

THE VINE



Pastor Kris' Chronicles

The Lectionary

This might be mostly a review for folks at Bethlehem and Zion where we've been using the Narrative Lectionary for years. But with the addition of more lay preachers, and two congregations not familiar with the Narrative Lectionary, it's worth looking at lectionaries and why and how we use them.

What is a lectionary? How many are there?

A lectionary is a schedule of assigned scripture readings to be read in worship over the year. Three lectionaries are most commonly used by churches that use a lectionary at all. The oldest is probably the Catholic lectionary. It comes from ancient liturgical practices. It includes an Old Testament reading, a Psalm, a New Testament reading and a Gospel. It follows a three-year cycle, years A, B, and C. Year A is the so-called Matthew year, Year B is Luke, and Year C is Mark. Passages from John are sprinkled over the different years, but predominantly the Mark year.

The Revised Common Lectionary is used by many Protestant denominations, including many Lutheran churches, Reformed churches, Anglican, and so on. It's similar to the Catholic lectionary and is sometimes identical, but revisions have been made by ecumenical committees over the years. The number of readings for each Sunday and the three-year cycle are the same as the Catholic lectionary.

The Catholic Lectionary and Revised Common Lectionary are designed to highlight the church year – Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and the time after Pentecost, often called Ordinary Time.

A third option is newer, the Narrative Lectionary. The Narrative Lectionary is the inspiration of two Luther Seminary professors who consulted with church leaders across the country. It's designed to follow the whole arc of the biblical story chronologically from creation to the early church. The Narrative Lectionary year begins the Sunday after Labor Day instead of Advent.

Each Sunday has one narrative reading. There is also an accompanying Gospel option when the main text is either Old Testament or a New Testament letter. There is typically an option to read a Psalm to accompany the narrative Gospel readings. The Narrative Lectionary still mostly follows the church year, although in a different way. In Advent, the Narrative Lectionary concludes the Old Testament exploration with readings from the prophets who are crucial for grasping what Jesus was about.

The Narrative Lectionary uses a four-year cycle – John gets his own year. The Narrative Lectionary year ends at Pentecost and there are a variety of series on other books of the Bible or certain aspects of our faith that can be used in the summer.

Why use a lectionary at all? What is the alternative?

A lectionary offers a broader view of scripture. Passages appear in the lectionary that many preachers probably wouldn't choose.

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In churches that don't use the lectionary, the pastor usually picks the scripture based on what he or she wants to preach on. Often a sermon series format is used.

Using a lectionary forces preachers to hear what scripture is saying in its own time and then discern what it has to say to us today. It's a less comfortable and more challenging way to preach since it forces preachers to tackle passages they might prefer to avoid. It makes us come to terms with the whole of the biblical story.

Preachers who don't use a lectionary more often look at what's going on and then choose scripture that speaks to that. It's not wrong necessarily, and I've done so on occasion. But it's more vulnerable to the preacher's own biases.

Why does Pastor Kris prefer the Narrative Lectionary?

I like the fact that all four gospels get equal time. I think it also gives people a better understanding of the whole story and how the Old Testament fits into that. The Old Testament stories can be great fun, but it's not always clear what they're supposed to say to us today. Having three months that focus on the Old Testament helps with that.

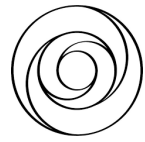
The Narrative Lectionary was designed to combat the biblical illiteracy that has grown over time. People often know snippets of scripture that support what they believe already. When you get a better grasp on the whole arc of the story, you're more likely to find yourself on thin ice when you read it that way.

I also like that it focuses on one reading each Sunday. When there are four readings, most preachers still only focus on one, usually the Gospel. That means a whole lot of scripture never gets much more than a quick read.

Lay Preaching

Could you be called to share a message in worship from time to time? We could use another 2 or 3 willing preachers so nobody feels overburdened. Here's what one of our preachers, Annie Mumgaard, has to say:

It's kind of a wonder, to go from reading the scripture to delivering a sermon. I have gone through the phases of "this says what?" to listening and being prodded by others on our Sunday call, to sitting and thinking "I've got nothing" to suddenly knowing "oh this is where I'm going." Honestly, it's a real Holy Spirit action ride. And I've always come away feeling a bit deeper in my faith. Give it a try.



Seeking the Spirit—by Virg Unverferth

To Never Feel Alone

I recently had a discussion with someone who felt that she is mostly alone in life and that any difficulties she has are best dealt with just by herself. These comments distressed me as I know that she is loved, but she has trouble letting people into her life including a deep relationship with God. Life is a journey and from the very start of humankind, God knew that it should not be journeyed alone. God gave Adam a companion, and sent His only Son to become a human companion as He communicated divine love to all people. Jesus did not want to be distant and neither does God. Some of us have a spouse or another dear friend, who we describe as our “soul mate or friend.” It is that person who you can share anything with, anything deep within you, and know that you will be understood and loved. God desires that same type of soul friendship. Your soul is the spirit of God within you that is present to help you discern your path in life or to give you that “warm hug” when you need it. One of my favorite poems is “Footprints in the Sand” and I think of it often when life gets me down and I wonder how I will get through it all.

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each, I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints; other times there was only one.

During the low periods of my life I could see only one set of footprints, so I said, “You promised me, Lord, that you would walk with me always. Why, when I have need you most, have you not been there for me?”

The Lord replied, “The times when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you.”

God loves you and desires a relationship with you. These churches love you and desire to support you in prayer and companionship.

Virg Unverferth is involved in the Seeking the Spirit Within through the Nebraska Synod of the ELCA. She is participating in a three year course to become a spiritual director. Spiritual Directors meet with folks to help them discern the Holy Spirit’s presence and call within them. She offers these each newsletter to help you connect with the Spirit in and around you.

Special Meetings

Below is the schedule of special meeting to formally vote on our shared ministry. A copy of the proposed Articles of Agreement has been sent by email and there are print copies available at the churches.

Czech Presbyterian—July 13 after worship
Zion Lutheran—July 20 after worship
Bethlehem Lutheran—July 20 after worship
Grace Lutheran—July 27 after worship

Pastoral Care

Mostly overseeing four congregations as opposed to two has gone well. I do find that I'm less likely to know about pastoral care needs, especially since I'm alternating where I am on Sunday mornings and can't count on hearing about hospitalizations and so forth on Sunday. Feel free to call about any issue you may be having, but especially if you or someone you're close to is hospitalized or is having significant health issues or you experience some other significant life event.

Regular Sunday Worship Times

Bethlehem Lutheran—10:30 am—communion first and third Sundays

Czech Presbyterian—10:30 am (There will be no worship on the third Sundays from June—September.

Grace Lutheran—9:00 am—communion second and fourth Sundays September—May; second only June through August

Zion Lutheran—9:00 am—communion first Sundays

Pastor Kris preaches at Bethlehem and Zion the first and third Sundays and Grace and Czech Presbyterian the second and fourth Sundays. Fifth Sundays are a joint worship.

Church School

Zion Lutheran every other Wednesday at 7 pm for grades K-6

Important information

Pastor Kris: phone 402-499-4993; krisbo90@gmail.com

Online worship info:

Bethlehem Facebook livestream

<https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemdavey>

Zion Facebook livestream

<https://www.facebook.com/Zionlthaca>

I also usually record Grace's service when I'm there and upload it to Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/gracelutheranwahoo>

Newsletter submissions

Newsletters will be bimonthly and I try to have them ready by the first of the month. **I would encourage you to submit items for the newsletter—events, thoughts, pictures, and so on.**