

THE CHURCH CALENDAR

(ADVENT, LENT, PENTECOST)

WHY DOES WAUKESHA BIBLE CHURCH
MARK CERTAIN “RELIGIOUS” HOLIDAYS?

Or

How We Participate in the Global Community and Conversation
Without Losing Our Theological Distinctiveness

Patrick J Griffiths @ 2009

As lead pastor and co-elder, I am sensitive to the unique personality we have as a local church. I am also aware of our part inside the global body of Christ. Neither one can be denied without doing great harm. I was raised religiously as a Roman Catholic. I left the Roman Catholic Church and became an Independent Baptist. Apart from the “New Birth,” my movement from Roman Catholicism into becoming an Independent Baptist was not intentional. It simply existed, and it was where I ended up. Although the move was providential and not necessarily intended by me, looking back I believe it was necessary and important that I break with the Roman Catholic Church. After I left Catholicism, I began attending a Bible College. My religious training took me further into a subset of Christianity called, “Fundamentalism.” The brand of Fundamentalism I engaged in practiced an idea called “secondary separation.” Inside of this context, I opposed all forms of doctrine that did not line up with my (“our”) system of thought. This ideology produced a separation and isolation from the larger expressions of professing Christianity.

Although there is a form of ecumenicalism that is harmful to the gospel’s purity, there is also a biblical ecumenicalism that recognizes the body of Christ globally. This global body does not carry any one label or system, but is genuinely Christian. The labels worn within the global church are so many as to be overwhelming. There is no question as to the need to define and explain what is primary within the Christian faith,

as there is a need to know what is of little or no consequence.

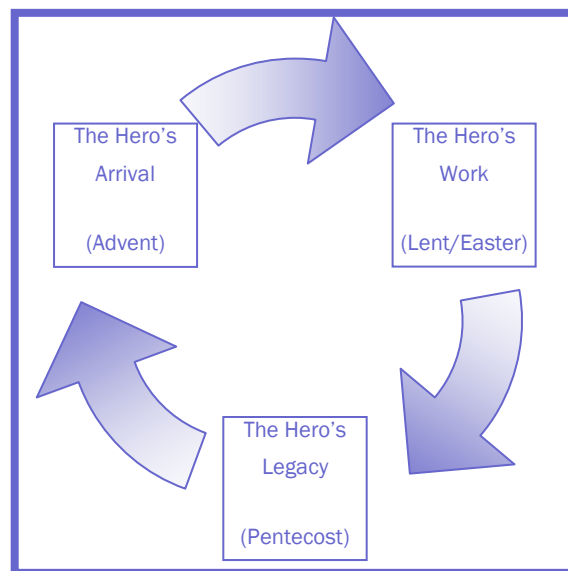
I personally believe one of the most harmful elements within the Christian church is the constant infighting that has taken place and the combative spirit shown to the unbelieving world at large. It is simply wrong for any Christian to attack another Christian over issues of non-importance. If anyone does not believe the gospel as set forth in the New Testament record, then they are not Christian. However, if they do believe the gospel as set forth in the New Testament record, then they are Christian no matter what label they are identified by. Every denomination or association label currently employed to identify the Christian Church is of secondary importance to the larger issue of Christ.

In light of all this, how do we retain our own personality and individualism within the larger body of Christ and still engage in the global community and communication? A real means to this end is by using the Church Calendar where possible. Christians universally all speak of Christmas and Easter. The periods surrounding the “celebration” of these two events are called Advent and Lent. A third date that can be introduced is that of Pentecost, which occurs fifty days after Easter. Pentecost celebrates the expansion of God’s kingdom message through the early church into the world at large.

Why would we, as a church, want to begin noting these events? **First**, with very few exceptions, the global expression of Christianity already recognizes these periods. **Second**, it is possible for us to note the event and the period without any harm to the integrity of our individual identity as a local church. **Third**, by marking these events (i.e., Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost) we are intentionally entering into the storyline of the Bible. The season of Advent celebrates the arrival of the story’s Hero; the season of Lent celebrates the Hero’s work and the season of Pentecost celebrates the Hero’s legacy as it is worked in and through His body, the Church. **Fourth**, in a culture that is moving toward deconstruction through isolation and desensitization through technology, it is imperative the Church once more become a relational community of

faith. **Fifth**, the Church must continue to function as a voice calling the individual and community back into the storyline of the Bible. Our current condition deceives us into believing this life is most important. The noting of these periods help call us back to the story and what is truly primary.

We are a Christ-exalting, Word-centered, Global-impacting, Grace-based fellowship that is determined to shout the supremacy of God in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of Scripture and to share Him with every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. Observing these seasonal periods allows us to enter into the global community and conversation without losing our personality and individualism as a local church. Each of these periods enable us to “proclaim and picture” to the believing congregant and unbelieving community the storyline of God as it has been entrusted to us.



Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.