

The [Consultation on Common Texts](#) (CCT) is an ecumenical body with representation from multiple Protestant and Catholic denominations in Canada and the United States. The CCT has been responsible for creating the Common Lectionary (1983) and the [Revised Common Lectionary](#) (1992). At its April 2025 meeting, the CCT approved a [provisional update](#) to the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). (See www.commontexts.org.) This update reexamines passages of Scripture that have historically been misused to justify discrimination and violence against Jews. This process involved extensive study and consultation with biblical experts, church historians and liturgical leaders, including a forum with the consultation and participation of Jewish scholars.

This proposed update is commended by the CCT to the churches for a **three-year trial period**, beginning in Advent 2025 (Year A). The preaching guidance and hymn suggestions below are provided to accompany the provisional alternative readings during Easter and a portion of the Time after Pentecost in year A (both in 2026). For the Easter Season and Lectionary 25-31 (Sept. 20 through Nov. 1, 2026), the alternate hymn(s) were chosen to reflect the provisional alternative reading suggested by the CCT for that lectionary day.

Preaching Guidance

In 2012, the Rev. Susan Auchincloss, a priest in the Episcopal Church, submitted a petition to the Consultation on Common Texts through [Change.org](#). Among other things, it called on the Consultation to reconsider the readings for Holy Week, and particularly those for Good Friday. The Consultation took Rev. Auchincloss seriously and committed itself to begin a process of reviewing the Revised Common Lectionary to address biblical texts and patterns of texts that have perpetuated harm to our Jewish neighbors.

The Consultation met directly with Rev. Auchincloss and sought ongoing counsel from Jewish and Christian scholars regarding Judaism and Christian anti-Semitism. It became clear there were significant theological, liturgical, pastoral and ecumenical issues to consider, especially with the Good Friday texts and the first readings from Acts during Eastertide. The process culminated in 2024 with [recommendations for alternative sets of readings](#) affecting Good Friday, Easter Season and the Season after Pentecost.

The work of the Consultation is to recommend texts, not to require them. Each receiving body and ultimately each worshiping community and its worship planners are responsible for deciding whether and how best to use these texts.

Holy Week: Good Friday

The Gospel of John's extended passion narrative has been the centerpiece for Good Friday (Holy Friday) in the Western churches since at least the seventh century. Whereas John's passion includes some of the most dramatic and poignant stories — including the stunning of the guard, Pilate's question about truth, and Jesus, on the cross, commending his mother to the care of the beloved disciple — it is also, by far, the most blatantly anti-Jewish of the passion accounts. The rhetoric of John's gospel regularly pits Jesus against "the Jews," who are nearly always portrayed in an adversarial light. Alternative translations have been proposed to blunt this effect.

Still, when one reads the whole of John's passion, it is nearly impossible to avoid the message that the Jewish people were directly complicit in Jesus' execution. It is no accident that there are multiple [documented instances of anti-Jewish violence](#) occurring or being instituted on Good Friday or during Easter weekend.

The Consultation suggests reading Mark's passion narrative on Good Friday, except during year B, when a briefer version of John's passion, focused on the trial before Pilate and the cross, and with far fewer references to "the Jews," may be read instead.

Mark's passion narrative is the least anti-Jewish of the those in the four gospels. It consistently names particular groups involved in the arrest of Jesus but never suggests that all Jewish people are implicated, as John does. Indeed, when the words "the Jews" appear, they come always from Roman officials and always as part of the phrase "King of the Jews."

Worship planners using Mark may want to note how Mark's passion portrays Jesus as a man rejected and abandoned to the machinery of death. No care is offered to Jesus on the cross. All his disciples have fled. Jesus is nailed there after having been beaten. Once affixed to it, he is continuously mocked by leaders who got him arrested and by those being crucified alongside him. When someone offers him sour wine, they do so only to prolong his agony after his cry of dereliction seems to have exhausted him. Mark does not say that Jesus took the wine. Instead, Mark tells us, Jesus let out a loud cry and died.

The centurion overseeing the crucifixion says, "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Mark 15:39). This line itself might be another point of entry to Mark's passion for worship planners to consider, paralleling the opening of Mark's gospel. Is the centurion expressing regret over the nature of the victim, or is he marveling at the efficacy of the death machinery, that it could vanquish a divine being? Where do we find ourselves, if we are honest?

Apart from the catharsis that may have been felt by those participating in the death machinery, Mark's passion offers no sign of relief until the very last, when the corpse is taken down and laid to rest. That a hasty burial is experienced as relief speaks volumes. It reminds one of Elie Wiesel's comment when asked where God was during the Holocaust: "Where He is? This is where — hanging here from this gallows" (*Night*, translated by Marion Wiesel [New York: Hill and Wang, 1960, 2006, p. 65). As Wiesel would later note, this expression was both the low point and the turning point of his own faith in God. Exploring this dynamic in Mark's passion may be another approach for Good Friday.

However you approach it, preaching on Mark's passion on Good Friday should help listeners name and face the horrors this world inflicts and the ways their actions and inaction perpetuate them. This is law. According to the gospel, the way of Jesus, which led him to the cross, and the salvation it brings are always available to us.

If you choose to read the shorter version of John's passion, you will still need to address its use of "the Jews" in verses 7, 12 and 13. You might replace the term with something like "the religious authorities" or specify the groups involved (chief priests and temple police, verse 6). You might address this in the service folder or when preaching. (See also "The Jews' in John's Passion," available at ELCA.org/resources.)

With John's passion, the preacher may sense a bit more of the good news. We see the death machinery at work throughout the narrative, yet Jesus' words from the cross contrast sharply. "Woman, here is your son" (John 19:26) and "Here is your mother" (27) reflect care for others in the face of suffering. "I am thirsty" (28), in addition to "fulfilling scripture," expresses a basic human need that is met here. "It is finished" (30) reflects not surrender but victory: the trajectory of Jesus' life having been accomplished, he is allowed to breathe his last in peace. Preaching John's passion might focus on any of these points or perhaps encompass three brief homilies, punctuated by silence, instrumental music or some other artistic expression.

The First Reading During the Easter Season

When the Catholic Church developed its three-year lectionary (*Ordo Lectionum Missae* or OLM), it added a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures for each Sunday and holy day. This was a gesture of hospitality toward Judaism. Prior to this, the Hebrew Scriptures, apart from the Psalms, were read only at the daily office, not at mass. At the same time, during Easter Season, the OLM included a set of first readings from Acts as a gesture of hospitality toward the Orthodox churches, which have a long practice of readings from Acts during that time. The OLM is the basis of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Though our Orthodox siblings may appreciate that gesture of hospitality, the [English Language Liturgical Consultation](#) noted in ongoing conversations that early Christians based much of their theology of resurrection and the work of the Holy Spirit on the theologies of creation and redemption found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, not to hear these Scriptures during the Easter season is a loss for the churches. Further, readings from Acts might be better placed during the season after Pentecost because Acts begins with Pentecost. In 2009, these considerations led the consultation to begin recommending readings from the Hebrew Scriptures that had been developed by the Church of Scotland and first published in its [Book of Common Order \(1994\)](#).

The Consultation on Common Texts came to concur with the English Language Liturgical Consultation for an additional reason. Since 1983, reading from the Hebrew Scriptures has become the new norm among users of the Common Lectionary and Revised Common Lectionary. Replacing the Hebrew Scripture reading with one from the New Testament mirrors the supersessionist theologies rejected by the ELCA in "[Preaching and Teaching 'With Love and Respect for the Jewish People'](#)" (available at [ELCA.org/resources](#)) — and does so during the holiest season of the Christian year.

The Easter readings from the Hebrew Scriptures were chosen to complement the gospel reading for each Sunday. Though many of these readings are taken from the prophets (especially Isaiah), we must not interpret them as predicting or being completed by what the gospel reading portrays. Instead, worship planners and leaders should look for something in the first reading that, in its own context, can illuminate what the gospel describes.

For example, on Easter 3, Year A, we read from Isaiah 51:1-6 and John 21:1-19. Verses 1-3 of Isaiah 51 speak of joy and gladness to come for the exiles in Babylon. The first part of the gospel reading describes a time when the disciples, enduring their own kind of exile after the execution of Jesus, share a meal with him on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Verses 4-6 speak of the word of Adonai going out to the ends of the earth, whereas the gospel describes encounters with two apostles (the beloved disciple and Peter) who will spread the gospel far and wide. Preaching that honors both texts and their original audiences will address God's unfailing promise to God's

people who face challenging circumstances and, amid these challenges, God's call for Christians to spread the gospel in word and deed.

In a similar way, on Easter 5 of Year C, we read from Leviticus 19:9-18 and John 13:31-25. Both texts address commandments, including a commandment to love others. The reading from Leviticus expands the range and specificity of what loving one another entails, including intentional acts of care for poor people and immigrants. Leviticus is not contrasted with, negated by or overwritten by John; rather, it adds content and depth to Jesus' call to his disciples.

In all three years, Daniel 7:9-14 is paired with the ascension narratives in Luke and Acts. We should recognize these verses as a prelude to God's promise "forever — forever and ever" granting self-governance to the Jewish people (Daniel 7:18). Christians borrow some of this language when describing Jesus' status after his resurrection. But Daniel does not "foretell" Jesus. Rather, Christians claim Jesus as the one who can and will conquer all empires just as the one described in Daniel will inaugurate the security of self-governance for the Jewish people.

Readings From Acts After Pentecost

The English Language Liturgical Consultation also noted that the selections from Acts covered by the Revised Common Lectionary were both limited and somewhat repetitive. Most of these readings focused on Peter and the first part of the ministry of Paul while giving little attention to any other apostles. Further, the sequence seemed to lack a sensible chronological progression from week to week.

The Consultation on Common Texts has proposed readings that cover far more of the book of Acts and have placed them during the season after Pentecost, in places where they least interrupt the flow of the existing readings. Compared to the readings they replace, these new readings also place substantially less emphasis on the Jewish people as a source of conflict or hostility.

In Year A, the readings from Acts are read during September and October, telling the story of Peter and his companions. In Year B, during July and August, they cover a variety of other figures, many of whose stories have rarely been told in previous lectionaries. If starting these Acts readings in Year A seems challenging, the newness of the Year B readings might help you start them then. Finally, in Year C, also during July and August, the readings highlight the entire ministry of Paul and his companions, from Paul's conversion to the end of the book.

Each series of readings provides an opportunity to explore the breadth and variety of contexts and forms of Christian ministries across the Mediterranean world in the first century. Each also enables the preacher to pay great attention to something that the epistles generally do not. The other epistle readings after Pentecost are largely focused on theology or relationships within the Christian community. Each of these three series of readings from Acts, like the book itself, focuses instead on the outward movement of mission and ministry across a diversity of geography, history and culture.

Hymn Suggestions

Provisional Alternative First Readings for the Easter Season, Year A

Easter Day

Jeremiah 31:1-6, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

ACS 1098 Who Is Like Our God/*¿Quién como Jehová?*

ELW 822 Oh, Sing to the Lord/*Cantad al Señor*

Easter 2

Exodus 15:1-11, Psalm 111

ELW 362 At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing

ELW 363 Come, You Faithful, Raise the Stain

ACS 1098 Who Is like Our God/*¿Quién como Jehová?*

Easter 3

Isaiah 51:1-6, Psalm 34:1-10

ELW 383 Christ Is Risen! Shout Hosanna!

ELW 556 Morning Has Broken

ACS 937 Earth, Earth, Awake

Easter 4

Ezekiel 34:7-15, Psalm 100

ELW 544 Praise the Lord, Rise Up Rejoicing

ELW 789 Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us

ELW 883 All People That on Earth Do Dwell (Psalm 100)

Easter 5

Proverbs 4:10-18, Psalm 119:9-32

ELW 514 O Word of God, Incarnate

ELW 518 We Eat the Bread of Teaching

ACS 971 Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom

Easter 6

Ezekiel 34:1-6, Psalm 115

ELW 723 Canticle of the Turning

ELW 789 Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us

Ascension

Daniel 7:9-14, Psalm 24:7-10

ELW 435 Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

ELW 825 You Servants of God

ACS 953 Before the Ancient One, Christ Stands

Easter 7

Isaiah 45:1-7, Psalm 21:1-7

ACS 1086 O God, Who Gives Us Life

Day of Pentecost

Numbers 11:24-30, Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

ELW 396	Spirit of Gentleness
ACS 942	Every Time I Feel the Spirit

Provisional Alternative Second Readings for the Time after Pentecost, Year A

Lectionary 25 — *Sunday between Sept. 18 and 24*

Acts 2:14-21, 33-35

ELW 396	Spirit of Gentleness
ACS 944	O Spirit, All-Embracing

Lectionary 26 — *Sunday between Sept. 25 and Oct. 1*

Acts 3:1-19

ELW 796	How Firm a Foundation
ELW 862	Praise, Praise! You Are My Rock

Lectionary 27 — *Sunday between Oct. 2 and 8*

Acts 4:5-12

ELW 645	Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation
ELW 651	Oh, Praise the Gracious Power

Lectionary 28 — *Sunday between Oct. 9 and 15*

Acts 8:14-25

ELW 578	Creator Spirit, Heavenly Dove
ELW 582	Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

Lectionary 29 — *Sunday between Oct. 16 and 22*

Acts 10:34-43

ELW 575	In Christ Called to Baptize
ELW 650	In Christ There Is No East or West

Lectionary 30 — *Sunday between Oct. 23 and 29*

Acts 10:44-48

ELW 400	God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind
ELW 453	Baptized and Set Free

Lectionary 31 — *Sunday between Oct. 30 and Nov. 5*

Acts 11:1-18

ELW 641	All Are Welcome
ELW 651	Oh, Praise the Gracious Power
ACS 1038	God, We Gather as Your People

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