

Narrative Lectionary

As you may have heard, starting on Sunday, September 13th, our Sunday morning services will be focusing on scriptures from the Narrative Lectionary (NL) instead of the traditional Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) which we have used for years.

Now we know that you've all been anxiously counting down the days until this change begins—I'm sure with countdowns on your cell phones and in paper chains hanging in your living rooms—so you can rejoice that it is finally here! But seriously, if you'd like to learn a little more about what's ahead, and why we're excited about it, please take a moment and read on.

The idea for the Narrative Lectionary was crafted by two professors from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota: Rolf Jacobsen and Craig Koester back in 2010. The idea was to give a more narrative flow to the scriptures so as to help parishioners become “fluent in the first language of faith.” To do this, instead of a three-year survey of reading as is found in the RCL, the NL takes a four-year journey, allowing for a more in depth look at scriptures that are not included in the RCL.

Starting each year in September, the NL journeys through the Old Testament. This year we'll be considering stories like Noah's Ark, the parting of the sea in Exodus, the story of David and Bathsheba, and more. Then, in December, our readings shift to the New Testament for the birth of Jesus and an exploration of the gospel of Matthew through the Sunday after Easter. Then the year winds down with a look at some of the Epistles (letters) in the New Testament.

The creators further explain the narrative arc of the scripture in this way: “Texts were selected that lead well to the proclamation of what God is doing. The stories tell of hope and disappointment, suffering and redemption. In all these varied contexts, we find God dealing with the complexities of human life. Stories from the gospels differ each year, avoiding repetition and highlighting what is distinctive about each gospel's telling of the story of Jesus.”

Interestingly, unlike the RCL, the NL does not prescribe readings for the summer months. Preachers can go back to the RCL, choose a theme, or do something else entirely! As we get closer to the summer of 2027, we'll explore what ideas make sense for UCCT.

Now all of the above may sound pretty academic (and maybe boring!) but I, for one, am excited. I think our exploration will prove to be very interesting as we delve deeper into some of the scriptures that the RCL doesn't cover, and as we spend time focusing on the narrative arc that runs through both testaments. My hope and prayer is that, with the help of God, we may hear new things, learn new things, and be challenged to new ways to live out our faith in the world.

If you're interested in learning more about the NL or seeing the schedule of readings, you can head to www.workingpreacher.com. And we'd love your feedback on how this plays out in worship this fall! That is, of course, only if you like it . . . kidding . . . sort of . . . ☺

See you in church!

Rev. Jeff