

Advent 1A:

The Circle of the Church Year

Our church-year puzzle is a little different from the Godly-play church-year puzzle in that it shows the relationship of the seasons, to the relationship between the earth and the sun (“the Sun and moon and the planets in their courses”). As you move the clock-hand around, you must take care to keep the North-South axis of the earth aligned with the Summer-Winter axis of the puzzle. Summer should be the side of the puzzle closest to you, and the north pole should always point straight away from you.

Story Materials

Church Year Puzzle

Storyteller: ...Today is an exciting day. Can you see some things that are different here in the nave? *Point out the blue paraments and the Advent wreath.* You might be starting to see special things at home and other places too. What are you seeing that's exciting? Christmas decorations! Christmas is double special to us Christians, because Christmas celebrates how our Lord Jesus was born as an ordinary baby, two thousand years ago. So we are all waiting eagerly for Christmas.

But wait a minute! How can we be waiting for something to happen, when it already happened two thousand years ago?

Something else happened, a long, long time ago: everything began. In the beginning, God created everything. God created even time! *Put the empty church-year puzzle in front of you.* There were no hours and no days, no yesterdays and no tomorrows, until God said “let there be light”, and divided the light from the darkness, and called the light “Day” and the darkness “Night”. *Turn the globe knob on the calendar around as you talk.* Day and night are separated by the turning of the Earth. Earth turns round and round. When Canada faces the sun, it is day in Canada. When Canada faces away from the sun, it's night in Canada. Round and round. Which one comes first? Either! Both! Night and Day and Night and Day.

God also made the earth go round and round the sun. *Move the hand of the calendar around in a circle.* That's why we have years: winter, spring, summer, fall and then winter again. Which comes first? All of them! Any of them. Right now we are here. See how the north half of Earth, where Canada is, points away from the sun? It's the beginning of winter.

Sometimes we keep track of how many times the year has gone around. Four times means you're a four-year old. But with the most important things, things that God has done, we experience them over and over as the year turns, as God's people have done for thousands of years. In God's time, kairois, all God's people from every time and place re-experience God's miraculous presence in our lives.

So at Christmas time, *turn the clock-hand to point straight away from you* -- right when our winter is coldest and darkest, we will experience how Jesus came into the world *put the golden Christmas block in place at the very peak of the circle opposite from you.* He is the Light of the World, so we remember Him when we need His Light most. *Put a white block next to the gold*

block. Christmas – Jesus' coming into our lives – is pretty important, so it lasts almost two weeks. *Put the four blue blocks next to Christmas, but ahead (counter-clockwise) from Christmas.* And we take four weeks to get ready for it: the special time called Advent. Today is the first day of Advent, so for us in the Church, it's the start of a new year.

Put the second gold block in at about four o'clock from your perspective. You know what is even more important than Christmas? Easter! *Put six white blocks and a red block (for Pentecost) in next to the second gold block, going clockwise.* We celebrate Easter for seven weeks! A whole Week of Weeks! *Put one red and five purple blocks next to Easter, but ahead (counter-clockwise from Easter.)* And we take over six weeks to get ready for Easter!

Put five green and one white block next to the second week of Christmas, and slide the Easter blocks as necessary to get the blocks all cuddled up. In between Christmas and Easter we have (six¹) weeks of Epiphany when we re-experience how people came to know who Jesus was, -- *put the remaining two white and 24 green blocks next to the red Pentecost block, beginning and ending with the white blocks --* and between Easter and Christmas we have all the remaining Sundays of Pentecost, when we re-experience how the Church has grown and is growing.

¹ Epiphany can have as many as eight or as few as four Sundays. Find out how many there are this year, and use that number