

## Revised Common Lectionary

A **Lectionary** is a table of readings from Scripture appointed to be read at public worship. The association of particular texts with specific days began in the 4th century. The Lectionary [1969, revised 1981] developed by the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II provided for a three-year cycle of Sunday readings. This Roman lectionary provided the basis for lectionary in *The Book of Common Prayer* 1979 as well as those developed by many other denominations.

**The Common Lectionary**, published in 1983, was an ecumenical project of several American and Canadian denominations, developed out of a concern for the unity of the Church and a desire for a common experience of Scripture. It was intended as a harmonization of the many different denominational approaches to the three-year lectionary. It has been in trial use in the Episcopal Church and among the member denominations since 1983.

**The Revised Common Lectionary**, published in 1992, takes into account constructive criticism of the Common Lectionary based on the evaluation of its trial use and like the current prayer-book lectionary is a three-year cycle of Sunday Eucharistic readings in which Matthew, Mark, and Luke are read in successive years with some material from John read in each year.

The Revised Common Lectionary provides the option of semi-continuous reading of the great Old Testament narratives on the Sundays after Pentecost, to provide exciting new preaching opportunities, vacation Bible School ideas, or informal summer story-telling for adults as well as children.

It also inclusion of women and their role in salvation history, offering texts about women never heard on Sunday before.

The Revised Common Lectionary preserves around 90% of the Gospel readings in the Lectionary of *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1979.

Why is the Revised Common Lectionary of value to the Episcopal Church?

- It is a truly ecumenical lectionary shared by most Protestant denominations and widely used throughout the Anglican Communion.
- It provides new opportunities for ecumenical Bible study and shared resources for teaching and preaching.
- It has improved the choice of appropriate texts for Sundays and Festivals.
- It incorporates most of the readings with which the church is familiar.
- Most new resources for preaching, teaching, and the planning of worship are already being developed to support the Revised Common Lectionary.

Who is already using the Revised Common Lectionary? American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Anglican Church of Australia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Christian Church [Disciples of Christ], Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Christian Reformed Church in North America, United Church of Canada, Church

of England, United Church of Christ, Anglican Church in South Africa, United Methodist Church.

The Roman Catholic Church has not adopted the R.C.L. There are, however, already many differences between the Episcopal and Roman Lectionaries, even though the Episcopal Lectionary was patterned after the Roman Lectionary.

General Convention 1997 called upon the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to propose a resolution adopting the Revised Common Lectionary. The commission reviewed the lectionary and its trial use and proposed its adoption, but the Convention of 2000 continued trial use and commissioned further study.

More than 300 congregations participated in the trial use project. In answer to the question of whether or not the lectionary should be adopted, 22.1% said “Yes” and 5.5% said “No”, and more than 72% of the respondents chose not to answer the question.

In 2003, Convention was not prepared to substitute the R.C.L. for the lectionary currently printed in the Book of Common Prayer, but it recognized that congregations across the church were using the R.C.L. and authorized this use.

In 2006, the General Convention directed that the Revised Common Lectionary replace the Book of Common Prayer lectionary effective the First Sunday of Advent 2007 (resolution A077). Use prior to that date—as we are doing at Ascension—is at the discretion of individual rectors. **Ω**

*Adapted from an article by the Reverend Clay Morris on the Episcopal Church website. Father Morris is the Liturgical Officer of the Episcopal Church.*