

Our journey through the lectionary 2023-24

This year, Roots will explore lectionary readings that help us see and understand the overarching big story of the Bible, and how it all points to Jesus. Managing Director Melanie Cave explains more.

Over the past few months, I've had some interesting conversations with Roots subscribers about teaching the Bible through the lectionary. Recently a minister told me how, although it was not part of his church tradition, he'd stumbled across the lectionary in his thirties and he continues to follow it twenty years later. He loved that it forced him to face the difficult passages in the Bible. He embraced the discipline that he couldn't get away with just preaching from his favourite passages. He had to regularly face and preach on some of the uncomfortable teachings of Jesus.

I've also discussed the challenges of the lectionary with children's leaders: some of the passages are rather difficult to teach to children – not that Roots has ever shied away from it – but when the Gospel passages are not stories and are more conceptual, it can be harder for children to grasp. One leader reflected that 'while the focus on Jesus in the Gospels is good, for the children who do come regularly, we end up doing the same stories again and again, and children don't know about Noah, Daniel and Moses because we haven't focused on the Old Testament.'

Another youth leader reflected how she loved exploring the Bible with teenagers who had started reading it for themselves. She relished their challenging questions (*Why did God make circumcision the sign of the covenant, if it was a sign that only half the population could potentially participate in?*) and how their questions caused her to read and study more herself. She wondered how to help these teenagers to understand more about God's big plan for humanity as it is revealed through the Old Testament. ▶▶



►► Our journey through the lectionary *continued*

Ordinary Time: Tracks one and two

Although many churches focus on the Gospel readings, the lectionary encourages us to study and grapple with the Old Testament – so this year Roots will spend some of the year exploring Old Testament readings. Every week there is both an Old Testament reading and a Psalm in addition to the Gospel and Epistle. For the Sundays after Pentecost (Ordinary Time) the RCL offers two tracks of readings from the Hebrew Scriptures. The semi-continuous readings (track one) cover important narrative themes from the Old Testament, and are not obviously related to the New Testament readings; this track encourages us to lean into the Hebrew Scriptures for their own sake, expecting God to speak as much through those stories as through the life and words of Jesus.

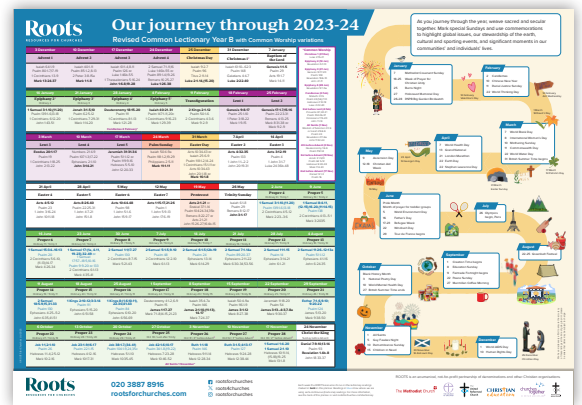
The complementary readings (track two) are chosen for their relationship to the Gospel reading for the day. Behind both tracks is the conviction that all of Scripture is to be understood in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The words and actions of Jesus make sense in the context of the narrative and themes of the Old Testament. Outside of the Hebrew Scriptures, the other readings are consistent between both tracks one and two.

As we journey through the year, we'll sometimes use the semi-continuous (track one) readings to explore the Old Testament. At other times we'll explore narrative themes in readings from track two, that complement the Gospel reading for that Sunday. On the weeks when we're using track one, we've listed the readings in **blue** on our planner – which you'll find at [rootsforchurches.com/yearplanner](https://www.rootsforchurches.com/yearplanner).

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EPIPHANY



HOLY WEEK



EASTER



PENTECOST



ADVENT

From Epiphany to Holy Week we will explore **God's covenant** with creation, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah that God wants to write on our hearts. In all of these passages, although we are not looking directly at Jesus, we find that the Hebrew Bible points us to Jesus. We see God's intention: to work with humans, and – although his human partners failed many times – ultimately, in Jesus, God's promises and plans for humanity are fulfilled. What an incredible lead-up to Easter!

Between Easter and Pentecost we dig into the **foundations of the Early Church** through the book of Acts. And then after Pentecost, we'll head back to pick up the themes of **covenant, kingship and messiah** as we follow the life of King David. We'll meditate on **true wisdom for life** in James and Proverbs, and then more wisdom as we explore **God's rescue** in Esther, **God's presence** in suffering in Job, and **God's faithfulness** in Ruth, coming back to the Gospels in Advent.