

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] offers the alternative of reading longer sections of the Old Testament across several weeks, and these are called the 'continuous' or 'Track 1' readings, not included 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) on 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 practice 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 keeps as Creation Sunday (we have creation themes at Harvest instead); and we follow RC rather than CE in transferring The Epiphany to the Sunday between 2 and 8 January (CE allows dates up to 6 January only).

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.

The Season of Epiphany, Ordinary Time, Sundays after Trinity, Propers, and more

In order to ensure that we can always keep both a Sunday celebration of Saint John the Evangelist and a Sunday celebration of The Epiphany, we keep The Epiphany on the Sunday falling between 2 and 8 January. This follows RC rather than CE/RCL (which does not allow The Epiphany on 7 or 8 January).

In RC, the period from the day after Epiphany, up to the last day before Lent, is the first part of 'Ordinary Time' (which resumes after Pentecost); 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**, or **First Sunday of the Year**, 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 after Epiphany.

In RC, the gospel account of the Transfiguration is read 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 – the Last Sunday of Epiphany. 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.

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), and by keeping the liturgical colour as white until Candlemas (for the forty days of Christmas) then changing it to green (for Ordinary Time – including Transfiguration Sunday). Given that white is the logical colour for Transfiguration Sunday, and that this would leave at the most four Sundays in green, and often only one or 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 in white, and calling all these Sundays Sundays of Epiphany. This does not affect the readings.

CE has also placed a Creation Sunday on the Second Sunday before Lent; 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).

In years when 6 January is a Sunday, for various obscure reasons, RC and RCL end up with their readings out of sync by a week during this period between The Epiphany and Lent. This is the only extended time in the year when readings do not coincide, and it only happens when 6 January is a Sunday – once every seven years on average. Also in these years, in a truly extraordinary act of folly, CE alone chooses to *number* the Sundays like RC, but *use readings* like RCL – leaving its own *Sunday numbers* out of sync with its own *Sunday readings*. In years when 6 January is a Sunday, we follow RC in preference to CE/RCL (for greater compatibility with other resources).

CE allows the transfer of Candlemas (2 February) to the day when it uses the readings set for RCL Epiphany 4. This lectionary combines the readings set for Candlemas with the various readings set for Epiphany 4 across the three years. In this lectionary, this is the Sunday falling between 27 January and 2 February. About once in twenty years, Candlemas will be displaced by the Last Sunday before Lent.

RC numbers its Ordinary Time readings continuously through 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.