SOFTWARE & TECH

United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015

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Understanding the United Methodist Church Lectionary for 2015

The lectionary serves as a spiritual compass for countless congregations, guiding worship services and personal Bible study through a systematic, thoughtful engagement with Scripture. For members of the United Methodist Church, the lectionary for 2015 was particularly significant, as it fell within Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary cycle. This article explores the structure, themes, and practical applications of the **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**, offering insights for pastors, lay leaders, and anyone interested in how this ancient practice shaped the faith journey of Methodist communities during that year.

What Is a Lectionary and Why Does It Matter?

A lectionary is a carefully curated schedule of Bible readings assigned to each Sunday and major feast day throughout the church year. The United Methodist Church, along with many other Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, uses the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). This three-year cycle ensures that congregations encounter a broad range of passages from the Old Testament, Psalms, Epistles, and Gospels. The **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**was part of Year B, which emphasizes the Gospel of Mark, along with complementary readings from the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament letters.

Using a lectionary helps churches avoid the pitfalls of topical preaching that can sometimes cherry-pick verses. Instead, it invites the community to walk through the entire story of God's redemption, following the rhythm of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. For United Methodists, the lectionary also connects local congregations to a global, ecumenical body of believers reading the same texts on the same Sundays.

The Structure of the 2015 Lectionary Year

The liturgical year does not align perfectly with the calendar year. While the **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**covered most of 2015, it actually began with the First Sunday of Advent in late 2014 (November 30, 2014) and continued through the following Advent in late 2015. This meant that the first readings of the 2015 calendar year fell in the season of Christmas and Epiphany, moving through Lent and Easter, and then into the long stretch of Ordinary Time after Pentecost.

Here is a seasonal breakdown of the lectionary readings as they appeared in 2015:

- Advent (November 30 – December 21, 2014): The start of Year B already in progress by the time 2015 began. Themes of waiting and hope.
- Christmas & Epiphany (December 25, 2014 – January 6, 2015): Readings focused on the incarnation, including the visit of the Magi.
- Lent (February 18 – April 2, 2015): A journey through the wilderness with Jesus, emphasizing repentance and covenant.
- Eastertide (April 5 – May 24, 2015): Resurrection appearances and the early church in Acts.
- Ordinary Time (May 31 – November 29, 2015): A long season of growth and discipleship, featuring the Gospel of Mark sequentially.
- Advent 2015 (November 29 – December 24, 2015): Return to the beginning of a new cycle (Year C), but still part of the 2015 lectionary year in the church calendar.

Key Themes in the United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015

Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary is dominated by the Gospel of Mark, the shortest and most urgent of the four Gospels. Mark's narrative moves quickly, often using the word "immediately." The **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**therefore stressed themes of discipleship, suffering, and the identity of Jesus as the suffering Son of God. In Ordinary Time, congregations followed Jesus' ministry from Galilee to Jerusalem, culminating in the passion predictions.

Complementing Mark, the Old Testament readings in Year B often highlight the covenants God made with Israel. The Psalms for 2015 included many laments and thanksgivings, mirroring the emotional depth of Mark's portrayal of human frailty and divine power. The epistles—primarily from 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Hebrews—addressed themes of unity, spiritual gifts, and the supremacy of Christ.

One notable series of readings occurred during the six Sundays of Lent 2015. The Gospel passages focused on Jesus' temptation, the transfiguration, and his cleansing of the temple, while the Old Testament readings traced the covenantal story from Noah to Abraham to the giving of the law. This interplay emphasized that the new covenant in Christ fulfills God's ancient promises.

How United Methodist Congregations Used the Lectionary in 2015

The **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**was not merely a list of Bible verses; it was a tool for worship design, sermon preparation, and small group study. Many United Methodist pastors preach from the lectionary texts, allowing the congregation to encounter a diverse range of biblical genres and voices. In 2015, typical worship services included a Call to Worship based on the Psalm of the day, an Old Testament reading, a New Testament passage, and the Gospel reading. Hymns and anthems were often chosen to echo the lectionary themes.

Sunday school classes and Bible studies frequently used the same readings, creating a cohesive learning environment. Personal devotional guides, such as *The Upper Room*, also followed the lectionary, enabling individual believers to prepare their hearts for Sunday worship. The 2015 lectionary year also coincided with a period of significant discernment in the United Methodist Church regarding human sexuality and church unity. The readings from Mark's Gospel, which repeatedly challenge the disciples to take up their crosses, provided a poignant backdrop for conversations about sacrifice, faithfulness, and the cost of discipleship.

Comparison with Other Lectionary Years

While each year of the Revised Common Lectionary has its own character, the **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**(Year B) stands out for its concentrated focus on Mark. In contrast, Year A features Matthew extensively, and Year C draws heavily from Luke. This means that the Year B lectionary tends to present a more terse, action-oriented Jesus. For instance, in late 2015 (Ordinary Time), the Gospel readings included the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6), Peter's confession (Mark 8), and the request of James and John (Mark 10). Each of these passages challenges readers to consider what it means to follow a Messiah who leads to suffering and glory.

Furthermore, the 2015 lectionary included several special Sundays recognized by the United Methodist Church, such as World Communion Sunday (October 4) and All Saints Sunday (November 1). On those days, the lectionary readings were supplemented with additional material to honor the global church and the communion of saints.

Practical Recommendations for Using the 2015 Lectionary

For pastors and worship planners revisiting the **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**—perhaps for a retrospective study or a sermon series—here are a few tips:

1. Read the Gospel of Mark in one sitting. Because the 2015 lectionary moves through Mark sequentially,

reading it straight through can reveal the evangelist's narrative flow and urgency.

2. Pair the Old Testament and Gospel readings. Many Sundays in Ordinary Time of 2015 linked a passage from 1 Samuel or 2 Samuel with a Gospel story, showing how God's kingdom contrasts with human kingship.

3. Incorporate the Psalms as prayer responses. The Psalm for each week can be used as a call to worship, a congregational reading, or a prayer of confession.

4. Use thematic series. For example, the five Sundays of Lent 2015 could form a series titled "Covenants of Promise," matching the Genesis passages with the Gospel accounts of Jesus' journey to the cross.

5. Engage with the confessing church tradition. The epistles in 2015, especially from Hebrews, remind believers of the high priestly role of Christ—a rich theological vein for preaching.

The Lasting Value of the 2015 Lectionary

Although the calendar year 2015 has passed, the spiritual nourishment provided by the **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**endures in the lives of those who engaged with it. Lectionary-based worship forms habits of listening to Scripture in its full canonical context. The Year B readings, with their emphasis on discipleship and the cross, continue to resonate in times of personal and church-wide challenge. United Methodists who followed the lectionary in 2015 were reminded that faith is not a comfortable set of beliefs but a dynamic journey of following Jesus, even when the path leads through suffering.

Today, many United Methodist churches still use the Revised Common Lectionary, referencing past cycles for thematic preaching. The 2015 lectionary can serve as a rich resource for sermon series on Mark's Gospel, covenant theology, or the apostolic teachings found in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Whether you are a pastor preparing a study series or a layperson deepening your biblical knowledge, revisiting the readings from that year can yield fresh insights.

Conclusion

The **United Methodist Church Lectionary For 2015**provided a structured, ecumenical, and deeply biblical framework for worship and spiritual growth. As Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary, it guided congregations through the Gospel of Mark, the covenants of the Old Testament, and the teachings of the early church. Its themes of urgent discipleship, suffering, and divine faithfulness continue to speak to believers today. By understanding how this lectionary shaped worship in 2015, United Methodists and others can appreciate not only the historical rhythm of the church year but also the enduring power of Scripture read in community. The lectionary remains a gift that helps the whole people of God encounter the Word—living and written—with consistency and depth.

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