

Newsletter

October 2024

Letter from the Minister

Warmest greetings!

I felt sad when I read, last week, that the singer/song-writer Kris Kristofferson had died. I was amazed to discover he was 88 years old!

I remembered going to see him in concert, not once, but, as they say in East Lothian, thrice – the last time about 8 years ago.

And at each performance, he gave his audience a wonderful and memorable night.

It was a win, win!



He was clearly, enjoying himself hugely, that, you could tell - and the audience was thrilled and delighted still to be able to enjoy the charisma and the talent of this Country legend, whose songs they had listened to for decades, and whose music had marked milestones along the journey.

His countless fans were glad he had not quit, quite yet...hung up his boots, and headed into the sunset. He still had plenty to offer! When the passion burns bright still, there is delight to be found.

I find that inspirational and challenging, and it makes me impatient with the ageist

assumptions that prevail - that people's contributions pretty much cease, when an arbitrary age is reached; and it's time to call a halt, bid farewell to the life and work that have hitherto been so central to an individual's life.

Someone once said that, if you find work you love doing – you will never have to work again – for this thing you love doing, will never seem a tiresome burden– but a daily joy!



Musicians and artists find that to be true.

And, maybe ministers of the Kirk are among the lucky ones too!

Love as always,

Laurence

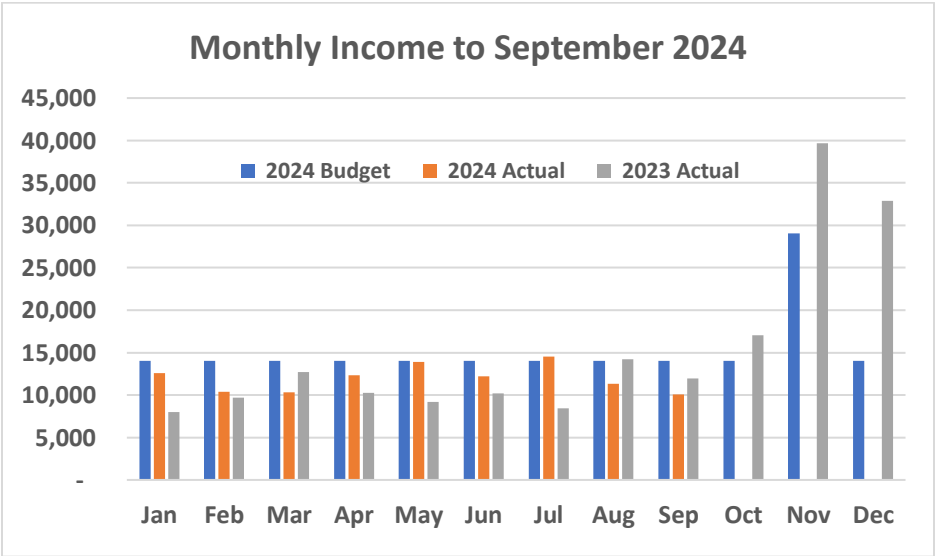


Finance Update - September 2024

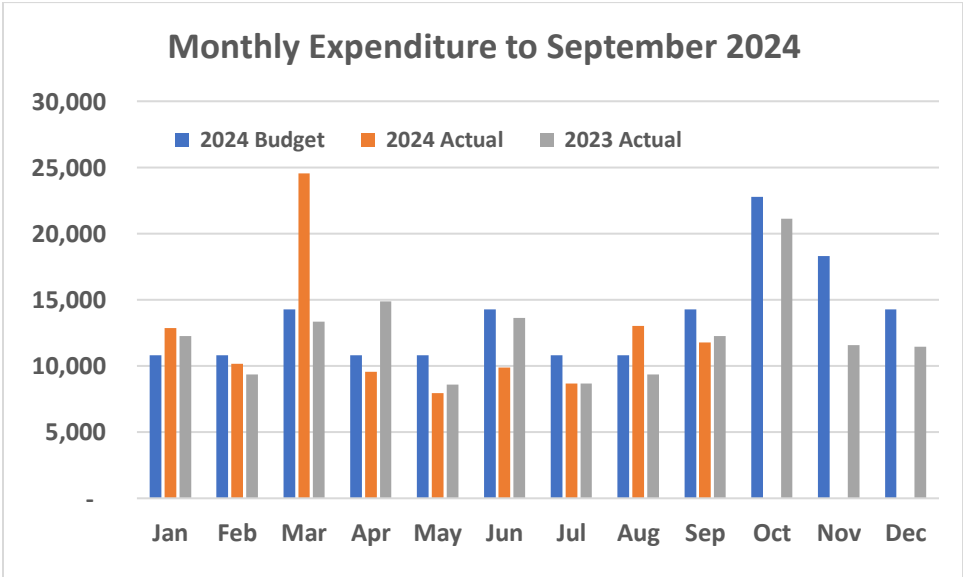


Is 2024 any better than 2023 ? This is probably a key question for a lot of people as the end of September 2024 passes. It was around this time last year when the alarm was raised that the Church was heading for a financial crisis, that expenditure was way ahead of income and that a deficit anywhere up to CHF 25,000 could be envisaged for the year. At around 10% of the Church’s net worth, that was hardly good news.

Of course, things picked up in the last quarter of 2023 with a strong Church Fair and the extremely generous response to the special appeal which was made. The latter, at least, cannot be considered a regular occurrence in future. Nobody plans ahead on the basis of special appeals unless a couple of centimes short of a franc or truly desperate. So, the question is more relevant in terms of regular giving, especially up to September for a reasonable comparison. It wasn’t automatically clear even by mid-2024 how well or not things were going but by September, a clear enough trend is there:

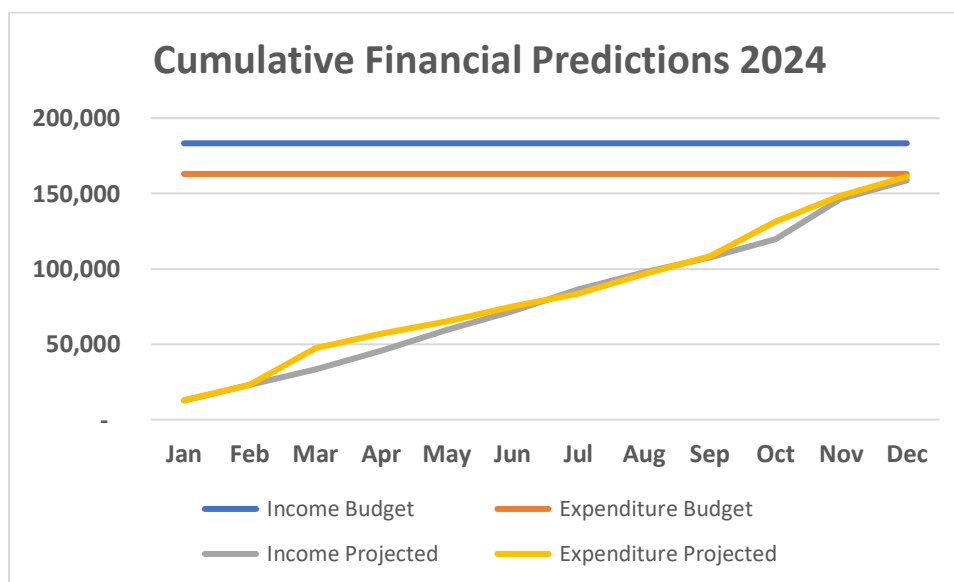


The blue is what we planned for in the budget approved by the ACM. The orange shows the income received and the grey shows (for comparison) the equivalent amount in 2023. Overall, income has been higher in 2024 to date by around CHF 13,000 over the equivalent period in 2023. So that’s fairly good news. On the other hand, expenditure has increased a shade:



Significant variations can be seen across different months due to one-off expenditures on taxes and different timings of Church of Scotland assessments. Overall expenditure trends continue to be below budget¹ but higher than in 2023 by about CHF 6,000.

There are then projections to take into account. The Church Fair should boost income in November while a combination of Auditoire rent, Church of Scotland assessments and social security charges will drive up expenditure by the end of the year. Adding these to existing trends would give a predicted deficit in the order of CHF 2,000 – CHF 3,000 although this is a very tight margin and would only need a significant one-off donation to reverse it.



Put more broadly, this means that in the larger sense, the Church is set, more or less, to break even in 2024, at least as far as the picture shows at present.

Following the special appeal, the Church effectively reset its financial status to that of 2019, just before the COVID-19 lockdown. Given the relative slide over the past decade, this was not an unimportant achievement. However, it leaves no room for things to get any worse and it leaves the Church vulnerable to any sort of shock. This itself was brought fully to light in 2020 when physical Services and Offerings ceased for a year and a half and the accelerated decline began which was only turned around at the end of 2023.

What this means is that the Church has achieved a degree of breathing space, in a financial sense at least. However, it cannot rest on this. Expenditures will not decline and it's also worth noting that the comparison with 2023 does not take inflation into account. The absolute value of income has to keep growing just to keep up with the value of what it can buy from one year to the next.

So the next question is how to grow the income ? As mentioned several times before, this really comes down to how the Church itself grows. We cannot simply ask existing members to keep giving more and more. There isn't even much point in having a Church which serves a Congregation of a handful of people who are paying huge amounts just to maintain it. If the Church's finances are to grow securely, so does the Church.

¹ The exceptional amount of expenditure seen in March 2024 is due to tax reconciliations which may be reclaimed although this is to be confirmed at present.

The rest of the newsletter here tells you all about what the Church is doing, what is going on and what makes the Church itself live. If we invest in these things, then we hope to grow the numbers of the Congregation and the life of the Church. History and experience suggest that financial security will be automatic when that happens. So, the plea to the Congregation is not so much to increase donations (although any are always gratefully received) but to get involved in whatever is happening which may be appealing, to bring friends along and to build up a vibrant community which supports itself in every sense. That is what the Church needs itself. Its finances are not what make the Church but they're part of what makes the Church and you can care about both and give both what they need at the same time.

Ewart MacKenzie
Treasurer

Please note that the above report does not take into account Mission income and expenditure. These remain distinct from those of the rest of the Church and are considered equal to each other from one year to the next so that their mathematical impact on the measurement of the Church's finances is zero.



Important Notice!

The Fair and ceilidh are only a couple of weeks away!! Nearly everything is in place for, hopefully, another successful day. What we still need is for everyone to spread the word. Tickets are now on sale for the ceilidh at ceilidhchurchofscotlandgeneva@gmail.com CHF35 for adults and there will be hot food, drinks and fun.

If you can help set up on the Friday afternoon from 16h00 and/or help set down and prepare for the ceilidh on Saturday afternoon from 15h00 it would be much appreciated.

Hope to see you and your friends, family, colleagues, contacts on the day.

Many thanks!

Christine Buhler

Mission Report

First, a big thank you to all who were able to contribute to the Special Malawi appeal. Your generosity enabled us to raise over CHF 3,000 for the work of the Ekwendeni Resource Centre. Han and Jane have taken the funds with them to Malawi to see with our partners there how they can best be used to meet important needs of this project. We look forward to hearing their report back, when they return home.



Autumn Concert

in aid of Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital, Nepal
Saturday, 19 October 2024, 18h

Auditoire de Calvin,
Place de la Taconnerie 1, Genève

Nocturnes and Songs by Gabriel Fauré

Xavier Dami, piano
Vivien Liu, soprano

Music from Japan: Ensemble < Cotori >

Mayu Suzuki, flûte à bec (soprano)
Kumiko Togawa, flûte à bec (alto)
Kaori Yano, flûte à bec (bass)

Join us in celebrating Graeme and Meena Clugston's
many years of service in Lalgadh!

Entrée libre, verre d'amitié, retiring collection

Second, Vivien Liu is very kindly organising an Autumn Concert in aid of Lalgadh leprosy hospital in Nepal. The concert will be held in the Auditoire on Saturday October 19th at 6pm. It will feature a programme of Gabriel Fauré nocturnes and songs as well as music from Japan. The concert will help raise funds for a new x-ray machine in the hospital. All are very welcome to attend so do please spread the word.

Future Focus

the way ahead...

Earlier this year, the Congregation came together to devise its Future Focus strategy, designed to build us up and keep our Church going. A range of initiatives and ideas was proposed and we now have a Coordinating Group to keep track of these. The group will also be looking into which areas we're not yet covering and what can be done about it. Now we need your help with a few things. So please let us know:

- 1/ If you are already organizing any sort of events or initiatives which are or could be part of Future Focus, and let us know what they are - these can be existing already or just planned.
- 2/ If you would like to take part in bringing together or being part of any sort of Future Focus initiative.
- 3/ If you would like to join the Coordinating Group - all are welcome !
- 4/ If you have a general question you'd like to ask.

Thanks from the Coordinating Group,

Georgina Cofie

Ewart MacKenzie

The mills of God grind slowly, and the mills of God's church more slowly still. But now we are taking our first steps in implementing the plan the congregation laid out in our *Future Focus* 3 meeting last April. (For five thematic groups, see Freda Craeye's piece in this issue.)

Neighbourhood Groups

Our congregational roll currently lists 129 members. The kirk session has divided these into five groups by area or "neighbourhood". Spouses and children are, of course, welcome! Each group contains one or more elders, but the elders aren't going to run the groups. Our view is that each group should run itself! Two members will serve as "coordinators" – not, certainly, to do all the work, but to make sure that the group does. The group itself should decide what kinds of activity it wants to engage in, how often it should meet, and so on. Each group is likely to be different from each of the others.

Some groups want to create a WhatsApp group, to provide quick and easy communication among their members. Some groups like the idea of a potluck lunch or supper where they can have a first discussion of what they would like to do between now and next summer. By then, our neighbourhood groups should be making a big difference to the life of the congregation.



Christine Buhler, Páraig Réamonn

Church of Scotland Geneva:

An Invitation to Grow as a Community



At our recent Future Focus Sessions we had lively discussions about how to deepen our sense of community and grow in understanding of our shared faith, commitment to and care for each other and the wider world as a church. Creating opportunities for our congregation to meet more regularly around a theme in different groups was one of the ways that was proposed.

Starting this Autumn, the Church of Scotland Geneva is offering 5 brand new groups, open to everyone interested: The Book Club, Bible Study, the Men's Group, the Parent's Group and the Theology Group.

Many thanks to Gillian Friedli, our Minister Laurence Twaddle, Laurent Djamen, Cornis van de Lugt and Mark Jeffrey for volunteering to coordinate these groups.

May God bless our work together and always be our light.

From the Thematic Group Coordinating Team:

Antoinette Djamen, Christine Buhler, Freda Craeye and Mark Jeffrey

Following is a short outline for each group, what it offers, where and when it meets and who to contact.



The Book Club :

What is proposed :

A group of 8 - 12 fairly regular participants join to discuss a book. Participants take turns to choose a book and lead the discussion.

Where and When we meet :

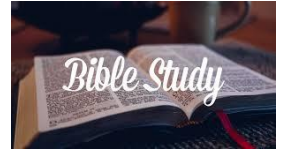
Meeting every 6 - 8 weeks, the place, date and time for the next meeting will be decided together at each meeting.

Who to contact :

Gillian Friedli at gillianfriedli@bluewin.ch

Bible Study :

What is proposed :



Led by our Minister, Laurence Twaddle, we will spend quality together time going deeper and following the Bible in our discussions, sharing and learning.

This is for anyone in the congregation who wants to be part of this experience, to share in the common search and to enjoy company on the way. Friends are welcome too!

Where and When we meet :

The group will meet on Zoom over the winter – on the last Wednesday of the month.

You can join from anywhere...distance no object!

First two meetings:

30th October and 27th November at 19:00 hrs.

The first 30 minutes are for settling in, sharing about our week, finishing dinner... theme discussions start at 19:30 hrs

Who to contact :

Laurence Twaddle at churchofscotlandgeneva@gmail.com



Men's Group :

Where and When they meet :

The first meeting will be on 20th October 2024 after church.

Who to contact :

Laurent Djamen at

f-laurent.djamen-t@hotmail.com

Parents' Group :

What is proposed :

Life & Learn meeting for parents coordinated by Cornis van der Lugt and led by Rev Paraic Reamonn.

This meeting will be an opportunity for parents to introduce themselves as couples and discuss questions they may have as parents about raising their kids with an understanding of religion in these times. What does it practically mean to be religious in a world of social media and unexpected exposure to various events?



Where and When we meet :

The group will meet online in the evening during the

week, dates and time to be determined according to availability of participants.

Who to contact :

Cornis van der Lugt at cofsgsundayschool@gmail.com



Theology Group :

What is proposed :

The Guiding principle of this group will be "Think and let think" – John Wesley

One person will pick a theme and prepare the topic for discussion, but at least half of the session to be open discussion. The first topic will be "*God outside Time*"

People joining should be there to listen, to think, and be creative and responsive in what they share. This is a group for growing and expanding our thinking, not for pushing rigid dogmas. While we are grounded in mainstream Christianity, we will explore wider experiences and understandings of our faith including philosophy, science, metaphysics, and how these things interact with one another and can be used to inform our faith.

You may want to take notes and share relevant reading materials.

Where and When we meet :

Meeting three times a year (or perhaps four if there is sufficient interest), online or hybrid mode to allow for parenting and travel challenges.

First meeting, in November, on the topic of "God outside Time". The best date and time for everyone will be determined through a Doodle poll.

Who to contact :

Mark Jeffrey at mark.jeffrey@microsoft.com

Book Club



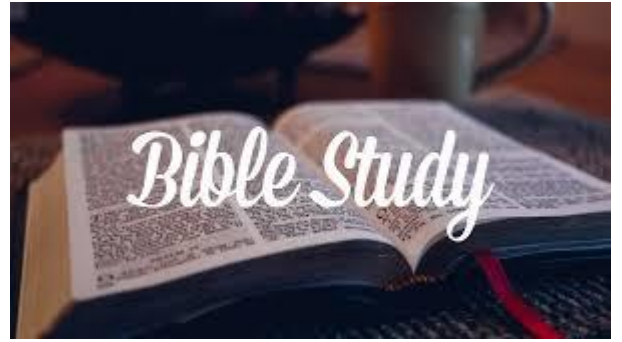
The first meeting of the book club got off to a promising start, on Wednesday 24 September, where we reviewed the book *Hamnet*, by Maggie O'Farrel. The discussion was led by Gillian who helped us to explore major themes in the book, such as loss, grief, mourning and coping with adversarial circumstances. Much discussion took place on the life and impetuses of the main protagonist Agnes. The book also gave great insight into life in a small-ish town in 16th century England. This included periods of plague which we could relate to the nowadays situation with COVID-19. The book club is a wonderful opportunity to read something we would not normally choose, expanding horizons.

The next meeting of the book club is set for Wednesday 13 November, at 14:00 hours in the restaurant of the Co-op City, Rue Du Commerce 5, and the book that we will discuss is *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver. There are several copies available in the Genevan municipal libraries, including a version in French.

If an alternative timing or location would be helpful for anyone, please do let Gillian know. We look forward to having new members to swell the ranks.

Gillian, Laurence and Nan

12 EXTREMELY GOOD REASONS
FOR COMING TO A BIBLE STUDY!



- 1. You spend time with nice people.**
- 2. You share ideas, thoughts, reflection, questions**
- 3. You learn that other people have ideas, thoughts, questions too.**
- 4. You get to know the Bible better.**
- 5. You spend time digging deeper than you might otherwise do.**
- 6. You learn things about Bible ideas, themes, characters.**
- 7. You find stimulation as you gather around those truths that have shaped the Church.**
- 8. Truths you might not have understood before, perhaps become clearer, and more full of meaning.**
- 9. You look back on what you have learned, and are glad you were there, taking the time to learn and grow.**
- 10. You remember that you are not on your own on this Christian journey.**
- 11. You draw strength from the insights and experience of others.**
- 12. It can be fun as well as thought-provoking!**

Reasons enough to explore our Bible Study experience over the next few months.

Led by the Minister, the group will meet on Zoom over the winter – on the last Wednesday of the month.

You can join from anywhere...distance no object!

And together we will spend quality time being led by the Bible in our discussions, sharing and learning.

This is for anyone in the congregation who wants to be part of this experience, - to share in the common search, and to enjoy company on the way. Friends are welcome too!

See you there! Details and Zoom connections to follow.

Ode On An Empty Vase



All things bright and beautiful,
In vases or in pots
Brighten up the Auditoire,
But for that we need lots

Of people who will join up
To the flower rota ranks.
Yet sadly, for the moment,
The rota form is blank ..

So would you please come along
And maybe add your name?
Or like dead flowers it will wilt,
And that would be a shame.

It needn't cost a fortune,
A simple plant will do.
If you can't reach the Salle
E-mail me, I'll sign for you!

Then we'll have the pleasure
Of flowers, great and small,
And I won't be nagging you
- The greatest joy of all!

Each little flower that opens
Because you volunteer,
Means we'll have glowing colours
From now until New Year!

Thank you so much in advance
For taking up the slack,
Or as Terminator said –
I shall be coming back ...



If you would like to volunteer to bring flowers
on a Sunday, please sign the rota in the Salle
or contact Rosemary at

hillrosemary@yahoo.co.uk

...but those who **HOPE** in the **LORD**
will renew their **STRENGTH**
They will **SOAR** on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31



Silent retreat
22-24 November 2024



HOPE in the LORD

Isaiah 40:31

Have you wanted to spend time with God and others to deepen your faith and hope in the Lord? If so perhaps this weekend is for you.

The Ignatian Spirituality Community in Geneva, invites you to come away from your busy schedules for a time of silence, prayer and reflection in the beautiful surroundings of St Maurice.

During this weekend you will spend time in silence, be accompanied by your personal Spiritual Accompanier/Director and be together in a prayerful presence with your fellow retreatants.

The weekend offers various opportunities of encountering God through silent personal and communal prayer.

From Friday, **22 November 2024** 18.30 CET to Sunday, **24 November 2024**, at 16:00 CET

Hôtellerie Franciscaine

Rue Antoine de Quartéry 1, 1890 Saint-Maurice

Retreat Cost: **CHF 320** to cover cost of accommodation, meals and refreshments (2 nights)

For more information or to register visit our website: www.isc-geneva.ch

Ordinary and Proper

In the July Newsletter, we called for eager and willing volunteers to join the rota of those who prepare the printed order of service each Sunday. The rota has been up and running for some months, but we're still looking for volunteers.

All you need is (1) a computer with Microsoft Word, (2) a colour printer (we can work around that, if you don't have one), and (3) a certain amount of *chutzpah* or derring-do.

In July, I also promised to explain later (1) why the banners at the top of the order of service tell us that we are currently in "Year B" and (2) why, ever since the second Sunday after Pentecost, these banners have borne a strange device: "Proper 4 (9)" and the like. I'd better do that now. Once we get to December, we shall find ourselves in "Year C", and the banners will carry more familiar devices: Advent, Christmas, etc.

Our story begins, as good stories often do, with a Pope.

In 1570, following the Council of Trent, Pope Pius V imposed the Roman Missal on Catholics everywhere. For almost four hundred years, Catholics found themselves on short biblical rations.

The missal (a worship book) contained a one-year lectionary, with two lessons for each Sunday: a short reading from one of the four Gospels, after a short reading almost always from elsewhere in the New Testament. The Old Testament appeared just three times: the feast of the Epiphany, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil, the day before Easter. It was thin stuff.

In 1959, good Pope John thought it was time to open the windows of the Catholic church and let in some fresh air and called the Second Vatican Council. The buzzword of the day was *aggiornamento*: dragging the church, kicking and screaming, into the modern world.

The council changed the way Catholics worshipped: the Mass was no longer in Latin but in the language the people spoke; the priest now stood behind the altar, facing them.

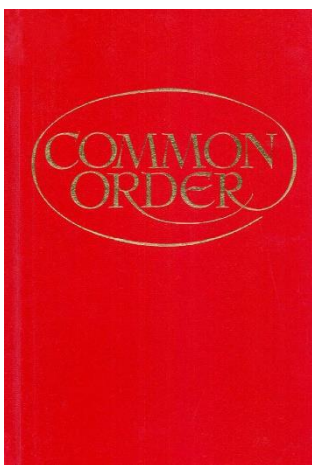
Above all, there was a new lectionary. In 1969, Catholics moved to a three-year cycle of readings, with each year focusing on one of the first three Gospels:

Year A: the Gospel of Matthew

Year B: the Gospel of Mark

Year C: the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of John, the most openly theological of the Gospels, was used for the major Christian festivals and also to pad out Year B, the Year of Mark, who gets marks deducted for not writing enough.



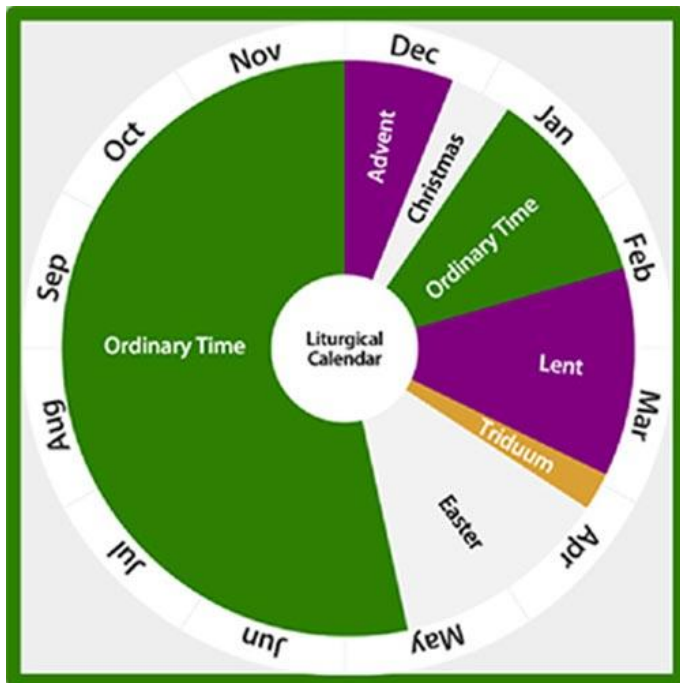
The Gospel lesson was preceded by two other readings. The first was usually from the Old Testament, the second from the letters of the New Testament or the book of Revelation. In between, there was a psalm or a portion of a psalm. This meant that much more of the Bible was now being read in Catholic worship than before.

Mainstream Protestant churches thought the new lectionary was wonderful and adapted it for their own use. This went through two editions (1974, 1983) before arriving, in 1994, at the *Revised Common Lectionary*. This is certainly revised but not entirely common: each Protestant tradition or denomination tends to have its own, slightly tweaked, version of a common core.

Ordinary Time

It wasn't all progress. In one respect the new Catholic lectionary took a step back. For the period following Epiphany (January 6) to the beginning of Lent and again for the period

following Pentecost to the beginning of Advent, it introduced the curious idea of “Sundays in Ordinary Time”. *This made sense only if you spoke English but thought in Latin.* These Sundays aren’t “ordinary” in the ordinary sense of “ordinary”. They are not routine, run-of-the-mill, still less, dead boring. We worship each Sunday because it is the first day of the week, the day when the Father raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead and began God’s new creation. If ever a Sunday service is dull, this can be only because we’re not doing it right. They are “ordinary”, instead, as part of *an ordinal series*: 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, etc.



For the most part, Protestant churches thought this was just daft and carried on counting Sundays after the Epiphany, Sundays after Pentecost. But some, mostly Anglican or Lutheran, churches made matters worse. Some decided to call all these Sundays “Proper”, again in an ordinal sequence. Others decided to keep the season after the Epiphany but call the Sundays after Pentecost “Proper”, in an ordinal sequence. Lifting our eyes to the hills and taking an ecumenical view, we now had, not one, but two sequences of Proper Sundays: hence “Proper 4 (9)”, etc. *This makes no sense at all.* “Proper” in its proper sense means the lectionary readings, prayers, and so on, that are “proper” to *any* particular Sunday. There are no “Improper” Sundays unless the choir gets drunk before the service.

The banners on our order of service are the Classic Banners created in 1997–1998 by Vanderbilt Divinity Library for [its Revised Common Lectionary website](#). In the season after Pentecost, they give us this “Double Proper” nonsense. Tomorrow, as I write, is October 6. For the Vanderbilt banner, it’s “Proper 22 (27)”. But fear not! We put the proper name – the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – at the top of the inside pages. I suppose you could call this wearing our heart inside our sleeve.

Nota Bene

On the new [Our Newsletter](#) page on our website, you can now find the back catalogue of our congregational newsletters – all the way back to 2018. Our thanks to Lindy for help with this.

Páraic Réamonn (paraic.reamonn@gmail.com)