

## Bishop Smith's reflections—June 7, 2016



For clergy, mainline musicians, and most other rostered leaders it's a given, but my experience is that lay folk, naturally, are not so honed in on the reality that for most Lutheran preachers, the scripture texts for Sunday mornings are assigned in advance. It's called a "lectionary," or an assigned collection of readings. The lectionary is based on the church year, so each lectionary year begins on the First Sunday of Advent and ends on Christ the King Sunday the following November. Each Sunday is assigned an Old Testament passage (or from Acts during Easter season), a Psalm, a "letter" or epistle, and a Gospel lesson.

The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), which most ELCA congregations as well as most Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, UCC, and Moravians use and which closely parallels (but not exactly) the Roman Catholic Lectionary, is on a three-year cycle: Year A is Matthew's Gospel, Year B is Mark, and Year C is Luke. John doesn't have his own year, but John's Gospel is interspersed during the Lenten and Easter seasons in all cycles.

There is more than one lectionary; in fact, there are dozens of them! The most popular alternative lectionary among Lutherans is called the "Narrative Lectionary." Its advantage is that rather than reading a snippet from a particular book each week and jumping around out of order from week to week, the Narrative Lectionary gives much longer and more continuous readings each week, as in reading through the Gospel of Luke. For that reason, the Narrative Lectionary isn't quite so tied into the church year itself.

We are currently in Year C in the RCL, which means all through this summer and until the end of November we'll be reading almost entirely from Luke. Admittedly, we'll be jumping around and leaving some parts out on Sundays, and besides that, I'll bet there could be one or two of you out there who might miss a Sunday due to vacation and travel plans. So...

### **Our synod's Book of Faith (i.e., the Bible) Team has a challenge for you.**

We want to invite you to read through the Gospel of Luke with us! Yes, this summer, in fact beginning this coming Sunday! In four weeks from June 12 through July 9, we'd like as many members and friends of the NC Synod as possible to read all the way through Luke's Gospel, from beginning to end. That's about a chapter a day. I'm going to do it as part of my regular daily devotional first thing in the morning. Will you join me?

The resource with a guide and questions is available on the synod's [Engage the Bible](#) webpage or you can [download it directly](#). There are also bulletin inserts available for the Sundays during the reading plan.

I'd like to see which congregation(s) have the highest percentage (# who read through Luke as a percentage of average worship attendance) of participants from June 12 to July 9. You can do this as small groups, as a whole congregation, or individually. We'll also be posting the readings on our [NC Synod Facebook page](#). If you have questions, please contact [Catherine Fink](#) in our synod office. Let's read Luke together!



In Christ,

Bishop Timothy Smith



**North Carolina Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.