The Book of Common Prayer contains a schedule of all Protestant Holy days in their order. During this time of reformation, holidays and created disputes among reformers as they each shared opinion about the godliness of their worship. Many accused them as being purely superstitious, not holy. In some areas, law enforcement was put in place to maintain observation of these holidays. Other believed punishment for disobedience came from a heavenly manifestation.

One example was in 1589 when an ale wife, making no exception of days, would need brew upon St Mark’s day; but, to the marvellous works of God! While she was thus laboring, the top of the chimney took fire, and before it could be quenched her house was quite burnt. Surely a gentle warning to them that violate and profane forbidden days.

Many holy days came from pagan holidays, which was of great concern to the Protestant reformers. Those days were split from the church of Rome. The Christian calendar consisted of over 100 Holy Days dedicated to the Saints and religious celebrations. In 1536, King Henry VIII decisively cut down the number of Holy Days to prevent men from becoming slothful and idle. Holy Days, Festivals, Feasts and Fasts were scheduled throughout the year, avoiding the days of labor necessary for the livelihoods of the community. July 1 through September 29 was strictly untouched by Holiday celebration because of the harvest.

The official calendar became 27 holy days:

1. Christmas of the Lord Jesus Christ (January 1)
2. Epiphany (January 6, Twelfth day)
3. The birthday of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (March 25)
4. The birthday of Our Lady Virgin Mary (August 15)
5. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin (August 15)
6. The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (December 25)
7. The Epiphany of Our Lord (January 6)
8. The Lord Jesus Christ's Birth (December 25)
9. Our Lady Virgin Mary’s Birthday (August 15)
10. All Saints (November 1)
11. St Andrew the Apostle (November 30)
12. St Thomas the Apostle (December 21)
13. Nativity of our Lord (December 25)
14. St Stephen the Martyr (December 26)
15. St John the Evangelist (December 27)
16. Holy Innocents (December 28, Childermass)

The Holiday Calendar

The Mass

Plainchant in the worship services

The music of Mass, as found in both of these texts, was originally named Gregorian Chant, after Roman Catholic Pope Gregory I in 540-604. Its proper name is Plainsong, stemming from the Latin term, cantus planus. Chanting was not meant to comfort and reassure the listener, but rather, it was highly demanding and physically challenging on the monks at that time. Chants were not seen as a musical performance for the congregation. It was an outreach to the Almighty for grace, forgiveness, hope, and help. They were sung memorized from the heart, and mostly out of the book of Psalms. When the Church of England broke off from the Roman Catholic church, they took a similar structure to their church worship, but changed most of the liturgy.

• Figures in written music, called NEUMES, were named after the Greek word neumes, meaning gesture or sign. Four lines were in place with lines “F” and “C” often noted with letters or colors. Some scripts placed letter-cliffs aside every staff line.

This was started by Guido of Arezzo around 1030AD. The first known book printed this way was in Rome 1071.

• “Neumes do not indicate pitch precisely, nor do they communicate measurable rhythmic values.” This is why psalms and prayers were able to be spoken and chanted together.

This musical notation has three degrees of pitch.

1. Neumatic- Small Phrases of notes (between 2-15) accompany each syllable

2. Melismatic- the melody expands into a layered phrase on a single syllable

3. Syllabic- each syllable has a corresponding note

During the near 100 year gap between these two books there is an obvious evolution of music and its notation. The five staff lines and neume shape, as found in the Book of Common Prayer, are some of these differences. Written in the Book of Common Prayer is the schedule of when songs would be sung throughout the day and during mass. (see image 3) A psalm, scripture, or greeting was sung by a Priest or congregation alone or in unison.

The Mass became more important to witness the process of Christmas. Writing the elevation and worshipping through prayer was often believed to make you a more devout Christian.

For those worshipping in the Church of England, Mass was more focused on lessons from the New and Old Testament that would be read to them. An important part of their service was the Morning and Evening Prayer that occurred daily. The Protestant Mass also consisted of what is called the Divine Office which included Plain Chants throughout the service.