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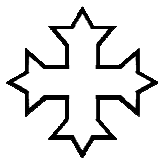
has just released

a NEW book by

Andrew-John Bethke

Celebrating the Seasons

THEMES AND SYMBOLS OF THE
CHRISTIAN YEAR



R90 per copy plus postage

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publish@anglicanchurchsa.org.za

“Certainly it will be of great value to many who seek to understand and lead worship on a regular basis”

Very Rev. Andrew Hunter, Dean of Grahamstown

“It is truly inspiring to read and a joy to use”

Rev. Canon Dr Vicentia Kgabe, Rector of the College of the Transfiguration

From the Foreword

**Celebrating the Seasons:
Themes and Symbols of the Christian year
Andrew-John Bethke.**

Christians often tend to undervalue the significance of the different seasons of the Christian liturgical year, the celebration of which has developed over the centuries from early times. The theological centre of our faith has always been Easter, the feast of resurrection. But equally important is the mystery of the incarnation whereby Christ, the Word of God, came to share in our human life, celebrated at Christmas. So modern lectionaries, as reflected in *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, begin with the four Sundays before Advent, immediately before or after the feast of St Andrew on November 30th.

Bethke rightly describes the different seasons not merely as commemorating past historical events, but as helping to make them alive and present to us in our life of Christian discipleship. Starting with the Cycle of Incarnation he draws attention to the importance of symbols in our worship, which often and rightly may be interpreted in several different ways, and he refers to the words of St Bernard (12th century) who spoke of the sacramental signs of the presence of Christ. As a musician Bethke frequently refers to hymns, both of early centuries and of modern times, reminding us that many people learn their theology through hymns rather than from learned sermons and addresses.

The Cycle of Incarnation is followed by the Cycle of Redemption, centered essentially on Easter, leading on to the Cycle of Christian discipleship – the long period between Pentecost and Advent when the ways to live out our Christian faith are considered. In this way our liturgical worship and our daily life are held together, in which Bethke displays a deeply personal and devotional understanding of the Christian gospel, with helpful comments on how to show the authenticity of our claim to be disciples of Christ. Nor does he forget to describe the historical background of the development of the church's liturgical year and its symbols, which many should find to be of particular interest, even though those who prefer charismatic forms of worship may find the liturgical ethos to be too traditional. We need at all times to remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 13.52 “Every teacher of the Law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his store-room treasures new and old.”

A valuable section near the end includes forms of services, for a church congregation or for groups, relating to the different seasons. A form of Vespers (Evening service), is provided which (with episcopal permission) could well be used on Sundays in place of Evensong.

Altogether therefore those who wish to deepen their understanding of the church's liturgical worship, especially of the eucharist, and its intimate connection with their personal life, and that of the world, should find much help from this book.

John Suggit

