

The Lectionary in the United Benefice

We use a version of the international ecumenical three year cycle of readings, used (with minor variations) by the Roman Catholic church, by many provinces of the Anglican communion (including the Church of England), and by many other churches worldwide.

There is a whole range of different resources available based on this lectionary, including children's resources, sermon notes, hymn suggestions and intercessions.

The three versions used as resources in compiling this lectionary are:

- **RC** – the Roman Catholic Lectionary for Mass (which is the original version)
- **RCL** – the Revised Common Lectionary (based on the Roman Catholic Lectionary, and used by many other churches nationally and internationally)
- **CE** – the Church of England Principal Service Lectionary (based on the Revised Common Lectionary)

It should be assumed throughout that all three of the above are identical in every respect, to each other and to this Lectionary for the United Benefice, except where specifically noted otherwise. Where a local alternative reading is used (rather than an RC/RCL/CE option), it is marked **LC**.

General principles used in compiling this lectionary where options and alternatives exist

For Old Testament readings, we follow the RC practice of having Old Testament readings related to the Gospel for the day. In RCL these are called the 'related' readings (related to the gospel for the day), and in CE they are called 'Track 2' readings.

For parts of the year, RCL, and to a lesser extent CE, offer the alternative of reading longer sections of the Old Testament across several weeks, and these are called the 'continuous' or 'Track 1' readings. These are not included or listed here.

Where RC has a reading from the apocrypha, RCL/CE offers an Old Testament alternative, and this is followed here.

RC, RCL and CE often have slightly different selections of verses for what is essentially the same reading. All variations are noted to avoid ambiguity.

RC, RCL and CE are often out of sync with each other (by a week or more) in the New Testament readings, because slightly different selections are being used, even as the three lectionaries work through the same New Testament books at the same time. All variations are noted.

It is almost always the case that the same Gospel reading is used in all three lectionaries. Again, all variations are noted to avoid ambiguity.

We follow the RC and RCL practice of *not* interrupting the pattern of Sunday readings for Saints Days (this is also a permitted option in CE).

We follow the RCL option, and CE requirement, to move Transfiguration Sunday out of Lent to the Last Sunday before Lent; however we follow RC and RCL (rather than CE) in relation to the Second Sunday before Lent, which CE alone keeps as Creation Sunday (we have creation themes at Harvest instead). We follow the RC option of transferring The Epiphany to the Sunday between 2 and 8 January (permitted in CE since 2006).

We follow the uniquely CE options of keeping both Candlemas and All Saints on Sundays, but incorporate some of the readings of the ordinary course that would otherwise be displaced.

Remembrance Sunday is kept nationally on the Second Sunday in November, which is also the Sunday closest to 11 November (being the Sunday between 8 and 14 November inclusive). This may coincide with either the Second or the Third Sunday before Advent, and the readings for either are suitable.

Local Festivals

We keep the local Patronal Festivals of

- *Saint John the Baptist* on the last Sunday in June
- *Saint Michael the Archangel* on the last Sunday in September, and
- *Saint John the Evangelist* on the Sunday after Christmas Day (either the last Sunday in December or 1 January), plus
- *Harvest* on the first Sunday in October.

Three sets of readings are provided for each of these festivals – one set for each year of the three year cycle. Some of the readings of the ordinary course are included in these provisions.

Notes on 'The Season of Epiphany' – the Season of Light

(the period between The Epiphany and Ash Wednesday)

- plus Ordinary Time, Sundays after Trinity, 'Propers', and more

In RC, 'Ordinary Time' begins the day after Epiphany, and runs until the day before Ash Wednesday. (It resumes after Pentecost, running until the day before Advent Sunday). The Sundays are called 'Sundays in Ordinary Time' or just 'Sundays of the Year', and the liturgical colour is green. In this table, 'RC1' means First Sunday in Ordinary Time etc.

In RCL, the Sundays between The Epiphany and Lent are called *Sundays after Epiphany*. Conveniently, the *Sundays after Epiphany* have the same numbers as the *Sundays in Ordinary Time* – and mostly the same readings.

Depending on the date of Easter, there may be as few as four, or as many as nine, Sundays in this period.

In RC, the gospel account of the Transfiguration is read in Lent, on the Second Sunday in Lent. RCL allows, and CE requires, that this is read instead (along with related OT and NT readings) on the Last Sunday before Lent.

This defines the Season of Epiphany as a *Season of Light* – beginning with a star, and concluding with the Transfiguration. CE even adds Candlemas in the middle of the season. Although RCL does not define liturgical colours, the logical liturgical colour for this *Season of Light* is white throughout.

Sundays before Lent

CE complicates this simplicity by renaming the Sundays after Candlemas (2 February) as *Sundays before Lent in Ordinary Time*. There may be as many as five of these, or as few as none. CE also keeps the liturgical colour as white until Candlemas (for the forty days of Christmas) then changes it to green after Candlemas (for the *Sundays before Lent in Ordinary Time* – which only begin after Candlemas, and which include Transfiguration Sunday). Given that white is the logical colour for Transfiguration Sunday, and that this would leave at the most four Sundays in green as *Sundays before Lent in Ordinary Time*, and often only one such Sunday in green or even none at all, the local decision here is to retain RCL's integrity of the Season of Epiphany as a Season of Light by keeping the entire season between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday in white, and calling all these Sundays *Sundays of Epiphany*. None of this affects the actual readings.

Creation Sunday

CE has also placed a Creation Sunday on the Second Sunday before Lent (if it falls after Candlemas). We follow RC and RCL in keeping this Sunday as an ordinary Sunday of Epiphany [or Ordinary Time], and celebrate Creation themes instead at Harvest (on the first Sunday in October).

Candlemas

CE allows the transfer of Candlemas (2 February) to the Sunday falling between 28 January and 3 February (Epiphany 4). For each year of the three year cycle, this lectionary combines readings set for Candlemas with readings of the ordinary course on this Sunday. Candlemas can clash with the Last Sunday before Lent if Easter is very early – but this does not happen again until the year 2160.

Years when 6 January is a Sunday

The original 1997 version of CE was set up in such a way that CE Sunday readings would be out of sync with RC and RCL Sunday readings by one week during the period between The Epiphany and Lent in those years when 6 January is a Sunday. This discrepancy was corrected in 2006, bringing CE, RC and RCL back into sync. In a truly bizarre act of folly, however, CE decided to stick to its original 1997 Sunday *names*, leaving the CE Sunday *names* out of sync with the CE Sunday *readings* by one week during the period between The Epiphany and Lent in those years when 6 January is a Sunday. This lectionary keeps Sunday names and Sunday readings in sync, following RC, RCL and CE readings, and RC and RCL Sunday names. (CE Sunday names will next be out of sync in the year 2030, then 2041, 2047, 2058, 2069, 2075, 2086 and 2097).

RC, RCL and CE numbering systems

RC numbers its *Ordinary Time* readings continuously through the two periods of Ordinary Time (here the Season of Epiphany and the Sundays after Trinity), thirty-four sets of readings in all (RC1 to RC34); some sets of Ordinary Time readings may be used either before Lent or after Trinity, depending on the date of Easter. RCL does the same thing, but begins its numbering with the first set of readings that might be displaced by Lent when Easter is early, which is RC6, naming this set of readings RCL Proper 1 (RCL1), thereby leaving the numbering for RCL 'Propers' and RC 'Sundays' – for the same readings on the same dates – needlessly and inconveniently out of sync by five throughout. CE begins its numbering of 'Propers' one week earlier than RCL, leaving it four weeks out of sync with RC, and one week out of sync with RCL, before Lent, but then skips a set of readings (RC8/RCL3) to fall back into sync with RCL for Sundays after Trinity. To add to the confusion, some RCL churches – such as the Anglican Church of Canada – use the RC numbering but the RCL term 'Propers'. In the table that follows, all RC Sunday numbers and all CE/RCL Proper numbers are given, wherever applicable, for ease of reference and cross-reference.