

Interview with Archbishop Robert Duncan, Liturgy Task Force Chair, on the Daily Office Lectionary and the Sunday Lectionary

As the Anglican Church in North America continues to grow, many new members have not used a lectionary before in their daily worship. Can you explain what the Daily Lectionary is and why it is part of the Book of Common Prayer?

The Daily Office Lectionary is designed to help Anglicans read through the entire Bible every year. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, in the first Book of Common Prayer, incorporated the daily lectionary in order that “the whole of the Bible or the greatest part thereof” might be read in common in every household and every parish church in the realm.

We often hear the term “Church Year” used. What is the Church Year and how do the readings reflect the different seasons of the year?

The seasons of the Christian (or Church) Year enable believers to follow the events of Jesus’ life—Advent to Ascension—and the content of his teaching—the long Pentecost (Trinity) season—in an orderly progression. The Sunday Lectionary is especially designed to do this in a three-year cycle of readings. By spreading lessons over three years, much of Scripture can be read on Sundays.

Following patterns established in the earliest Christian centuries, Old Testament readings on Sundays are chosen for their fore-shadowing of the day’s gospel passage. The Daily Lectionary is less connected to the seasons, allowing for seriatim reading of the books of the Bible. Feasts (“red-letter days”) associated with specific calendar dates, recalling New Testament figures or events, break into both cycles with special readings and prayers relevant to the observance.

The readings in the lectionary are from both the Old and New Testaments, but it also includes some readings from the Apocrypha. What is the Apocrypha and why is it included in the Daily Office Lectionary?

Both the Anglican and Lutheran Reformations retained the use of books found in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), but not found in the Hebrew Bible. Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles states “the Church doth read [these books] for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet it doth not apply them to establish any doctrine.” Two of the most common canticles at Morning Prayer—the Benedicite, omnia opera Domine and the Benedictus es, Domine—come from the Apocrypha.

Past lectionaries have been criticized for skipping over some parts of the Bible that some might find uncomfortable. How has the new lectionary addressed these concerns?

So-called “uncomfortable passages” eliminated from the Daily Office Lectionary of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer have all been restored. Furthermore, the most egregious omission of the Sunday lectionary—the second half of Romans, chapter 1—is now assigned to the Third Sunday of Lent (alongside John 4) in Year A.

To download the working texts, visit the website of the Anglican Church in North America [here](#).