

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.

The Revised Common Lectionary, 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 these new features:

- 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.

[Genesis through Judges in year A; the Davidic Covenant and Wisdom literature in Year B; the prophets – Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel and Habbakuk – in Year C.]

- the option of lections in thematic harmony with the Gospel of the day for the Sundays after Pentecost.

This follows the pattern of the present lectionary in which the readings from the Old Testament and the New Testament are chosen in relation to the Gospel; a principle followed the rest of the Church Year as well.

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

The most notable example is the account of the woman anointing Jesus at Bethany [Mark 14:3-9]. Jesus responded by saying “wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.” This text, omitted in the present lectionary, is included in the *Revised Common*

Lectionary as part of the Passion narrative read on Palm Sunday in Year B.

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

Why should the Episcopal Church adopt the Revised Common Lectionary?

- 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 USA.
Anglican Church of Australia
Anglican Church of Canada
Christian Church [Disciples of Christ]

Christian Reformed Church in North America
Church of England
Anglican Church in South Africa
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
Presbyterian Church in Canada
Presbyterian Church in the USA
United Church of Canada
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church

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

The 72nd General Convention, meeting in Philadelphia, called upon the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to propose a resolution to the 73rd General Convention adopting the *Revised Common Lectionary*. The commission reviewed the lectionary and its trial use and proposed its adoption at Denver. The Convention adopted the following resolution, calling for trial use instead of adoption of the lectionary.

**CONVENTION RESOLUTION A063A/s
[Denver, July 2000]**

Resolved, That the readings and psalms and psalms of *The Revised Common Lectionary*, as distinct from the rubrics, be authorized for continued trial use during the 2001-2003 triennium, and be it further

Resolved, That for purposes of trial use, the *Revised Common Lectionary* be adapted to comply with the *Lectionary practice of the Book of Common Prayer* and be it further

Resolved, That Bishops be encouraged to designate several congregations in their dioceses to use the Sunday readings in

Cycle C (Advent 2000 – Advent 2001) contained in the *Revised Common Lectionary* in order to enhance the effectiveness of trial use; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music develop a simple form to enable dioceses to make available to the Standing Commission the results of this trial use, and that these results be reported to the 74th General Convention.

Prepared by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, using materials provided by The Reverend Joseph Russell, former Chair of the Consultation on Common Texts

Questions about the *Revised Common Lectionary* or the adoption process can be addressed to Clay Morris in the Office for Liturgy and Music at the Episcopal Church Center [800-334-7626].

**IN THE
BEGINNING
WAS THE
WORD**

**THE
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH
AND THE
REVISED
COMMON
LECTIONARY**