

# **Lutheran Church of Australia: Commission on Worship**

## **STATEMENT 10**

### **THE LECTIONARY AS USED BY THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA**

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*This revised statement adopted by the Commission on Worship, February 2000.*

*The original statement, prepared by the General Church Council, was adopted by the church at its 1987 General Convention. The Commission on Worship included it in its collection of Statements under the heading: 'Permissible lectionaries'. After the LCA's adoption of the Revised Common Lectionary, the Department of Liturgics updated the statement, giving background and rationale for the lectionary.*

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#### **A. The original statement**

*Acting on the authority granted by the General Convention at Croydon, Victoria, 1984 (Resolution 239), the General Church Council made the following decision regarding permissible lectionaries in the church. This was endorsed by the 1987 General Convention (Resolution 16).*

- 1 That the traditional readings as found in the *Lutheran Hymnal* be retained as the basic cycle for use in the Lutheran Church of Australia.
- 2 That the use of the three-year cycle of readings as found in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* be permitted as an alternative.
- 3 That the following adjustments be made to the church year:
  - That from Epiphany to Ash Wednesday, the Sundays be designated as consecutive Sundays after Epiphany (no 'gesima' Sundays), and that the last Sunday after Epiphany be Transfiguration
  - That beginning with Trinity Sunday and continuing until the end of the church year, the Sundays be designated as consecutive Sundays after Pentecost
  - That the last Sunday after Pentecost (the Last Sunday of the Church Year) be designated the Day of Fulfilment.

#### **B. The lectionary before the 1997 General Convention decision**

- 1 Before the 1984 General Convention at Croydon, Victoria, all congregations of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) used the traditional one-year lectionary as printed in the *Lutheran Hymnal* (1973).
- 2 Following the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic church published a three-year lectionary for use in its churches in the *Lectionary for Mass* (1969).
- 3 In modified form, this three-year lectionary was adopted by the Lutheran churches in the United States, and published in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978). Congregations of the LCA began to use this lectionary, as it provided a greater variety of readings.

- 4 In 1984 and 1987 the LCA authorised the three-year lectionary for permissible use (see A above).
- 5 In the following decade, the use of the three-year lectionary almost completely replaced the traditional one-year lectionary.
- 6 In 1992, the Consultation on Common Texts in the United States published *The Revised Common Lectionary*. This revision was based on a 1983 revision of the *Lectionary for Mass*, but made several major changes:
  - The readings from the Old Testament were completely revised.
  - The Sundays after Pentecost offer a choice between two sets of first readings and psalms, which allows either thematic or continuous readings.
  - Other changes reflect questions of balance and where readings start and end.
- 7 Churches throughout the USA and Australia were quick to adopt the Revised Common Lectionary. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted the Revised Common Lectionary in 1995. In Australia, both the Uniting and Anglican churches have adopted it.

### **C. The lectionary from 1997**

- 1 At the 1997 General Convention of the LCA, the church formally adopted the Revised Common Lectionary (with minor changes) for use in the church from Advent 1998 onwards.
- 2 The use of the Revised Common Lectionary does not require any adjustments to be made to the calendar of the church year. The naming of non-festival Sundays — the Sundays after Epiphany and the Sundays after Pentecost — will not change. However, a major change involves the way readings are selected for these non-festival Sundays from year to year.
  - Beginning with the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, the non-festival Sundays are assigned sets of readings named Proper 1, Proper 2, etc, up to the last Sunday in the church year, which is always Proper 29.
  - The number of Propers after Epiphany depends on how early or late Ash Wednesday comes, and the last Sunday after Epiphany is always Transfiguration.
  - The first Sunday after Pentecost is always Trinity. The Proper for the Second Sunday after Pentecost will depend on how many Sundays there are after Pentecost for that year, and is chosen so that the Sundays after it are consecutive, up to the last Sunday, which has Proper 29.
- 3 To make things simpler, all the Propers listed after Trinity are dated. For example, Proper 8 is headed ‘Sunday between 26 June and 2 July inclusive’.
- 4 The Commission on Worship (which was assigned the task of releasing the readings for the LCA) has made only a few very minor changes to the readings for the Sundays and major festivals of the Revised Common Lectionary for LCA use.
  - Three verses of the psalm for the second Sunday after Christmas have been made optional because of their reference to snow—not as appropriate in January in Australia and New Zealand as in the Northern Hemisphere.

- The last Sunday of the church year has been renamed the Sunday of the Fulfilment, and new alternative gospels have been added to this Sunday as a first option for years B and C.
  - A number of alternative readings from the Apocrypha are listed in the Revised Common Lectionary throughout the year, and these have been omitted.
- 5 The Revised Common Lectionary includes only a small list of minor festivals, so these have been supplemented with the readings from the previous *Collects and Readings* book and the Revised Common Lectionary listing published by Augsburg Fortress.
  - 6 In year A, most of the gospels are from Matthew, in year B from Mark, and in year C from Luke. Selections from John are spread throughout the three years.
  - 7 The psalms are intended as responses to the first readings rather than readings in their own right, although they could be used as introits.
  - 8 For the non-festival Sundays the second readings and the gospels are semi-continuous and not generally related thematically to each other.
  - 9 There are two sets of first readings (with accompanying psalms) given for the Sundays after Pentecost: a new semi-continuous set, and a set related thematically to the gospels, based on the earlier form of the lectionary. It is intended that either one of these two sets be used throughout and that they not be mixed.