Reading the Lectionary This Week

I must be ready for holidays,
Looking forward to 2 weeks off
(texts, without notes, will be posted here,
And Marnie, then Thom, will lead study and worship)

We will observe Indigenous Day of Prayer this week
The UCC resources offer us full service ideas
All focus and reflect upon Galatians 3:28
A favourite verse in our liberal subculture.

As we complete this 'church year',
I'm grateful for the past 50 weeks with you,
A dozen engaged lay leaders learning with me –
How can we build on this in the coming year?

We were blessed by a visit with Alydia Smith this year
Our UCC rep on the 'Consultation on Common Texts'
That updates the Revised Common Lectionary
and coordinator of all worship and music resources

Thanks to Alydia, 'equipping the saints for the work of ministry',
Gathering is now online, with endless tools,
For people planning worship in the UCC
And the new music resource is rolling out toward 2025

As Alydia acknowledged with us,
The lectionary avoids the 'icky bits' of texts,
Targeting use in worship, in balance and depth –
Though we may be tempted to go wider or deeper

As I did last week with Proverbs 8, here's all of 1 Kings 19,
With the lectionary reading in plain type, the rest in italic
I added Galatians, with the chestnut verse in bold italic
The gospel text just matches the lectionary

1 Kings 19

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done,
and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.

[2]Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying,
'So may the gods do to me, and more also,
if I do not make your life like the life of one of them
by this time tomorrow.'

[3]Then he was afraid;
he got up and fled for his life,
and came to Beer-sheba,
which belongs to Judah;
he left his servant there.

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness,
and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree.

He asked that he might die:
'It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life,
for I am no better than my ancestors.'

[5]Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep.
Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him,
'Get up and eat.'

[6]He looked, and there at his head
was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water.
He ate and drank, and lay down again.

[7]The angel of the LORD came a second time,
touched him, and said,
'Get up and eat,
otherwise the journey will be too much for you.'

[8]He got up, and ate and drank;
then he went in the strength of that food
for forty days and forty nights
to Horeb the mount of God.

[9]At that place he came to a cave,
and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying,
'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

[10]He answered,
'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts;
for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant,
thrown down your altars,
and killed your prophets with the sword.

I alone am left,
and they are seeking my life,
to take it away.'

11 He said,
'Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD,
for the LORD is about to pass by.'

Now there was a great wind,
so strong that it was splitting mountains
and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD,
but the LORD was not in the wind;

and after the wind an earthquake,
but the LORD was not in the earthquake;

[12]and after the earthquake a fire,
but the LORD was not in the fire;

and after the fire
a sound of sheer silence.

[13]When Elijah heard it,
he wrapped his face in his mantle
and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Then there came a voice to him that said,
'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

[14]He answered,
'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts;
for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant,
thrown down your altars,
and killed your prophets with the sword.

I alone am left,
and they are seeking my life,
to take it away.'

[15]Then the LORD said to him,
'Go, return on your way
to the wilderness of Damascus;
when you arrive,
you shall anoint Hazael
as king over Aram.

[16]Also you shall anoint Jehu
son of Nimshi
as king over Israel;

and you shall anoint Elisha
son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah
as prophet in your place.

[17]Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael,
Jehu shall kill;
and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu,
Elisha shall kill.

[18]Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel,
all the knees that have not bowed to Baal,
and every mouth that has not kissed him.'

19 So he set out from there,
and found Elisha
son of Shaphat,
who was ploughing.

There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him,
and he was with the twelfth.

Elijah passed by him
and threw his mantle over him.

20 He left the oxen,
ran after Elijah,
and said,

'Let me kiss my father and my mother,
and then I will follow you.'

Then Elijah said to him,
'Go back again;
for what have I done to you?'

21 He returned from following him,
took the yoke of oxen,
and slaughtered them;
using the equipment from the oxen,
he boiled their flesh,
and gave it to the people,
and they ate.

Then he set out and followed Elijah,
and became his servant.

Here's an audio recording, and notes from last August:
http://www.hereticslikeus.com/2021/08/1-kings-19.html

Luke 8:26-39

26 Then they arrived
at the country of the Gerasenes,
which is opposite Galilee.

27 As he stepped out on land,
a man of the city who had demons met him.

For a long time he had worn no clothes,
and he did not live in a house
but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus,
he fell down before him
and shouted at the top of his voice,

'What have you to do with me,
Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

I beg you, do not torment me'—

29 for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit
to come out of the man.

(For many times it had seized him;
he was kept under guard
and bound with chains and shackles,
but he would break the bonds
and be driven by the demon into the wilds.)

30 Jesus then asked him,
'What is your name?'
He said,
'Legion';
for many demons
had entered him.

31 They begged him
not to order them
to go back
into the abyss.

32 Now there on the hillside
a large herd of swine was feeding;
and the demons begged Jesus
to let them enter these.

So he gave them permission.

33 Then the demons came out of the man
and entered the swine,
and the herd rushed down the steep bank
into the lake and was drowned.

34 When the swineherds saw
what had happened,
they ran off and told it
in the city and in the country.

35 Then people came out to see
what had happened,
and when they came to Jesus,
they found the man
from whom the demons had gone
sitting at the feet of Jesus,
clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid.

36 Those who had seen it told them
how the one
who had been possessed by demons
had been healed.

37 Then all the people
of the surrounding country
of the Gerasenes
asked Jesus to leave them;
for they were seized with great fear.

So he got into the boat and returned.

38 The man from whom the demons had gone
begged that he might be with him;
but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 'Return to your home,
and declare how much God has done for you.'

So he went away,
proclaiming throughout the city
how much Jesus had done for him.

You granted me study leave last summer,
For an online course with Prof John Swinton of Aberdeen,
"Living Faithfully With Mental Health Challenges"

We often come at gospel exorcism stories this way,
Assuming our modern 'psychosis' lens fits –
Psychiatric survivors now challenge this,
Stigmatized even more by the 'demonic' label,
Subjected to well-meaning 'healing' Christians

Cross-cultural and political readings
From Africa and Latin America
See the Gerasene's 'Legion' as effect of oppression,
Roman military occupation marginalizing the demoniac
And Jesus engaging the man differently,
Resuming 'right relations', no longer possessed!

Galatians 3:23-29

21 Is the law then opposed
to the promises of God?
Certainly not!

For if a law had been given that could make alive,
then righteousness would indeed come through the law.

22 But the scripture has imprisoned all things
under the power of sin,
so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ
might be given to those who believe.

23 Now before faith came,
we were imprisoned and guarded under the law
until faith would be revealed.

24 Therefore the law was our disciplinarian
until Christ came,
so that we might be justified by faith.

25 But now that faith has come,
we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,

26 for in Christ Jesus
you are all children of God
through faith.

27 As many of you as were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you belong to Christ,
then you are Abraham's offspring,
heirs according to the promise.

Reading the Epistle This Week

Across the UCC this week,
On Indigenous Day of Prayer,
I predict we'll hear a rolling echo
of Galatians 3:28

Imagine if we could claim that,
Unity transcending ethnicity, race, or gender
'all of you are one in Christ Jesus'!

Crossan suggests this is early Paul,
An optimistic over-realized eschatology
Later tempered by social conformity in the church,
Or outright surrender to cultural norms…

I'd rather just confess
that I don't get to declare it
As a cis-gendered SWM,
Claiming to be colour-blind and 'woke'

At best, this is an aspirational standard,
Against which to measure repentance
To hear the TRC recommendations
Or the voices of the marginalized

At least as vicious, in this glib liberal reading,
Is the avoidance of Torah, 'law',
Contrasting faith,
Each a response to sin.

What's no longer, or not yet, in right relations?
What keeps it that way, in us and around us?
What's the gospel or 'saving' response?
Not assimilation into premature solutions!