

The Word of God creates and affirms both unity and diversity¹

Our conviction

The Word of God, mediated through the Holy Scriptures, is the source of ecclesial communion and of the church's life, hope and belief. The testimony of the Holy Scriptures is not a monotone but a choir of many different voices. Diversity, then, is sanctioned in Scripture (Gal 2:7–10). Therefore it is essential to be aware of the range of scriptural utterances contained in the Bible rather than to focus on a narrower selection of texts. This diversity is reconciled through the shared core of the Scriptures: all Lutheran churches affirm the basic authority of Scripture interpreted through the hermeneutical key of the gospel of the liberating grace given in Jesus Christ. Moreover, those who follow Jesus find themselves facing the fundamental questions that people are asking in their contexts because Jesus leads us into the world (Mt 28:18–20). Beyond this, as we read Scriptures, we do so with a cloud of witnesses looking over our shoulders (Heb 12:1–2), and so we take their voices seriously, as well as the voices of those outside the Lutheran communion. While grounded in Christ, this polyphonic reading of Scripture allows for a plurality of interpretive possibilities and knows that the serious engagement with others might also mean the discovery of points of profound disagreement.

Need for discussion

The churches are looking for reliable ways of dealing with the conflicts of interpretation concerning Scripture in relation to daily life. How can we faithfully consider biblical texts in their own historical context and engage these same texts in contemporary contexts in ways that are both faithful and relevant? How might we do this when addressing issues that did not exist in biblical times (e.g., bioethical issues that arise with technological advances)? Sometimes the deep divisions in biblical interpretation are said to be linked to confessional or geographical contexts while they might actually reflect internal divisions, resulting from different hermeneutical orientations. Each church should be able to explain why and how biblical arguments are used in the discussion. As a communion of churches, seeking a common witness in the world, we continue to strive together to explore mutually renewing ways of biblical interpretation.

¹ Source: The Self-Understanding of the Lutheran Communion- A Study Document, © The Lutheran World Federation, 2015, page 22