

A LECTOR'S GUIDE & COMMENTARY

TO THE
REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY



YEAR C

J. TED BLAKLEY

For Anyone Who Wants to Read the Bible with Understanding

A LECTOR'S GUIDE AND COMMENTARY assists those whose calling, responsibility, and privilege it is to proclaim the Word of God through the public reading of Holy Scripture. The Guide provides a brief, reliable commentary for each lectionary reading, and then offers suggestions for how the text can be delivered, so that the biblical Story might have its full impact on the Christian community gathered for worship.

Pronunciations for words and names that may be unfamiliar are also included. The Guide is for use by any congregation or tradition that follows the Revised Common Lectionary, and even includes the adaptations authorized for use in The Episcopal Church.

Although designed first and foremost for lectors and lay readers, the Guide has also been written with other groups and uses in mind. For example, it can be used to trigger discussions in a Sunday school class or small group Bible study, or to serve as a resource for personal study, reflection, and devotion. It can also assist lay Eucharistic ministers when delivering the Word and Sacrament to the homebound and hospitalized, and even function as a first stop for preachers and teachers. In short, *A Lector's Guide and Commentary* is for anyone who wants to read the Bible with understanding.

"It is a wonderful privilege to belong to a church that uses a lectionary rather than relying on a narrow range of scriptures chosen by the pastor, but the other side of the privilege is that we read all sorts of passages without being sure what they are about. It is a huge privilege to read scripture in church, and these introductions will help readers do so in a way that brings the passage home to the people. They will help preachers too."

John Goldingay

David Allan Hubbard Professor of Old Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary; Pasadena, California
Author of *Walk On: Life, Loss, Trust, and Other Realities* and *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel*

"Dr. Blakley provides an invaluable resource for the Church. With masterful brevity and just the right amount of scholarship, he locates the assigned text within its literary context, the biblical narrative, and the liturgical theme of the day. After identifying the salient thoughts, he prudently suggests where and how to bring the text alive for the Church. Finally the scholar, the liturgist, the rhetorician, the lector, and the pew sitter are united! All of our lectors will have a copy. Bless you, Ted, for you have blessed us."

Jim Clark

Rector, Saint Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Parish; Scottsdale, Arizona
Author of *The ART of Engaging Holy Scripture Study Series*

J. TED BLAKLEY (M.Div., Ph.D.) received his doctoral degree in Biblical Studies from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. Currently, he serves as a scholar in residence for St. Mark's Press in Wichita, Kansas, where he and his wife, Rebekah, reside with their three children, Emma, Thaddaeus, and Esther.

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SEASON OF ADVENT

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Jeremiah 33:14–16

Psalm 25:1–10

1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

Luke 21:25–36

Overview of Readings

The first season of the Christian year is the season of Advent, which is a season of eager anticipation and expectant waiting. The word *advent* derives from the Latin *adventus*, which means *coming*. Thus, during the four Sundays of Advent, we—both individually and as the worshipping Christian community—are preparing ourselves for the coming of God in Jesus, the Christ (that is, the Messiah).

While we might associate Advent primarily with Christ's first coming as God incarnate, the readings for Advent 1 concern Christ's second coming at the end of history, when he will complete God's work of redemption begun during his earthly life, nothing less than the restoration of all of creation. Therefore, today's readings prepare us to celebrate and remember Christ's birth even as they help us reorient to live our lives in light of Christ's return.

JEREMIAH 33:14–16

Commentary

In Year C, not only are both the first and last OT readings taken from Jeremiah, but both address the LORD's plans to restore his exiled people, which includes raising up a shepherd king who will lead them in the way of justice and righteousness (Jer 23:1–6, Prop 29).

Jeremiah 1–29 is primarily concerned with the prophet's predictions that the southern kingdom of Judah will be defeated and exiled in Babylon as punishment for the sins of idolatry and injustice. Jeremiah 30–33, often designated *The Book of Consolation*, adopts a different tone, since these chapters deal with the end of exile and the restoration of Israel and Judah. In 22:1–23:6, the LORD charges the kings of Israel and Judah with not attending to the people as a shepherd tends his flock. Though the LORD brought about the judgment that led to the people being exiled, the kings are those who are truly responsible. The LORD says, "It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings" (23:2). These kings did not seek the word

of the LORD or commit themselves to the way of the LORD; instead, they committed idolatry and supported injustice, serving as bad examples that the people followed. Consequently, when the LORD has mercy on Israel and Judah and restores their fortunes (30:3; 33:26), he shall raise up shepherds over his people who will actually shepherd. The people will thus be safe and secure and have no need to be afraid or dismayed (23:3–4, Prop 29).

33:14–16. In today’s reading, a day is envisioned when a particular king will be raised up who “shall execute justice and righteousness in the land” (33:15). This king will be entirely devoted to the LORD and so shall serve as a model for those who would love the LORD their God with all of their heart, soul, and strength (Deut 6:5). By supporting justice and righteousness, this king will also serve as a model for God’s people who are called to love their neighbors as themselves (Lev 19:18).

In 2 Samuel, the LORD made a covenant with David, promising that one of David’s descendants will always occupy Judah’s throne (2 Sam 7:11b–16; 1 Kgs 8:25). Consequently, in Jeremiah, the king to be appointed is a descendent of David, described here as a righteous Branch that the LORD will cause to spring up (33:15). This same image is employed by Isaiah: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse [David’s father], and a branch shall grow out of his roots” (11:1). Thus, because of their judgment and exile, Israel and Judah’s kings are no more. David’s dynasty is like a mighty tree that has been felled; only the stump and the roots remain. When the LORD restores his exiled people, he will also remember his covenant with David, by raising up a king who will inaugurate an age of peace and prosperity throughout the Promised Land as well as the whole world (Isa 11:1–10) and who will be known by the name, “The LORD is our righteousness” (23:6; cf. 33:16).

Suggestions for Lectors

Today’s reading is quite brief, so do not start reading until your listeners are settled and attentive; this might involve pausing for longer than normal after introducing the reading. Also, read at a slightly slower-than-usual tempo. Since you are the voice of the LORD, speak with a strong, clear, and slightly elevated tone, especially when delivering the concluding line, *The LORD is our righteousness* (33:16).

1 THESSALONIANS 3:9–13

Commentary

Here, Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica, one of the first Christian communities he established as an apostle and missionary of Christ to the Gentiles. Earlier in the letter, Paul noted his desire to return to the Thessalonians in order to strengthen them in their new Christian faith, but so far he has been prevented (2:17–20). Thus, Paul sent his co-worker Timothy to them (3:1–5), and Timothy has just returned with news of their faith, their love for one another, and their concern for Paul. This news has been a source of great comfort and encouragement for Paul as he has endured hardships and persecutions (3:6–8).

3:9–13. In today’s reading, Paul expresses his gratitude for the Thessalonians by praying that God will so strengthen them that their lives will be increasingly charac-

terized by the holiness and love for one another that Christians are to practice as faithful followers eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus.

Suggestions for Lectors

Since today's reading is brief, make the most of your time by reading slowly and taking care to enunciate every phrase and thought. As you read, allow your voice to be filled with a quiet earnestness as you express Paul's gratitude and his eagerness to return to the Thessalonians. Pause for a full second before continuing in 3:11, which can be read with longing in your voice. Finally, direct 3:12–13 to your listeners in a tone of blessing.

Pronunciation Guide

Thessalonians (thes'-uh-LOH-nee-uhnz)

LUKE 21:25–36

Notes

Sequence. 1 of 6

Commentary

Today's reading is set in Jerusalem near the end of the last week of Jesus' life. Earlier in the week, Jesus performed two symbolic actions. On Palm Sunday, he processed into Jerusalem on a donkey as Israel's king (19:28–44), and afterward he engaged in a prophetic demonstration disrupting activities in the temple (19:45–48). He then returns daily to the temple to teach and to respond to questions about his authority for doing these things (20:1–21:4). By week's end, Jesus will be dead, condemned as a false prophet by Israel's leaders and executed by the Roman authorities as a messianic pretender, an enemy of the state.

On this, his last day in the temple precincts, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple (21:5–6). When his disciples ask Jesus when this will happen and what sign will presage it (21:7), he responds with a lengthy discourse, of which today's reading is a part.

21:25–36. Today's reading can be divided into three sections. In the first (21:25–28), Jesus announces his return as the glorious and powerful Son of Man. In the second (21:29–33), he tells a parable about a fig tree. Nothing looks deader than a fig tree in winter; yet when it begins to bud, it is a sign that summer is just around the corner. Then, in the final section (21:34–36), Jesus exhorts and encourages his followers to remain prayerfully vigilant until his return. Only after Christians weather the winter of hardship will the final achievement of Jesus' mission—world redemption—be near.

Suggestions for Lectors

Today's reading can be divided into three sections (25–28, 29–33, 34–36), so pause for a full beat prior to verses 29 and 34 in order to signal the change from one section to the next.

Read 21:25–27 with a serious intensity in your voice to convey the gloomy foreboding of Jesus' predictions. While retaining your intensity, back down from the se-

riousness as you read 21:28. A quieter, less severe tone can be employed for Jesus' parable and instructions in 21:29–33. Then, conclude by reading 21:34–36 with something of the serious intensity with which you began today's reading.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Baruch 5:1–9 *or* Malachi 3:1–4
Luke 1:68–79; ✠ Canticle 4 *or* 16
Philippians 1:3–11
Luke 3:1–6

Overview of Readings

Whereas the readings of Advent 1 are oriented to Jesus' second coming, the readings of Advent 2 focus upon his first coming. In all three years, the OT readings express the expectations of a future messianic age, an age of restoration, reconciliation, and peace (*shalom*) to be inaugurated with the arrival of God's anointed agent. (The word for *anointed one* is *Messiah* in Hebrew and *Christ* in Greek).

Similarly, in all three years, the gospel readings introduce us to John the Baptist, whose vocation it was to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of God's Messiah. Because of texts like Malachi 4:5 (cf. Mark 9:11), in the first century, it was believed that the prophet Elijah would return to prepare the way for the coming of God and God's anointed agent. The gospels present John the Baptist as fulfilling this role of preparing the way (Matt 11:7–15; Luke 1:13–17).

BARUCH 5:1–9

Commentary

The book of Baruch exists only in Greek and so is not a part of the Hebrew canon. As such, Baruch belongs to neither the OT nor the NT but to a collection of books known as the Apocrypha in Protestant traditions and as Deuterocanonical (that is, Second Canon) in Roman Catholicism. In Eastern Orthodoxy, Baruch is simply part of the OT scriptures. The book is attributed to Baruch son of Nariah, who served as a secretary and amanuensis for the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 36:4) and who is said to have composed this book in Babylon during the Babylonian exile (1:1–2). In it, Baruch presents vignettes from the history of the Exile and reflections on that history. In today's reading, which is filled with allusions to Isaiah, the author anticipates the future salvation of God's people, depicted here as the exiled people returning to Jerusalem.

5:1–4. Today's reading begins with the vision of a rebuilt and glorious Jerusalem. The author calls the city to "take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction" (5:1) and to "put on the robe of righteousness" and "the diadem of glory" (5:2), thus indicating that Jerusalem must get herself ready for the homecoming of her exiled children. Here, one may be reminded of the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 (East 5 and 6).

5:5–9. Next, the author tells Jerusalem to stand up and look around, to the east (towards Babylon), to the west and east (to the other places where God’s people had been taken), in order to get a first glimpse of the salvation that God is orchestrating. Jerusalem is to rejoice because God has not ultimately forgotten or forsaken his people whom he sent into exile due to their sins of idolatry and injustice; instead God has remembered his people and is gathering them back together (5:5). The manner of their return will differ from the manner of their departure; they were taken away on foot by their enemies, but now God will himself convey them back in glory “as on a royal throne” (5:6). Here, the image is of a king being carried about upon his throne by his subjects. Moreover, their return will not be a difficult journey or a bumpy ride as though they were traipsing through the wilderness; for the rough terrain between Babylon and Jerusalem will be ironed out flat, as the mountains and hills are cut down and the valleys filled up (5:7; cf. Isa 40:3–4; Mark 1:2–3). In short, God does not wait for his people to return on their own; instead, he forgives them and then goes out, gets them, and brings them back home himself.

Suggestions for Lectors

Today’s reading is filled with visions of the glorious future that awaits God’s people, so announce the visions as if you were an eyewitness to their splendor. Pause for a full second before 5:5 as you begin the direct address. In 5:7, the tone changes again as your voice now reflects the wonderful deeds of God himself. Although 5:9 also presents God’s acts, conclude your reading on a gentler note.

Pronunciation Guide

Baruch (bah-ROOK)

MALACHI 3:1–4

Commentary

The book of Malachi is the last book in the collection of OT writings known as the Book of the Twelve, which comprises the twelve Minor Prophets from Hosea to Malachi. In Hebrew, *malachi* means *my messenger*, making it unclear as to whether Malachi is the author’s name or whether the book is an anonymous work entitled, *My Messenger*. This latter position finds support in today’s reading, where reference is made to “my messenger” whom the LORD God will send (3:1), which appears to be a reference to the prophet Elijah (cf. 4:5).

One of the most distinctive aspects of Malachi is its literary structure, which is organized around six disputations, or debates, that follow a pattern of alternating questions and answers (1:2–5; 1:6–2:9; 2:10–16; 2:17–3:5; 3:6–12; 3:13–4:3). Today’s reading forms part of the fourth disputation, which begins in 2:17:

The Prophet: You have wearied the LORD with your words.

The people: How have we wearied him?

The Prophet: By saying, “All who do evil are good in the sight of the LORD, and he delights in them.” Or by asking, “Where is the God of justice?”

In other words, the people are looking around and seeing rampant corruption and injustice of the type listed in 3:5, and the LORD appears to be doing absolutely nothing about it.

3:1–4. The LORD responds by saying that he will come to his temple unexpectedly (3:1b) and execute judgment (3:5). But before he comes, he will send his messenger on ahead to make preparations for his arrival (3:1a). Since the priesthood has become corrupt (cf. 1:6–2:16), the messenger of the covenant will purify the descendants of Levi, that is, the Levitical priests who are responsible for the temple and its sacrifices (3:2a–3). Once temple operations have been restored to their proper order and function and the offerings made acceptable (3:4), the LORD will return to his house (3:1b, 5).

In today’s gospel reading, John the Baptist is described as coming in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the people of Israel to receive the LORD, that is, Jesus.

Suggestions for Lectors

This is a relatively short reading and a consistent strong voice throughout will be sufficient. Pause for a full second before delivering the last line in a slower, less intense manner and with a hint of hope, joy, and/or satisfaction in your voice.

Pronunciation Guide

Judab (JOO-duh), *Levi* (LEE-vī)

Malachi (MAL-uh-kī)

PHILIPPIANS 1:3–11

Notes

Sequence. 1 of 2

Suggested Reading. Philippians 1:1–11

Commentary

The Letter of Paul to the Philippians is essentially a “thank you” note to the Christians in Philippi for their ongoing financial support of Paul’s missionary efforts (Phil 4:10–20). The church in Philippi was founded during Paul’s second missionary journey; it was the first Christian community to be established in Greece (Acts 16:6–40). In this letter, Paul writes from prison (1:7, 13–14) and thanks the Philippians for the gifts they sent to him through one of their own, Epaphroditus, who has been a great help and encouragement to Paul (2:25). In return, Paul wishes to return Epaphroditus to them and to encourage the Philippian Christians with his words of praise and gratitude and even with exhortation to remain faithful to the gospel by loving and serving one another.

1:1–11. In today’s reading, Paul greets the Christians in Philippi, praying that their love may overflow; for loving one another is what constitutes true purity and holiness, and loving one another in the present is how we await Jesus’ return. Paul, of course, is confident that his prayer will be answered because he trusts God’s faithfulness to the Philippians: “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ” (1:6).

Suggestions for Lectors

If beginning with 1:1–2, read this opening salutation with plenty of pauses as the punctuation dictates and with additional brief pauses after *you* and *peace* in 1:2. Read the blessing in 1:2 with warmth, then pause for a full second afterwards before commencing with the main body of the reading in 1:3–11.

As you read 1:3–11, convey with your voice and facial expression Paul's intense devotion to and gratitude for the Philippian Christians. Verse 6 stands apart from the rest of the reading and so deserves special emphasis. This can be achieved by introducing lengthy pauses both before and after verse 6 and by reading it more deliberately and slowly. You may even drop your voice a little and lean in to indicate that this verse is of particular importance and relevance to your listeners.

Pronunciation Guide

Philippi (FIL-uh-pī; fih-LIP-ī), *Philippians* (fih-LIH-pee-uhns)

LUKE 3:1–6

Notes

Sequence. 2 of 6

Commentary

Luke is the only gospel to narrate the conception and the birth of John the Baptist (1:5–25, 57–80). Once, when his elderly father Zechariah was performing his priestly duties in the temple, the angel Gabriel announced to him that his barren wife, Elizabeth, would bear him a son named John, who “will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (1:16–17).

3:1–2. In today's reading, John, now an adult, begins his work of preparing people for the arrival of God and God's kingdom, whose kingdom will rival that of the empires and kingdoms listed in the opening verses (3:1–2).

3:3–6. In its original context, the quotation from the prophet Isaiah, which comes from Isaiah 40:3–5, refers to the anticipated end of the Babylonian exile. Isaiah 40 begins with the LORD comforting his exiled people, “cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins” (40:2). Since the people's persistent sins were what sent Israel into exile, the forgiveness of their sins means the end of exile. Now, the LORD God is coming to lead his exiled, yet now forgiven, people back to Jerusalem from Babylon. Consequently, the wilderness region standing between Babylon and Jerusalem must be prepared as for a royal procession, and a straight and flat highway must be constructed.

In Luke, John the Baptist is like Isaiah in that he has been called to be “the prophet of the Most High, [who] will go before the Lord to prepare his ways” (Luke 1:76). Therefore, John's role is to prepare the people for the arrival of the Lord's Messiah who is coming to seek and save the lost (19:10), to set free not those who are in geographic exile but those who are in exile as captives to sin (cf. 4:18–19). So,

John travels throughout the wilderness regions around the Jordan, preparing the people to meet their Lord by baptizing them for the forgiveness of their sins.

Suggestions for Lectors

Your goal for 3:1–3 is to read these verses as smoothly as possible, which is complicated by the fact that they contain many names that you may not be familiar with. One of the pitfalls when reading a passage containing so many unusual names is that, even if we pronounce the names correctly, we might place so much emphasis upon the names themselves that the larger meaning of the text becomes distorted or lost. Consequently, you will want to spend more time than normal preparing so that you come to the place where you are able to say the names with ease and confidence. It may be helpful to shift into a slightly slower pace for these opening verses, which would afford you a better opportunity to pronounce the names with ease and clarity.

Read 3:4b–6, which comes from the prophet Isaiah, in a higher tone of voice as an announcement. There is no need to shout, but do attract your listeners' attention. Increase the intensity of your voice as you conclude with the promise, *and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God* (3:6), which is what we are anticipating during this season of Advent.

Pronunciation Guide

Abilene (ab'-uh-LEE-nee; *not* AB-uh-leen), *Annas* (AN-uhs)
Caiaphas (KĪ-uh-fuhs; KAY-), *Galilee* (GAL-uh-lee), *Herod* (HAIR-uhd)
Isaiah (Ī-ZAY-ah), *Ituraea* (ih'-tyoor-EE-uh; it'-yoor-EE-uh), *Jordan* (JOR-duhn)
Judea (joo-DEE-uh; -DAY-), *Lysanias* (luh-SAY-nee-uhs, lī-), *Pilate* (PĪ-luht)
Pontius (PON-chuhs; -shuhs; -tee-uhs), *Tiberius* (tī-BIHR-ee-uhs)
Trachonitis (trak'-oh-NĪ-tis), *Zechariah* (zek'-uh-RĪ-ah)

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Zephaniah 3:14–20
Isaiah 12:2–6; ✠ Canticle 9
Philippians 4:4–7
Luke 3:7–18

ZEPHANIAH 3:14–20

Commentary

Zephaniah, one of the twelve Minor Prophets and a contemporary of Jeremiah, carried out his prophetic ministry in the southern kingdom of Judah in the middle of the seventh century B.C. (c. 630–620 B.C.). In the first part of this prophetic book, Zephaniah announces the approaching day of the LORD, which is a day of judgment for Judah (1:4–18), for her capital Jerusalem (3:1–8), and for her pagan neighbors (2:4–15).

3:14–20. Yet, in the latter part of the book including today's reading, Zephaniah's prophetic message becomes one of hope in the promise of a future restora-

tion for all of Israel (3:9–20). The day of the LORD may dawn in deep darkness, but the darkness will give way to the light of day, for the LORD—the king of Israel and Jerusalem’s most important citizen—will release Israel from its punishments and liberate Israel from its oppressors. With God, judgment never seems to be the last word.

Suggestions for Lectors

This reading essentially involves two speakers—the prophet Zephaniah (3:14–18a) and the LORD (3:18b–20)—so adopt a manner and tone appropriate to each. Zephaniah is attempting to instill hope in the people of Israel; therefore, read these words with strength and confidence in an attempt to inspire your listeners to rejoice in hope. You may need to practice 3:14, as it is sometimes difficult to start a reading on such a strong note. After *on a day of festival* (3:18a), pause for a moment and perhaps look at your listeners so as to signal a change in speakers.

When you continue with *I will remove disaster from you* (3:18b), speak as the LORD speaking to his people. With the repeated use of the first person pronoun, *I*, the LORD seems to have come closer, so try to reflect this intimacy with your voice.

Pronunciation Guide

Zephaniah (zef'-uh-NĪ-ah)

Zion (ZĪ-uhn)

PHILIPPIANS 4:4–7

Notes

Sequence. 2 of 2

Commentary

Having just offered specific instructions regarding a dispute that has arisen between two prominent members of the Philippian church (4:2–3), in today’s reading, Paul offers a series of exhortations, directing the Philippian Christians to rejoice always, to manifest gentleness, and to take everything to God in prayer with thanksgiving. The fruit of such activities and dispositions is a peace that comes from God that will keep them united to God and to one another in love as they await the Lord’s return.

Suggestions for Lectors

With this brief reading, you have but a few seconds to call out this happy news. Make the most of your time through the modulation of your voice, somewhat in the following fashion: verses 4 and 5 are the good tidings we await next week, so here your voice should be at its most joyous, while 4:6 can be read in more informative tone as Paul issues some basic instructions. As you read 4:7, raise your eyes to wish them the gift of peace, speaking these parting words gently and affectionately.

Pronunciation Guide

Philippians (fih-LIH-pee-uhns)

LUKE 3:7–18

Notes

Sequence. 3 of 6

Commentary

In last week's reading, John the Baptist began his task of preparing the people of Israel for the coming of the Lord's Messiah by baptizing them for the forgiveness of their sins.

3:7–9. The baptism John proclaimed was no mere ritual. The people trekking into the wilderness should not think that a mere dip in the Jordan was sufficient to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah. What John was calling for and what his baptism symbolized was a change of heart, for as the angel Gabriel said of John before his birth, "He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:16–17).

Moreover, a change of heart is not simply an internal matter. A true change of heart will be manifest in a person's attitudes and actions; consequently, in his fiery manner, John calls the people to "Bear fruits worthy of repentance" (3:8). In addition, the people should not think that they need not prepare themselves because they belong to God's chosen people, because they are descendents of Abraham with whom God entered into covenant, for God can turn anyone and anything into his children. As it says in Isaiah 40:5, which was cited at the end of the previous reading, when the Lord comes, "*all* flesh will see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). So again, the people should, "Bear fruits worthy of repentance" (3:8).

3:10–14. Then, in response to the crowds' inquiries, John identifies specific actions, the sort that he regards as fruits befitting repentance. Interestingly, and not coincidentally, every action John highlights has to do with economic matters, from the ending of economic exploitation to taking care of the poor. These are matters that almost all the OT prophets speak about, and we hear these same concerns in Jesus' own teaching in Luke (e.g., 3:18, 6:20–23; see also 1:52–53).

3:15–18. The power with which John speaks and the great crowds he attracts prompt speculations over his identity. Is he the Messiah? No, John says. His work is merely preparatory; his baptism with water could not even begin to compare with the work of the one who is coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Suggestions for Lectors

Read 3:7–9 with a sharp edge to your voice to convey John's strong words and denunciations. In 3:10–14, keep your voice strong and instructional as John answers the crowds' questions.

Pause for a full second before 3:15 to signal the shift in focus. Here, John is no longer instructing the people but trying to lay to rest the mounting speculations that he is the Messiah. Imagine that the crowds are large and noisy and that your voice must be loud enough to be heard over the tumult. Since John is attempting to distinguish himself from the one who is coming, emphasize the contrast between their

vocations by leaning heavily on *I baptize you with water* and *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire* (3:16). You may wish to read 3:16–17 more slowly, giving yourself an opportunity to enunciate each word more clearly.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Micah 5:2–5a

Luke 1:47–55 *or* Psalm 80:1–7; ✠ Canticle 3 *or* 15 *or* Psalm 80:1–7

Hebrews 10:5–10

Luke 1:39–45, (46–55)

MICAH 5:2–5A

Commentary

The book of Micah belongs to a collection of writings called the Book of the Twelve, comprising the twelve Minor Prophets from Hosea to Malachi. Roughly contemporary with Isaiah, Micah was a prophet of Judah at the end of the eighth century B.C. and so would have witnessed the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

In Micah 1–3, the prophet issues oracles of judgment against the two capital cities of the divided kingdom: Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel), and Jerusalem (the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah). The basic charges, which are found in the other prophetic writings, are those of idolatry and social injustice; that is, the people and their leaders have failed to love God with all they are and have (Deut 6:4–5) and to love their neighbor as themselves (Lev 19:18). In light of these persistent failures, Micah announces that Samaria and Jerusalem will be laid waste (1:6) and the people scattered (cf. 2:12–13).

Then, in Micah 4–5, the tenor changes from that of judgment and exile to that of hope and restoration, as the prophet anticipates a future day when the LORD will restore Zion, the mountain on which the city of Jerusalem and its temple are situated (4:1–2), and when the LORD will forgive and gather together his exiled people whom he has disciplined (4:6–7). That day will be a day of peace (4:3–4) when once again the people will lead faithful, obedient lives (4:5).

5:2–5a. It is near the end of this oracle of hope and restoration that today's reading comes and speaks of a new ruler over God's people. Earlier in chapter three, Micah had condemned the leaders of Israel and Judah who had forsaken the ways of justice, being men of violence motivated by wealth and power. In contrast, the ruler whom the LORD shall raise up will be a man of peace (5:5), a true shepherd who will guide and feed God's people. This ruler will not be of the aristocracy but of humble origins, coming from the little Judean village of Bethlehem, the hometown of king David. Consequently, this new ruler is envisioned as a new David, a new shepherd-king who like David will be a man after God's own heart. This future vision of a Davidic king stands in continuity with the LORD's promise to David that he will establish his throne forever (2 Sam 7:11b–16). On this Fourth Sunday in Advent, we see in Jesus' anticipated birth the fulfillment of this vision.

Suggestions for Lectors

This passage is so brief that you need but one tone of voice throughout, strong and clear. Here you are talking to Bethlehem about the important role it will play in the LORD's plans to restore Israel and introduce peace to the world. Your voice should reflect a sense of excitement and anticipation about what the Lord is planning to do. The last line, *and he shall be one of peace* (5:5a), should be set apart from what precedes by pausing for a full-second beforehand. Then, read the line calmly with an ever-so-brief pause after *he* and another one after *one*. Make sure to say *of peace* clearly; do not let it drop off too quickly.

Pronunciation Guide

Bethlehem (BETH-luh-hem'), *Ephrathah* (EF-ra-thah; ef-RAH-thah)
Judah (JOO-duh), *Israel* (IZ-ree-uhl; -ray-), *Micah* (MĪ-kuh)

HEBREWS 10:5–10

Commentary

In the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is presented as, among other things, our Great High Priest (4:14–5:10; 8:1–7; 9:1–28). Under the Old Covenant, it was the duty of the high priest, once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), to sacrifice a bull and a goat and to take their blood into the Holy of Holies, the most sacred space in the temple where the ark of the covenant rested, thereby purifying the temple of all contamination and cleansing the people of all sin. Under the New Covenant, Jesus' death has achieved what all of these repeated sacrifices of bulls and goats could never achieve, namely, the once-for-all-time removal of sin. In this way, Jesus has fulfilled the aims and intentions of the Old Covenant and thus introduced a new era of salvation, the New Covenant. This is why Jesus has become our Great High Priest; for in his obedience to God, Jesus made a perfect, complete, and sufficient once-for-all-time sacrifice of himself (7:27; 9:12, 26; 10:10) that has resulted in the forgiveness of the whole world's sins. All of this stands as the background to today's reading.

10:5–10. Today's reading begins with a citation from Psalm 40:6–8a, in which the psalmist declares that God takes no delight or pleasure in animal sacrifice and burnt offerings. Now such a declaration may strike us as strange given all of the prescriptions and regulations regarding animal sacrifice in OT books like Leviticus. However, the psalmist's point is that what God desires most of all is not performance of ritual, however important it may be, but people who are ready and willing to obey God and do God's will. In Jesus, we have one who was perfectly ready and willing to do God's will, as evidenced by his obedience even unto death. Moreover, in the death of Jesus and what it accomplished, a changing of the guard has occurred; the Old Covenant, which has served its God-given purpose, has been set aside and the New Covenant has been established in its place. In Jesus' coming, we do not have a rejection of the Old Covenant, but rather its very fulfillment.

Suggestions for Lectors

Today's reading will require some variations in your voice as it moves back and forth between simple narration, direct speech, and parenthetical asides. Reading slowly, deliberately, and with many pauses will help you distinguish these various portions. The direct speech portions are also scripture citations from the OT, so read these in an elevated voice. Then, as you read the parenthetical expressions at the end of verses 7 and 8, drop your voice, perhaps leaning in slightly as you make eye contact with your listeners.

As you conclude your reading, you might add *Thus* before *he abolishes* (10:9b), which will help it sound more like the conclusion to an argument. Alternatively, instead of reading *He abolishes the first in order to establish the second* as its own sentence, treat it as though it concluded the sentence that begins with *When he* in 10:8; for *the first* refers to *the sacrifices and burnt offerings and sin offerings* in 10:8 and *the second* refers to *your will* in 10:9a. In other words, treat the period after *your will* as a comma and intone 10:8–9 as a single sentence instead of two sentences as punctuated in the NRSV.

LUKE 1:39–45, (46–55)

Notes

Sequence. 4 of 6

Commentary

In the Advent 3 reading, John the Baptist put to rest any speculations that he was the Messiah. In today's Advent 4 reading, even John the Baptist's own mother, Elizabeth, recognizes and acknowledges that it is not her son but Mary's who will be God's Messiah.

In Luke 1:26–38, the angel Gabriel visits Mary in Nazareth of Galilee and announces that she has been chosen by God to conceive and bear a son who will be called “the Son of the Most High” (1:32). When Mary asks how this will all come about since she has never been with a man, Gabriel says that it will be the work of God's Holy Spirit. Then, to provide evidence that such an impossible thing is not impossible with God, Gabriel informs Mary that her elderly relative Elizabeth is already sixth months pregnant with her first son.

1:39–45. In today's reading, Mary sets out and travels from Galilee to Judea in order to visit Elizabeth. When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the Holy Spirit comes upon her, and three times she speaks of Mary or her child as blessed of God (1:42ab, 1:45), thus confirming the angel Gabriel's greeting that Mary has been favored by God (1:28).

1:46–55. Mary then responds to Elizabeth's gracious and confirming words with her own song of praise, known as the Magnificat, the Latin word for *magnifies* which is the first word in the text of the Latin Vulgate, *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. In the Magnificat, Mary praises the God of Israel for the favor that he has bestowed upon a humble Galilean girl. God's choosing of Mary suggests to her that what God is about to do will involve a reversal of fortunes, a reversal of the power structures of the world's kingdoms. Interestingly, many of the themes one finds within the

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word
that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:3

A LECTOR'S GUIDE AND COMMENTARY *to the Revised Common Lectionary* is a complete revision of *A Lector's Guide to the Episcopal Eucharistic Lectionary* by Frank Mulligan, published by St. Mark's Press in 1986. When Mulligan submitted his manuscript to St. Mark's, requesting that it be considered for publication, St. Mark's was delighted, for at the time, many believed that the performance of the Liturgy of the Word was an area of public worship in need of attention. *A Lector's Guide* addressed that need and has done so for nearly a quarter of a century, but now there is a need for a new guide.

The Need for a New Guide

In 2006, the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church adopted the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) as the official lectionary of The Episcopal Church. Since *A Lector's Guide* was based upon the readings in *The Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*, the adoption of the RCL effectively rendered the Guide out of date. In August 2008, a month after submitting my doctoral thesis to the University of St. Andrews, I was approached by St. Mark's Press and asked if I would consider updating *A Lector's Guide*. I was gratified and excited by the request, for I saw it as a chance to contribute to the ongoing life and ministry of the Church by engaging in a project that I felt passionate about and that drew upon my experience and expertise as a biblical scholar. For as long as I can remember, I have loved the Bible; I have loved reading it, studying it, and teaching it. For the past several years, I have enjoyed serving as a lector, eagerly awaiting my monthly opportunity to read aloud and proclaim the Scriptures that have so shaped me. Over the years, I have come to see my primary vocation as contributing to the spiritual development and well-being of the local church by teaching and developing programs of spiritual formation oriented around individual and corporate engagement with Holy Scripture. For me, this has involved making the Bible accessible so that people might more easily enter into the biblical narrative and be encountered by the God of the Bible. I see *A Lector's Guide and Commentary* as contributing to the fulfillment of this vision of putting the Bible back into the hands of God's people.

Though my scholarly training has been primarily in the area of New Testament studies, my ambition is to be a *biblical* scholar. I do not simply want to be a New Testament or an Old Testament specialist, but a scholar who seeks to understand and convey how the Old and New Testaments relate to one another and function together as Holy Scripture, bearing witness to the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. My ambition, to borrow from the words of Jesus, is to be a "scribe who has been

trained for the kingdom,” who like the master of a household, “brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matt 13:52). Achieving such an ambition has become more and more difficult in a day and age of increasing specialization. So, I am sincerely grateful for being entrusted with a project that affords me an opportunity to research, study, and write about nearly every book in the Bible.

When I first accepted the project, the plan was to update *A Lector’s Guide* to bring it into conformity with the RCL. This would have involved making minor edits, rearranging some readings, and adding a number of additional readings that are included in RCL but not in the *BCP*. But, plans have a way of changing. After working on the project for a few months, it became clear that my overall vision for the Guide was different from Mulligan’s. I imagine our differences are a result of our respective backgrounds, interests, and training. I met with St. Mark’s Press, and we determined that the Guide would exhibit an unevenness in style and presentation if I were simply to update it as originally planned. So, we agreed on a new vision and focus, which has been reflected in its new title, *A Lector’s Guide and Commentary*. What started as a relatively straightforward updating turned into a wholesale revision, and what began as one book has now become a projected three, with this being the first.

While there is no need to note all of the differences between *A Lector’s Guide and Commentary* and its predecessor, a few differences are worth mentioning. The most significant difference between the guides relates to the commentary sections. Whereas Mulligan’s commentaries range on average from 30 to 70 words, mine range from 400 to 800 words, with some passages receiving more than a 1000 words. Except for the occasional phrase borrowed from Mulligan, the commentaries have been completely rewritten. In addition, a Table of Contents, a Scripture Index, and a Pronunciation Guide have been added. The suggestions for reading have also been expanded. Here Mulligan’s influence can still be felt. I learned much from Mulligan’s instructions, sometimes even reproducing his insights for how a passage of Scripture might best be conveyed orally.

Acknowledgements

Finally, I wish to express my sincerest thanks and gratitude to St. Mark’s Press for this opportunity, especially to Iola Crandall, Ed Lester, and Larry Bottenberg for their trust, encouragement, and patience throughout this process and for their enthusiastic support of the new vision for *A Lector’s Guide and Commentary*. I would like to thank Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, especially Fr. Gary Goldacker (Interim Rector) and Keith Anderson (Senior Warden) for providing me with temporary office space to work on the book. I daresay it would not have come together as easily somewhere else. I would also like to thank Jack Wilkins for his support in providing the computer system I have used for writing and typesetting the book and designing the cover.

Thanks goes to Ruth Anne and Otto Praeger for proofreading and collating the lectionary references. Special thanks goes to Charlotte Crandall and Rebekah Blakley for their willing and tireless editing and re-editing of the manuscript. Any errors or idiosyncrasies that remain are mine and mine alone.

Lastly, I wish to thank my family—Rebekah, Emma, Thaddaeus, and Esther—for the freedom to write this guide and for the sacrifices that they have made, for the long days, the long nights, and the inevitable stress that such an undertaking can have upon a household. I love you more dearly than the spoken word can tell.

My hope and prayer is that *A Lector's Guide and Commentary* will, in some small but significant ways, contribute to God's kingdom, to the recovery of our vocation as God's image-bearers in a world that desperately needs us, as the Body of Christ, to be the community of the Spirit who knows how to love God with all that we are, have, and hope to be and to love our neighbors as ourselves, be they friend or foe.

Blessings.

J. Ted Blakley
Easter 2009

To report errors or to make suggestions for improvement,
please contact St. Mark's Press at stmarkspress@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:10–11

The Word that God speaks and the Word that God is is a dynamic, powerful and effective word. In Isaiah 55, the Word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD is characterized as life-producing and life-sustaining, qualities manifest throughout the biblical narrative. By his eternal Word, God spoke creation into being. Where before there had been nothing but the nothingness of chaos, God, through his Word, fashioned fertile and habitable spaces, where the life God created might take root and flourish. By his eternal Word made manifest in the Law, the LORD sustained his chosen people, Israel, that they might become a nation of priests, who would mediate the presence, knowledge, and forgiveness of God to all peoples everywhere. Then, in the fullness of time, God's eternal Word became a human being, Jesus of Nazareth, the one Israelite who perfectly and obediently fulfilled Israel's vocation to be the light of the world. Through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of his forever incarnate Word, God has redeemed the world and inaugurated the New Creation, to be consummated when the incarnate Word of God returns.

When, as Christians, we profess the Bible to be the Word of God, whatever else we might mean by this, we are claiming that the Bible possesses the qualities of God's eternal Word: it is dynamic, powerful, effectual, life-giving, and life-sustaining. In addition, we are claiming that the Story of the Word is of central importance for the whole world. This Story is the good news of how the God of creation became a creature so that the old creation, which had become subject to sin, violence, and death might give way to the New Creation, where human beings would finally fulfill their original calling to be faithful stewards and the bearers of God's image in the world.

From the very first days of the Church until now, Holy Scripture has played a vital role in the life and worship of Christian communities. In the Scriptures, we discover our true identity as God's chosen and beloved people. When we enter into the

biblical Story, we are encountered by the God who created us and sustains us, the God who loves, rescues, and restores us, and the God who equips and empowers us to participate in the New Creation, enabling us to love God, to love our neighbors, and even to love our enemies. Thus, the ongoing proclamation of the Word of God through preaching, teaching, *and* the public reading of Holy Scripture continues to be a central and vital ministry of the Church.

When the Bible is read aloud in a setting of communal worship, the Word of God is activated and sent forth. Therefore, those who read the Bible publicly are a principal means by which the Word of God accomplishes God's purposes. This is why the Church needs not only gifted preachers and teachers, but gifted lectors and lay readers. *A Lector's Guide and Commentary to the Revised Common Lectionary* is designed to equip and prepare those who are called and privileged with the responsibility of proclaiming the Word of God through the public reading of Holy Scripture. The Guide does this by providing a brief, reliable commentary for each lectionary reading, and then by offering suggestions for how the text can be delivered, so that the Story of the Word of God might have its full intended impact on the Christian community gathered for worship.

Although designed first and foremost for lectors and lay readers, the Guide has also been written with other groups and uses in mind. For example, the Guide can be used to trigger discussions in a Sunday school class or small group Bible study, or it could serve as a resource for personal study, reflection, and devotion. The Guide can assist lay Eucharistic ministers who deliver the Word and Sacrament to shut-ins, and even function as a first stop for preachers and teachers.

BASIC FEATURES OF THE GUIDE

A Lector's Guide and Commentary is for use by any Christian congregation or tradition that follows the Revised Common Lectionary. It also includes the adaptations authorized for use in The Episcopal Church; these are described below. The following describes the basic features of the Guide.

Notes

Some of the lectionary readings include brief notes, which are of two kinds: Suggested Reading and Sequence.

Suggested Reading. According to the RCL, when it is appropriate, readings may be lengthened at discretion. The RCL includes suggested lengthenings, which are cited in parentheses. For example, the gospel reading for Advent 4 is cited as Luke 1:39–45, (46–55). The persons responsible for selecting the readings must decide whether Luke 1:39–45 or Luke 1:39–55 is to be read.

Occasionally, the Guide includes its own suggested lengthening, which will be found in the Notes. For example, the NT reading for Epiphany 7 is 1 Corinthians 15:35–38, 42–50. The Guide deems verses 39–41 to be an important part of Paul's argument regarding the nature of resurrection bodies, and so it suggests that 15:35–50 be read.

In most churches, a pastor, priest, or preacher determines whether a reading will be lengthened. However, if you as a reader think that your assigned reading would benefit from being lengthened, discuss the possibility with whoever is responsible for making those decisions.

Sequence. One of the benefits of the RCL is that it provides many opportunities for continuous or semi-continuous reading of biblical texts. For example, in Year C, the Gospel of Luke is read every Sunday in the Season after Pentecost, twenty-nine Propers in all. Since one of the chief goals of the Commentary portion is to situate a reading within its larger literary context, the Notes will indicate when a lectionary reading occurs in a sequence of readings from the same biblical book. With this information, a reader who wants to understand more about their assigned text has the opportunity to explore the Commentary for the previous and/or subsequent weeks' readings.

For example, on Easter 2, the Notes for John 20:19–31 reads: *Sequence.* 2 of 7. This indicates that John 20:19–31 is the second of seven sequential gospel readings from John. Consider also the Notes for 1 Corinthians 13:1–13 on Epiphany 4, which reads: *Sequence.* 3 of 7 (3 of 3 on Spiritual Gifts). This indicates that 1 Corinthians 13:1–13 is the third in a sequence of seven epistle readings from 1 Corinthians and that it is the third and final reading in a sequence of readings where Paul discusses spiritual gifts.

Commentary

When we are unclear about the purpose and meaning of a biblical text, our uncertainty and confusion can be conveyed to our listeners in our reading of the text. The converse is equally true. Even when we possess just a basic understanding of a text, we are able to communicate that understanding to our listeners, often intuitively in subtle, yet very significant ways (for example, through our tone of voice, our tempo and pace, our overall demeanor, and so on. To assist lectors in communicating meaning, the Guide provides a Commentary for every lectionary reading (except for the Psalms and other scriptures that serve as The Response to the first reading).

The purpose of the Commentary is to help lectors gain a better understanding and feel for their assigned passage so that they can read it with confidence and understanding. To do this, the Commentary sometimes provides background information in order to situate a reading within its broader historical and cultural contexts. Sometimes references are made to other biblical events and passages of Scripture in order to locate a reading within the wider biblical context and to show what role it plays within the larger Christian Story. When this occurs, the other biblical passages are cited so that readers can consult them. If the cited passage happens to be a lectionary reading from Year C, then the day on which that reading occurs is also cited. For example, in the gospel reading for Epiphany 4, Jesus makes reference to Elijah's healing of a Gentile, so the Commentary offers the following parenthetical citation: *1 Kgs 17:8–24, Prop 5*. Armed with this information, a reader can look up the story in 1 Kings and consult its commentary in Proper 5.

Most of all, readings are interpreted within their own literary contexts. For example, when addressing a reading from one of the gospels, the Commentary gener-

ally includes comments about what has happened in the narrative prior to the assigned reading. In addition, if the reading exhibits any of the gospel writer's trademark motifs or themes, these are discussed as well. Here, the goal of the Commentary is to help readers see that their assigned texts are not individual, isolated units that stand on their own but that they belong to larger narratives, teachings, arguments, and stories. Inevitably, this broadening of the horizons will have a positive effect on one's understanding and delivery of Scripture.

Suggestions for Lectors

Understanding the meaning and purpose of a biblical text is just the first step in fulfilling our role as lectors and lay readers. The second step involves learning how to convey that understanding to our listeners through our reading of the text. To assist in this task, the Guide provides Suggestions for Lectors, which offers specific advice and practical suggestions, not absolute rules, for how the text can be delivered so that it might have its intended rhetorical impact upon its listeners.

As with the Commentary, the Suggestions for Lectors does not seek to be exhaustive; it does not comment on every aspect of a text but merely draws attention to its more prominent features. The Suggestions for Lectors does not presume to offer the only, or even the best, way to read a given text aloud. After all, biblical texts are not dead or inert, rather they are dynamic, alive, and rich with meaning. A single passage of Scripture often lends itself to multiple interpretations and thus to multiple ways of being read that are faithful to its meaning and intent. This is not to say that every interpretation of a text is a faithful interpretation; only that a single reading can never capture or convey everything within a given biblical text. One of the benefits of following a lectionary cycle of readings is that it gives us the opportunity to revisit the same text again and again. This allows texts to unfold and reveal more of their meaning over time. In short, the Suggestions for Lectors should be taken as just that, suggestions, which are not designed to replace but to complement a lector's own engagement with the biblical text and their experience with reading.

Pronunciation Guide

If a reading contains names or words that are potentially unfamiliar or difficult to pronounce, phonetic pronunciations are included in the Pronunciation Guide that immediately follows the Suggestions for Lectors. For names that occur frequently, pronunciations are not generally included with the reading; instead, these can be found in the Comprehensive Pronunciation Guide at the end of the book, which offers pronunciations for all the biblical names that occur in the Year C readings. There you will also find the Pronunciation Key.

✠ Adaptations to the RCL for use in The Episcopal Church

Recently, The Episcopal Church adopted the RCL as its official lectionary, albeit in a slightly adapted form. In the Guide, the adaptations for use in The Episcopal Church have been marked with the symbol, ✠. The following discussion provides a few more details regarding these adaptations.

In 2000, the 73rd General Convention of The Episcopal Church approved the continued trial use of the RCL, and at the same time, authorized a number of adap-

tations. Three years later, the 74th General Convention approved the continued trial use of the adapted RCL. Then, in 2006, the 75th General Convention directed that the RCL, along with the authorized adaptations, become the official lectionary of The Episcopal Church beginning in Advent 2007.

Most of the two-dozen or so adaptations are minor. For example, many concern the Response to the first reading, where a Canticle from the *BCP* replaces a Psalm or other biblical text serving as the Response. For example, in Advent 3, Canticle 9 replaces Isaiah 12:2–6 as the Response for Zephaniah 3:14–20. This is certainly a minor change as Canticle 9 is the First Song of Isaiah (*Ecce, Deus*) and is taken directly from Isaiah 12:2–6. Other minor adaptations include the omission of certain alternative readings. So, for the gospel reading in Lent 2, the RCL permits reading either Luke 13:31–35 or Luke 9:28–36, whereas the adaptations omit the second reading altogether. In addition, the Episcopal adaptations include readings for days and services that the RCL makes no provision for, including weekday readings for Easter week and readings for the Vigil of Pentecost. The most significant adaptations occur in the Christmas season, where the readings authorized for Christmas 1 and 2 are entirely different than those provided in the RCL.

THE PUBLIC READING OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

As we have seen, the Suggestions for Lectors offers guidance for reading a given biblical text. What follows below is more general advice on the public reading of Holy Scripture, which applies to all biblical texts. No attempt has been made to be comprehensive; these are just a few things to keep in mind as you seek to develop and hone your skills as a lector. For more detailed guidance consult the following:

Clayton J. Schmit. *Public Reading of Scripture: A Handbook*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2002.

Virginia Meagher and Paul Turner. *The Liturgical Ministry Series: Guide for Lectors*. Chicago, Ill.: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007.

Prepare! Prepare! Prepare!

As a lector charged with proclaiming the Word of God through the public reading of Holy Scripture, nothing is as important as spending quality time in preparation. Preachers, teachers, musicians, soloists, and choirs need preparation, and so do readers. So always *Prepare! Prepare! Prepare!* How much time one will need for preparation depends upon a variety of factors and will vary from person to person and from text to text. The goal of preparation is to become so familiar with your assigned passage and with your plan of delivery that you can read it before others with relative ease and confidence. Preparation includes the following basic elements.

Get to know your text. Getting to know your text involves reading it through multiple times until you no longer stumble over words or phrases or lose your place. Getting to know your text also involves understanding its meaning. Reading is an act of interpretation, so when you read a biblical text in worship, you are offering an

interpretation of Scripture, *your* interpretation. So study the text, seeking to discern its meaning and purpose; the Commentary will assist you. In addition, make the text personal by identifying with someone or something in the text or by incorporating the text into your devotional life in the week leading up to your reading.

Practice reading your text aloud. Singers practice their songs aloud, so it makes sense for readers to practice their readings aloud. As Clay Schmit notes, reading aloud helps you identify any potential problems with pronunciation, pauses, and pacing in a way that reading silently to yourself cannot. Look up any words whose pronunciations you are unsure about. Then read and re-read those words along with any other tricky phrases, sentences, or sections until you can read everything smoothly and easily. Vary the tempo and the stresses until the reading feels right to you. Rehearse your text aloud before others and elicit their feedback. Consider taping yourself and listening to your reading, even if only occasionally.

Loud and Clear

As you read, control the volume of your voice so that you can speak each word loudly and clearly. It is easy to read too quietly, but almost impossible to read too loudly. There is no need to shout, but simply read with more intensity, letting the strength of your voice come from your gut (your diaphragm) and not your throat.

Pace and Tempo

Pace and tempo has to do with the speed at which one reads a text. While it is possible to read too slowly, the more common problem is reading too quickly. Reading too quickly is often a symptom of nervousness, which can be addressed by adequate preparation and which will decrease with experience. So, force yourself to read at a slow and deliberate pace, never hurried.

Pauses

Knowing when to pause and for how long is perhaps the finest skill a reader can develop. Pauses in reading are like rests in music. A well-placed pause can transform a poor reading into a great reading. A slight pause after each sentence, sometimes more than once during a sentence, helps the thought sink in and gives the listeners time to reflect on it, enabling them to follow the passage more intelligently. Pauses also mark transitions—from a narrative to a quotation, or a change in the situation being described.

Reading vs. Dramatic Reading

While it is important that lectors read with emotion and with variations of tone and mood in their voice, it is also important that their reading not become a dramatic reading. Remember that your listeners know that you are reading, so they do not expect you to employ hand gestures, facial expressions, or the expressiveness of voice associated with a dramatic reading or play.

In our capacity as lectors, we are readers not actors, so we only provide hints of the joy, anger, or frustration of the characters in the stories we read. This can be accomplished by putting ourselves in a particular frame of mind—awe, for instance—and then letting that awe express itself in and through our reading in subtle yet sig-

nificant ways. As lectors, we allow the text to provide the primary emotional and tonal input, while we serve only to support the text through the subtle modifications of our voice.

Eye Contact

When it comes to making eye contact with your listeners, there are two schools of thought: one says that eye contact is absolutely essential, and the other says it is not necessary. I have witnessed both approaches and found them both to work equally well. In the end, the effectiveness of either depends primarily upon the personality, demeanor, and comfort level of the individual reader. My advice to lectors is that they experiment and decide upon an approach that works for them. If a lector possesses good reading skills, then eye contact or the lack thereof makes little difference.

That being said, if you are a reader who prefers not to look up or make eye contact with your listeners during your reading, then be sure to make eye contact before you begin reading and after you have finished. This helps create and maintain a connection with your listeners.

On the other hand, if you are a reader who likes to make eye contact with your listeners, avoid bobbing your head up and down. Looking up for the sake of looking up can be quite distracting. Instead, only look up to reinforce a message that is being conveyed at a particular point in the reading. Suggestions for when to look up are included in the Suggestions for Lectors.

Handling Mistakes Gracefully

While we certainly wish to avoid mistakes, as readers our focus and energy is not on producing a flawless reading free of all mistakes but on conveying a text's meaning to our listeners. No matter how well one prepares for a reading, mistakes can and will occur. Thus, you will want to think through how you intend to handle mistakes with poise and grace so as to minimize further distraction.

When we stumble over a word or phrase, our listeners' attention is momentarily drawn to our mistake, which may cause them to miss the next few seconds of the reading. If the mistake is minor, it is appropriate to continue without attempting to correct it. If, however, you think the meaning of the text has been compromised or lost, do not be afraid to pause, take a short breath, and start the whole sentence over; this will help your listeners get back into the flow of the reading. Do not attempt to make up for your mistake by simply repeating the missed word or phrase. Also, avoid the temptation to say *Excuse me* or *I'm sorry*, which only creates further distraction for your listeners.

If you make a number of errors within the opening sentences of your reading, instead of trying to continue on and plow through the reading as if nothing happened, simply stop and start over from the beginning. On this occasion, it would be appropriate to say something simple like, *Let's try this again.*

ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Gen	<i>Genesis</i>
Exod	<i>Exodus</i>
Lev	<i>Leviticus</i>
Num	<i>Numbers</i>
Deut	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
Josh	<i>Joshua</i>
Judg	<i>Judges</i>
Ruth	<i>Ruth</i>
1–2 Sam	<i>1–2 Samuel</i>
1–2 Kgs	<i>1–2 Kings</i>
1–2 Chr	<i>1–2 Chronicles</i>
Ezra	<i>Ezra</i>
Neh	<i>Nehemiah</i>
Esth	<i>Esther</i>
Job	<i>Job</i>
Ps, Pss	<i>Psalms, Psalms</i>
Prov	<i>Proverbs</i>
Eccl	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>
Song	<i>Song of Songs</i>
Isa	<i>Isaiah</i>
Jer	<i>Jeremiah</i>
Lam	<i>Lamentations</i>
Ezek	<i>Ezekiel</i>
Dan	<i>Daniel</i>
Hos	<i>Hosea</i>
Joel	<i>Joel</i>
Amos	<i>Amos</i>
Obad	<i>Obadiah</i>
Jonah	<i>Jonah</i>
Mic	<i>Micah</i>
Nah	<i>Nahum</i>
Hab	<i>Habakkuk</i>
Zeph	<i>Zephaniah</i>
Hag	<i>Haggai</i>
Zeck	<i>Zechariah</i>
Mal	<i>Malachi</i>

APOCRYPHA/ DEUTEROCANONICAL

Tob	<i>Tobit</i>
Jdt	<i>Judith</i>

Add Esth	<i>Additions to Esther</i>
Wis	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>
Sir	<i>Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)</i>
Bar	<i>Baruch</i>
Let Jer	<i>Letter of Jeremiah</i>
Add Dan	<i>Additions to Daniel</i>
Sg Three	<i>Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews</i>
Sus	<i>Susanna</i>
Bel	<i>Bel and the Dragon</i>
1–2 Macc	<i>1–2 Maccabees</i>
1 Esd	<i>1 Esdras</i>
Pr Man	<i>Prayer of Manasseh</i>
Psalms 151	<i>Ps 151</i>
3 Macc	<i>3 Maccabees</i>
2 Esd	<i>2 Esdras</i>
4 Macc	<i>4 Maccabees</i>

NEW TESTAMENT

Matt	<i>Matthew</i>
Mark	<i>Mark</i>
Luke	<i>Luke</i>
John	<i>John</i>
Acts	<i>Acts of the Apostles</i>
Rom	<i>Romans</i>
1–2 Cor	<i>1–2 Corinthians</i>
Gal	<i>Galatians</i>
Eph	<i>Ephesians</i>
Phil	<i>Philippians</i>
Col	<i>Colossians</i>
1–2 Thess	<i>1–2 Thessalonians</i>
1–2 Tim	<i>1–2 Timothy</i>
Titus	<i>Titus</i>
Phlm	<i>Philemon</i>
Heb	<i>Hebrews</i>
Jas	<i>James</i>
1–2 Pet	<i>1–2 Peter</i>
1–2–3 John	<i>1–2–3 John</i>
Jude	<i>Jude</i>
Rev	<i>Revelation</i>

CHURCH SEASONS AND DAYS

Adv	<i>Advent</i>
Asc	<i>Ascension</i>
AshW	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>
Chr	<i>Christmas</i>
East	<i>Easter</i>
EastEv	<i>Easter Evening</i>
EastVig	<i>Easter Vigil</i>
Epi	<i>Epiphany</i>
GFri	<i>Good Friday</i>
Lent	<i>Lent</i>
MThu	<i>Maundy Thursday</i>
Name	<i>The Holy Name of Jesus</i>
Palm	<i>Palm Sunday</i>
Pent	<i>Pentecost</i>
PentVig	<i>Pentecost Vigil</i>
Prop	<i>Proper</i>
Tri	<i>Trinity Sunday</i>

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

CJB	<i>Complete Jewish Bible</i>
CSB	<i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
NAB	<i>New American Bible</i>
NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
NET	<i>New English Translation</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NJB	<i>New Jerusalem Bible</i>
NKJV	<i>New King James Version</i>
NLT	<i>New Living Translation</i>
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
TNK	<i>JPS TANAKH</i>

MISCELLANEOUS

a.k.a.	<i>also known as</i>
A.D.	<i>Anno Domini</i>
B.C.	<i>Before Christ</i>
cf.	<i>compare</i>
e.g.	<i>for example</i>
esp.	<i>especially</i>
NT	<i>New Testament</i>
OT	<i>Old Testament</i>

Magnificat are found elsewhere in the gospel, not least in Jesus' teachings. For example, whereas Mary states, "he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty" (1:53), her son teaches, "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled" (6:21), and "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation" (6:24).

Suggestions for Lectors

The first portion of today's reading is simple narration, where the emphasis falls upon Elizabeth's response to Mary's greeting. Read at a slightly quicker pace, with your voice leaping with the child in her womb and rising as you read through 1:45 to reflect Elizabeth's thrill of recognition.

Pause before 1:36 to signal the change from Elizabeth to Mary, and then as you read 1:36–55, speak more slowly, with great deliberateness and humility and with hints of awe and thankfulness in your voice at the appropriate times.

Pronunciation Guide

blessed (adj., two syllables; BLES-id)

Elizabeth (ee-LIH-zuh-buhth; ih-)

Judean (joo-DEE-uhn; -DAY-)

Mary (MAIR-ee)

Zechariah (zek'-uh-RĪ-ah)

SCRIPTURE INDEX

ABBREVIATIONS

Adv	<i>Advent</i>	Lent	<i>Lent</i>
Asc	<i>Ascension Day</i>	MThu	<i>Maundy Thursday</i>
AshW	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>	Name	<i>The Holy Name of Jesus</i>
Chr	<i>Christmas</i>	Palm	<i>Palm Sunday</i>
East	<i>Easter</i>	Pent	<i>Pentecost</i>
EastEv	<i>Easter Evening</i>	PentVig	<i>Pentecost Vigil</i>
EastVig	<i>Easter Vigil</i>	Prop	<i>Proper</i>
Epi	<i>Epiphany</i>	Tri	<i>Trinity Sunday</i>
GFri	<i>Good Friday</i>		

OLD TESTAMENT

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PRONUNCIATION

PRONUNCIATION KEY

1. Syllables with a primary accent are CAPITALIZED.
2. Syllables with a secondary accent are followed by an accent mark: '.
3. To save space, alternative pronunciations have not always been given in full. For example, the entry *Rabbouni* (rab-BOH-nī; -nee) indicates that *Rabbouni* can be pronounced either rab-BOH-nī or rab-BOH-nee.

VOWELS

a	cat (short ä)
ah	father
ahr	yard
ai	air
aw	jaw
ay	day (long ā)
e, eh	bed (short ě)
ee	beed (long ē)
er	her
ī	side (long ī)
i, ih	tip (short ĭ)
ihr	fear
o	hot (short ǒ)
oh	bone (long ō)
oo	boot (long ū)
or	for
ow	how
oy	toy
u	put (short ŭ)
uh	alone (schwa)
x ^{uh}	barely pronounced

CONSONANTS

b	bug	p	pack
ch	chin	r	run
d	do	s	sit
f	fun	sh	shy
g	get	t	tie
h	hat	th	thin
hw	when	th	that
j	join	tw	twin
k	kite	v	vow
kw	queen	w	we
l	love	x	vex
m	mat	y	yard
n	no	z	zipper
ng	sing	zh	vision

COMPREHENSIVE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

When a lectionary reading contains names or words that are potentially unfamiliar or difficult to pronounce, phonetic pronunciations are provided in the Pronunciation Guide for each reading just after the Suggestions for Lectors. The following Comprehensive Pronunciation Guide contains pronunciations for *all* the names that occur in Year C readings and the names of all biblical books, regardless of their difficulty.

A

Aaron (AIR-uhn)
Abana (uh-BAY-nuh; AB-uh-nuh)
Abba (AH-buh)
Abel (AY-buhl)
Abel-meholab (AY-buhl-muh-HOH-lah)
Abilene (ab'-uh-LEE-nee;
not AB-uh-leen)
Abraham (AY-bruh-ham)
Abram (AY-bruhm)
Adam (AD-uhm)
Admah (AD-muh)
Abab (AY-hab)
Abaz (AY-haz)
Alpha (AL-fuh)
Amaziah (am'-uh-ZĪ-ah)
Ammonite (AM-uhn-īt)
Amorite (AM-or-īt)
Amos (AY-muhs)
Amoz (AY-moz)
Ananias (an'-uh-NĪ-uhs)
Anathoth (AN-uh-thoht;
AN-uh-thoth)
Annas (AN-uhs)
Antioch (AN-tee-ahk)
apostle (uh-PAH-s^{uhl})
Apphia (AP-fee-uh; AF-ee-uh)
Arab (AIR-uhb)
Aram (AIR-uhm)
Aramean (air'-uh-MEE-uhn)
Archelaus (ahr'-kuh-LAY-uhs)
Archippus (ahr-KIP-uhs)
Arimathea (air'-uh-muh-THÉE-uh)
Asia (AY-zhuh)
Assyria (uh-SIHR-ee-uh)
Augustus (uh-GUHS-tuhs, aw-)

B

Baal (BAY-uhl)
Baals (BAY-uhlz)
Babel (BA-buhl; BAY-buhl)
Babylon (BA-buh-lon'; -luhn)
Barabbas (bah-RA-buhs, bahr-AB-uhs)
Barak (buh-RAHK; BAIR-uhk)
Barnabas (BAHR-nuh-buhs)
Baruch (bah-ROOK)
Beersheba (beer'-SHEE-buh; bihr'-)
beloved (buh-LUV-uhd)
Benjamin (BEN-juh-min)
Bethany (BETH-uh-nee)
Bethel (BETH-uhl)
Bethlehem (BETH-luh-hem')
Bethphage (BETH-fuh-jee; BETH-fayj)
Beth-zatha (beth-ZAY-thuh)
bier (BIHR)
bitumen (bih-TOO-muhn; -tyoo-)
blessed (adj., two syllables; BLES-id)
blessed (vb., one syllable; BLEST)
brier (BRĪ-er)
bulrush (BOOL-ruhsh)

C

Caesarea (ses'-uh-REE-uh, sez'-, seez'-)
Caiaphas (KĪ-uh-fuhs; KAY-uh-fuhs)
Cana (KAY-nuh)
Canaan (KAY-nuhn)
Canaanite (KAY-nuh-nīt)
Capernaum (kuh-PER-nay-uhm, -nuh-)
Cappadocia (kap'-uh-DOH-shuh)
Carmel (KAHR-m^{uhl}, KAHR-mel)
centurion (sen-CHUR-ee-uhn)
Cephas (SEE-phus)
Chaldean (kal-DEE-uhn)

Christ (KRĪST)
Chuzā (KYOO-zuh; KOO-zuh)
Cilicia (sih-LISH-uh)
Cleopas (KLEE-oh-puhs)
Clopas (KLOH-puhs)
Colossae (kuh-LOS-ee)
Colossians (kuh-LOSH-uhnz)
Corinthians (kuh-RIN-thee-uhnz)
Cretan (KREET-uhn)
cypress (SĪ-pruhs)
Cyprus (SĪ-pruhs)
Cyrene (sī-REE-nee; *not* sī-REEN)

D

Damascus (duh-MAS-kuhs)
Daniel (DAN-yuhl)
Darius (duh-RĪ-uhs; *not* DAIR-ee-uhs)
David (DAY-vid)
denarius (dih-NAIR-ee-uhs)
denarii (dih-NAIR-ee-ī'; dih-NAIR-ī)
Deuteronomy (doo'-tuh-RON-uh-mee)
Diblaim (DIB-luh-im; dib-LAY-uhm)
Dorcās (DOR-kuhs)

E

Ecclesiastes (e-klee'-zee-AS-teez)
Egypt (EE-jipt)
Egyptian (ih-JIP-shuhn; ee-JIP-shuhn)
Elamite (EE-luh-mīt)
Eli (EE-lī)
Eliezer (el'-ih-EE-zer)
Elijah (ee-LĪ-juh; ih-LĪ-juh)
Elisba (ee-LĪ-shuh; ih-LĪ-shuh)
Elizabeth (ee-LIH-zuh-buhth; ih-)
Elkanah (el-KAY-nuh)
Emmaus (eh-MAY-uhs; ih-MAY-uhs)
Epaphras (EP-uh-fras)
Ephab (EE-fah)
ephab (EE-fah)
Ephesians (eh-FEE-zhuhnz; ih-)
ephod (EE-fod)
Ephraim (EE-free-uhm)
Ephrathab (EF-ra-thah; ef-RAH-thah)
Esther (ES-ter)

Ethiopia (ee'-thee-OH-pee-uh)
Eunice (YOO-nis)
Euphrates (yoo-FRAY-teez)
Exodus (EK-suh-duhs)
Ezekiel (ee-ZEE-kee-uhl, -kyuhl)
Ezra (EZ-ruh)

F

frankincense (FRANG-kin-sens)

G

Gabbatha (GAB-uh-thuh)
Galatia (guh-LAY-shuh)
Galatians (guh-LAY-shuhnz)
Galilean (gal'-uh-LEE-uhn)
Galilee (GAL-uh-lee)
Genesis (JEN-uh-sis)
Gennesaret (gih-NEH-suh-ret')
Gentile (JEN-tīl)
Gerasenes (GAIR-uh-seenz)
Gideon (GID-ee-uhn)
Gilead (GIL-ee-uhd)
Gilgal (GIL-gal)
Golgotha (GOL-guh-thuh;
gol-GOTH-uh)
Gomer (GOH-mer)
Gomorrab (guh-MOR-uh)
Goshen (GOH-shuhn)
Greek (GREEK)

H

Habakkuk (huh-BAK-uhk)
Hades (HAY-deez)
Haggai (HAG-ī, HAG-ee-ī)
Ham (HAM)
Hanamel (HAN-uh-mehl)
Hazael (HA-zuh-el')
Hebrew (HEE-broo)
Hebrews (HEE-brooz)
Herod (HAIR-uhd)
Hezekiah (hez'-uh-KĪ-ah)
Hittite (HIH-tīt)
Hivite (HIV-vīt)
Ho (HOH)

Horeb (HOR-uhb, HOH-reb)

Hosea (hoh-ZAY-uh)

I

Isaac (Ī-zik)

Isaiab (Ī-ZAY-ah)

Iscariot (is-KAIR-ee-uht)

Israel (IZ-ree-uhl; IZ-ray-uhl)

Israelite (IZ-ree-lit)

Ituraea (ih'-tyoor-EE-uh; -yoor-)

J

Jabbok (JAB-uhk)

Jacob (JAY-kuhb)

James (JAYMZ)

Japheth (JAY-fuhth)

Jebusite (JEB-yoo-sit; JEB-yuh-sit)

Jebozadab (juh-HOH-zuh-dak)

Jehu (JEE-hoo)

Jephthah (JEF-thuh)

Jeremiah (jair'-uh-MĪ-ah)

Jericho (JAIR-ih-koh; JAIR-uh-koh)

Jeroboam (jair'-uh-BOH-uhm)

Jerusalem (juh-ROO-suh-luhm)

Jesus (JEE-zuhs)

Jethro (JETH-roh)

Jew (JOO)

Jewish (JOO-ish)

Jezebel (JEZ-uh-bel)

Jezeel (JEZ-ree-uhl; JEZ-reel)

Jezeelite (JEZ-rih-uh-lit)

Joanna (joh-AN-uh)

Job (JOHB; *not* JAWB)

Joel (JOH-uhl, JOHL)

John (JAHN, JON)

Jonah (JOH-nuh)

Joppa (JOP-uh)

Jordan (JOR-duhn)

Joseph (JOH-sif; JOH-suhf)

Joshua (JOSH-yoo-uh)

Jotham (JO-thuhm)

Judab (JOO-duh)

Judaism (JOO-day-iz'-uhm; -dih-)

Judas (JOO-duhs)

Jude (JOOD)

Judea (joo-DEE-uh; joo-DAY-uh)

Judean (joo-DEE-uhn; joo-DAY-uhn)

K

Kedar (KEE-dair; KEE-dahr)

Kidron (KID-rahnh; KID-ruhn)

L

Lamentations (lam'-uhn-'TAY-shuhns)

Lazarus (LAZ-uh-ruhs)

Levi (LEE-vī)

Levite (LEE-vīt)

Leviticus (luh-VIT-ih-kuhs)

Libya (LIB-ee-uh; LIB-yuh)

Lo (LOH)

Lo-ammi (loh-AM-mee)

Lo-rubamah (loh'-roo-HAH-mah)

Lois (LOH-is)

Luke (LOOK)

Lydda (LID-uh; LIH-duh)

Lydia (LID-ee-uh)

Lysanias (luh-SAY-nee-uhs, lī-)

M

Macedonia (mas'-uh-DOHN-ee-uh)

Magdalene (MAG-duh-leen; -lee-nuh)

Mahseiah (mah-SEE-yah)

Malachi (MAL-uh-kī)

Malchus (MAL-kuhs)

Mamre (MAM-ree; MAM-ruh)

manna (MAN-uh)

Mark (MAHRK)

Martha (MAHR-thuh)

Mary (MAIR-ee)

Matthew (MATH-yoo)

Medes (MEEDZ)

Mesopotamia

(mes'-oh-puh-'TAY-mee-uh)

Messiah (muh-SĪ-ah)

Micah (MĪ-kuh)

Midian (MID-ee-uhn)

Miriam (MIR-ee-uhm)

Moriah (moh-RĪ-ah)

Moses (MOH-zuhs)
myrrb (MER)
myrtle (MER-tuhl)

N

Naaman (NAY-uh-muhn)
Naboth (NAY-both)
Nabum (NAY-uhm)
Nain (NAYN)
Nathan (NAY-thuhn)
Nathanael (nuh-THAN-ee-uhl)
Nazareth (NAZ-uh-reth; *not* -rus)
Nazorean (NAZ-or-ee-uhn)
Neapolis (nee-AP-oh-lis)
Nebuchadnezzar (neb'-uh-kuhd-NEZ-er;
neb'-yoo-kuhd-NEZ-er)
Nebuchadrezzar (neb'-uh-kuh-DREZ-er;
neb'-yoo-kuh-DREZ-er)
Nehemiah (nee'-uh-MĪ-ah)
Neriah (nuh-RĪ-ah)
Nicodemus (nik'-uh-DEE-muhs; -oh-)
Nile (NĪL)
Nimsbi (NIM-shī)
Noah (NOH-uh)

O

Obadiab (oh'-buh-DĪ-ah)
Omega (oh-MAY-guh)
Onesimus (oh-NES-uh-muhs)

P

Pamphylia (pam-FIL-ee-uh)
Parthian (PAHR-thee-uhn)
paschal (PAS-kuhl)
Paul (PAWL)
Peniel (puh-NĪ-uhl)
Pentecost (PEN-tuh-kost)
Penuel (pen-YOO-uhl)
Perizzite (PAIR-uh-zīt; PER-)
Peter (PEE-ter)
Pharaoh (FAY-roh; FAIR-oh)
Pharisee (FAIR-uh-see)
Pharpar (FAHR-pahr)
Philemon (fī-LEE-muhn)

Philip (FIL-ip)
Philippi (FIL-uh-pī; fih-LIP-ī)
Philippians (fih-LIH-pee-uhns)
Phrygia (FRIHJ-ee-uh)
Pilate (PĪ-luht)
Pontius (PON-chuhs; -shuhs; -tee-uhs)
Pontus (PON-tuhs)
portico (POHR-tih-koh)
porticoes (POHR-tih-kohz)
prophecy (n., PRAH-fuh-see)
prophesy (vb., PRAH-fuh-sī)
proselyte (PRAH-suh-līt)
Proverbs (PRAH-verbz)
Psalm (SAHLM)

Q

Quirinius (kwih-RIN-ee-uhs, kwuh-)

R

Rabbouni (rab-BOH-nī, -nee)
Rahab (RAY-hab)
Rephidim (REF-uh-dim)
Revelation (rev'-uh-LAY-shuhn;
not Revelations)
Roman (ROH-muhn)
Romans (ROH-muhnz)
Rome (ROHM)
Ruth (ROOTH)

S

sabbath (SAB-uhth)
Sadducee (SAJ-uh-see, SAD-yoo-see)
Samaria (suh-MAIR-ee-uh)
Samaritan (suh-MAIR-uh-tuhn)
Samothrace (SAM-oh-thrays, -uh-)
Samson (SAM-suhn)
Samuel (SAM-yoo-uhl, SAM-yuhl)
Sarah (SAIR-uh)
Sarai (SAIR-ī)
Satan (SAY-tuhn)
Saul (SAWL; rhymes with Paul)
Scythian (SITH-ee-uhn)
Seba (SEE-buh)
seraph (SAIR-af, SAIR-uhf)

Shallum (SHAL-uhm)
Shaphat (SHAY-fat)
Shealtiel (shee-AL-tee-el)
Sheba (SHE-buh)
shekel (SHEK-uhl)
Shem (SHEM)
Shinar (SHĪ-nahr)
Sidon (SĪ-duhn)
Silas (SĪ-las)
Siloam (sĭh-LOH-uhm; suh-LOH-uhm)
Sivvanus (sil-VAY-nuhs)
Simon (SĪ-muhn)
Sinai (SĪ-nī; SĪ-nee-ī)
Sirach (SĪ-rak)
Sodom (SOD-uhm)
Solomon (SAH-luh-muhn, SOL-uh-)
Susanna (soo-ZAN-uh)
Syria (SIHR-ee-uh)
Syrian (SIHR-ee-uh)

T

Tabitha (TAB-ih-thuh)
Tarsus (TAHR-suhs)
terebinth (TAIR-uh-binth)
Theophilus (thee-OFF-ih-luhs)
Thessalonians (thes'-uh-LOH-nee-uhnz)
Thomas (TOM-uhs)
Thyatira (thī-uh-TĪ-ruh)
Tiberias (tī-BIHR-ee-uhs)
Tiberius (tī-BIHR-ee-uhs)
Timothy (TIM-uh-thee, -oh-)
Tishbite (TISH-bīt)
Titus (TĪ-tuhs)
Trachonitis (trak'-oh-NĪ-tis)
Troas (TROH-as; TROH-az)
Tyre (TĪR)

U

Ur (ER)
Uriah (yoo-RĪ-ah)
Uzziah (u-ZĪ-ah; *not* yoo-ZĪ-ah)

Z

Zacchaeus (za-KEE-uhs)
Zarephath (ZAIR-uh-fath)
Zebedee (ZEB-uh-dee)
Zeboiim (zih-BOH-im)
Zechariah (zek'-uh-RĪ-ah)
Zedekiah (zed'-uh-KĪ-ah)
Zephaniah (zef'-uh-NĪ-ah)
Zerubbabel (zuh-ROOB-uh-buhl)
Zion (ZĪ-uhn)