GENERAL

united methodist church lectionary for 2015

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Introduction

Every year, the United Methodist Church (UMC) releases a carefully curated set of scripture readings, prayers, and thematic resources that guide congregations through the liturgical seasons. This collection, known as the **United Methodist lectionary**, serves as the backbone of Sunday worship, Bible study, and pastoral planning. For those who served in 2015 or are looking back at that year's spiritual journey, the **United Methodist Church lectionary for 2015**offers a window into the themes, scriptural passages, and worship practices that shaped that year's services. In this article we'll explore the purpose of a lectionary, the specifics of the 2015 edition, practical ways to use it, and where to find it today.

What Is a Lectionary?

A lectionary is more than a list of passages; it is a structured roadmap that aligns Scripture with the rhythm of the church year. Traditionally, churches use a lectionary to determine which passages to read on a given Sunday or holiday. The United Methodist Church's lectionary follows the Common Lectionary, which cycles through the Gospels, Old Testament books, and New Testament letters in a way that ensures balanced exposure to the entire Bible over the course of a year.

Key features of a lectionary include:

- Liturgical seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time.
- Reading cycles: A three-year cycle (A, B, C) that repeats the entire New Testament and portions of the Old Testament.
- Scriptural themes: Each Sunday's reading often ties into a broader theme such as grace, faith, or discipleship.
- Prayers and hymns: Suggested prayers and hymns that complement the readings.

Why the United Methodist Church Publishes a Lectionary

The UMC's commitment to Scripture as the foundation of faith drives the creation of its lectionary. By offering a consistent, theologically sound reading plan, the church encourages:

1. Scriptural literacy: Congregants hear the entire Bible in a structured way.
2. Theological unity: A common reading plan fosters shared worship experiences across different congregations.
3. Pastoral support: Pastors and worship leaders have a ready-made resource that aligns with the UMC's doctrinal statements.
4. Liturgical coherence: The lectionary ensures that the worship of one Sunday naturally leads into the next, reflecting the continuity of God's work.

Overview of the 2015 United Methodist Lectionary

The 2015 edition follows the standard Common Lectionary cycle, but it also reflects the UMC's emphasis on the "Good News" and the "Grace of God." Below is a snapshot of how the year was organized.

Liturgical Seasons Covered

2015 began with the Advent season, moved through Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and concluded with Ordinary Time. Each season had a distinct thematic focus:

- Advent (Dec 2014 – Jan 2015): Anticipation of Christ's birth and second coming.
- Christmas (Dec 2014 – Jan 2015): Celebration of the Incarnation.
- Lent (Mar – Apr 2015): A period of repentance and preparation.
- Easter (Apr 2015): The resurrection of Christ.
- Pentecost (May 2015): The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- Ordinary Time (Jan – Mar & Jun – Dec 2015): Growth in faith and discipleship.

Reading Cycle and Structure

Each Sunday's readings are organized into three parts: the Old Testament reading, the New Testament reading, and a Gospel reading. In addition, the lectionary provides a "Proclamation" (a short sermon text) and a "Meditation" (a reflective passage). The 2015 cycle followed the A-cycle of the Common Lectionary, which means:

1. Old Testament: A selection from the Pentateuch, Historical Books, Wisdom Literature, or Prophetic Books.
2. New Testament: A passage from the Pauline or General Epistles.
3. Gospel: A reading from Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

For example, on the first Sunday of Advent 2015, the readings were:

- Old Testament: Isaiah 60:1 6
- New Testament: Hebrews 4:1 9
- Gospel: Matthew 4:12 17

Key Themes and Scripture Focus

The 2015 lectionary emphasized themes such as:

- Grace: How God's unmerited favor shapes our lives.
- Hope: The promise of redemption and restoration.
- Faith: Trusting God in the face of uncertainty.
- Discipleship: Following Jesus in everyday life.

Each theme was woven into the selection of readings, prayers, and hymns, creating a cohesive narrative that guided congregants through the spiritual highs and lows of the year.

How to Use the 2015 Lectionary in Worship Planning

Pastors, worship leaders, and Sunday school teachers can benefit from a systematic approach to the lectionary. Below are practical tips for incorporating the 2015 readings into your weekly services.

Pastoral Planning Tips

1. Start with the theme: Identify the overarching theme for the week or season and choose sermon topics that align with it.
2. Use the Proclamation and Meditation: These short texts offer a ready-made sermon skeleton that can be expanded upon.
3. Integrate hymns and prayers: The lectionary often suggests hymns that echo the day's message; use them to reinforce the theme.
4. Coordinate with other ministries: Align Bible study, youth programs, and outreach initiatives with the lectionary's focus.

5. Reflect on the Old Testament reading: Even if the service is Gospel-heavy, the Old Testament passage often provides prophetic context.

Congregational Engagement Ideas

- Scripture Memorization: Encourage members to memorize the Gospel reading each week.
- Discussion groups: Use the Old Testament passage as a conversation starter for small groups.
- Creative arts: Invite musicians or visual artists to create pieces inspired by the readings.
- Service projects: Tie the theme of the day to a local outreach effort (e.g., a food drive for the “Grace” theme).

Accessing the 2015 Lectionary

While the UMC’s official website no longer hosts the 2015 lectionary in its primary archive, there are several reliable ways to locate it.

Official Sources

The UMC’s **Church Publishing**department released the lectionary in print and PDF format. Many church libraries still hold copies, and the UMC’s official website may provide a link to the PDF if you register for an account.

Alternative Formats

- PDF downloads: Several Christian book retailers offer the 2015 lectionary for purchase or free download.
- Printed books: The 2015 edition is available in paperback through major Christian publishers.
- Digital libraries: Some university libraries and theological seminaries host the lectionary in their digital collections.

Digital Tools and Resources

In today’s digital age, using online platforms can streamline the process of reading, studying, and sharing the lectionary.

Online Platforms

Websites such as *Scripture App* or *MyBible*allow users to search for the exact passages listed in the 2015 lectionary. Many of these apps also offer daily reading plans and note-taking features.

Mobile Apps

Apps like **ChurchApp** and **Plan Your Week** have built-in lectionary modules that can import the 2015 schedule. These tools enable pastors to create custom sermon outlines, share reading lists with volunteers, and track congregational engagement.

FAQs About the 2015 Lectionary

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