS

### **Christmas Day**

Color: White  
Date: December 25  
Bible Reference: Luke 2

### **Epiphany of Our Lord**

Color: White  
Date: Twelve days after Christmas  
Bible Reference: Luke 2:30-32

### **The Baptism of Our Lord**

Color: White  
Date: First Sunday after Epiphany Day  
Bible Reference: Matthew 3:13-17

### **Transfiguration Sunday**

Color: White  
Date: Between the seasons of Epiphany and Lent  
Bible Reference: Luke 9:28-36

### **Palm/Passion Sunday**

Color: Purple  
Date: Marks the beginning of Holy Week  
Bible Reference: Mark 11:1-10

### **Easter/Resurrection of our Lord**

Color: White  
Date: In 2004, April 11  
Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

# The Happy New Year Party Planner

Seasons are used to identify specific periods of time. The seasons of the year identify the characteristics of a cycle of plant life and growth. For example, the season of spring marks the beginning of new life and seedlings. Summer is green and lush with growth. Fall marks harvest and completion of the growth cycle. Winter marks the season of “rest” as the outdoor plant life remains dormant, waiting to begin again.

Christians associate the life and ministry of Jesus with specific days and months of the year. Some of the days or events, like Christmas and Easter, are the same as the secular calendar year. Some are just recognized by the church, including the days before Christmas that are defined to be a time to get our hearts ready for Jesus. Those days are called Advent. Advent marks the beginning of a brand new church year and another walk through the role Jesus played in our salvation.

Read through the descriptions for each day and season. There are six seasons and twelve festival days. Each season and festival day is color-coded to convey a special meaning—blue for royalty, white for holiness and purity. Note the date or beginning time, notable event in the life of Christ and Bible reference. Consider possible ways that you might incorporate the seasons of the church year to nurture your expressions of faith at home.

You may want to use or display a visual aid to remind you of God’s presence and activity at specific points or throughout the entire year. The church year has historically been used to teach God’s story and God’s activity in and throughout history. It creates a sense of continuity as we grow in our intrigue and devotion to God—Creator, Savior and Holy Spirit.

## Key Bible Verse

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

—Hebrews 13:8



## SIR-FACTORS

**Color:** Blue

### **Beginning Point:**

The Sunday after Thanksgiving and includes the four Sundays before Christmas.

### **Reason for the Season:**

It marks the beginning of a “new year.” It comes from the word “adventus” which means “coming.” Advent is filled with anticipation and hope. As we await the birth of Jesus, the coming of the long awaited Messiah, Advent invites us to recognize God’s presence and activity in the past, when he came into the world as a babe; the present, as he comes to each one of us; and future, when he will come again at the end of time.

### **Bible Reference:**

Isaiah 40:3a and Mark 1:1-8

### **Possible Party Plans:**

- 🕯️ Use blue cloth or paper placemats to mark the beginning and duration of this season.
- 🕯️ Families with young children might consider making a stable out of a refrigerator box and a manger using a smaller box. Lay out some large shirts and bathrobes and stuffed animals and invite the children to get the stable ready for the birth of Jesus. Families with older children might create a schedule for adding a character to a nativity scene.
- 🕯️ Post a few adhesive notes on bathroom and bedroom mirrors saying, “Pretend your heart is a Bethlehem. Do you have room in your inn for him?”
- 🕯️ Encourage members of your family to make list of what they’d like to give instead of get. Use John 3:16 as a reference, “For God so loved the world that he gave....”
- 🕯️ Pray some of the prayers in your prayer card holder. Write a few of your own!

## SIR-FACTORS

**Color:** Green

### **Beginning Point:**

This season begins 50 days after Easter with the festival of Pentecost.

### **Reason for the Season:**

It celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit to bring faith and hope to the world. It honors God’s continued activity in the world through the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is devoted to empowering and equipping people to share the good news of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

### **Bible Reference:**

Acts 2:1-4

### **Possible Party Plans:**

- 🕯️ Use green cloth or paper placemats to mark the beginning and duration of this season.
- 🕯️ Look for common signs of God’s presence and activity in your lives. Make a point of sharing these moments with each other and thanking God for them. You might scan through portions of the daily newspaper and pray for God’s grace, peace, comfort and healing.
- 🕯️ Make reading the Bible a priority in your home. Choose age-appropriate Bibles to help children understand and appreciate the lessons and stories they read.





## STIR-FACTORS

**Color:** White

### **Beginning Point:**

Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox (the first day of spring when the sun's path in the sky crosses the equator, making days and nights of equal length). The lunar calendar varies from year to year, so easter might be as early as March 22 or as late as April 25.

### **Reason for the Season:**

The festival was originally associated with the pagan celebrations for the goddess of spring or fertility, known in Scandinavia as "Ostra" or Teutonic "Ostern" or "Eastre." They used colored eggs to represent increased sunlight and rabbits to represent fertility. The Christian interpretation elevated the season to focus on new life in Christ! All 50 days of Easter are intended to God's infinite grace, love and forgiveness.

### **Bible Reference:**

Matthew 28:1-20 and 2 Corinthians 5:14

### **Possible Party Plans:**

- ✂️ Use white cloth or paper placemats to mark the beginning and duration of this season
- ✂️ Place a budding branch in a vase of water. Display it in a highly visible place in your home so that you can appreciate the miracle of new life and growth.
- ✂️ Include faith resources and references in your Easter baskets—a cd featuring contemporary Christian music, a book, cross or heart jewelry.

## STIR-FACTORS

**Color:** White

### **Beginning Point:**

December 25, Christmas Day.

### **Reason for the Season:**

It is a celebration of praise and thanksgiving for the sending of Jesus into the world. The name comes from the season's first celebration, which in the Catholic tradition was the "Christ Mass."

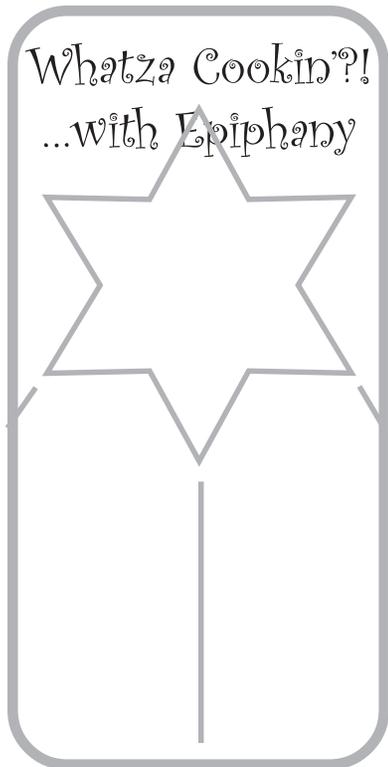
### **Bible Reference:**

Luke 2

### **Possible Party Plans:**

- ✂️ Use white cloth or paper placemats to mark the beginning and duration of this season.
- ✂️ Wrap a small doll in cloth pieces and place it in a shoebox. Gift wrap the box and place it under your Christmas tree. Address the gift tag to your family.
- ✂️ Choose Christmas carols to sing as part of your table prayers. Verse three of *Away in the Manger* (*Lutheran Book of Worship* 67, *With One Voice* 644) would be a heart-warming bedtime prayer.





## STIR-FACTORS

**Color:** Green

**Beginning Point:** Epiphany begins 12 days after Christmas on January 6

**Reason for the Season:** Epiphany means to “magnify” or “make known.” It has come to be known as the time in which the wise men came to see Jesus. It announces the fact that salvation was not just intended for the Jews, but for everyone. The star is associated with this season as a symbol for the significance of light—to guide our way.

**Bible Reference:**

Luke 2:25-32 and Matthew 2:1-11

**Possible Party Plans:**

✦ Use green cloth or paper placemats to mark the beginning and duration of this season.

✦ Consider using the following Bible verses as a mealtime prayer.

**Leader:** Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

**Group:** Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

✦ Make a Middle Eastern meal to honor of the wise men’s journey to see the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. You might even wear some crowns. Engage in a conversation about how the wise men might have shared their amazing experience with others. Consider how you share stories about God’s presence and activity in your lives today.

✦ Designate a candle to be your “Christ Candle” to celebrate God’s presence in your home. You might light it as a casual, subtle and ongoing evening reminder.

## STIR-FACTORS

**Color:** Purple

**Beginning Point:**

It begins with Ash Wednesday and continues for 40 days, not including Sundays. (Sundays are actually set apart to recognize the current reality of Easter.)

**Reason for the Season:**

It comes from the word “lencten,” meaning spring. It is meant to be a time for prayer and reflection on who Jesus is and what he did for us. It includes Holy Week which marks Jesus entry into Jerusalem with the celebration of Palm Sunday and recognizes the events that lead to his Last Supper with his disciples on Maundy Thursday and his crucifixion on Good Friday.

**Bible Reference:**

Mark 1:39 and 1 John 4:13-16

**Possible Party Plans:**

✦ Use purple cloth or paper placemats to mark the beginning and duration of this season

✦ Invite family members to trace around one of their shoes. (You might also imprint the texture on the bottom of your shoes.) Then, talk about all the different places you leave your footprints as a lead-in to consider the many places and events you make footprints by following Jesus.

✦ Think of someone or something you “followed” today—a car in traffic or a colleague or student ahead of you in the lunch line. Consider what it means to follow Jesus. Share some things we do when we follow Jesus.

