

A Covenant to Promote Biblical Renewal within the Lutheran Church of Australia

- a response

The document *A Covenant to Promote Biblical Renewal within the Lutheran Church of Australia* is a superfluous document in the context of LCA and its current decision making process on the issue of the ordination of both men and women.

The document appears to be calling for some kind of "movement" in the LCA in the lead up to the 2015 LCA Synod to effectively turn the debate on the ordination of both men and women into a debate on Scripture. Clearly, these issues have been dealt with and are on the record of our church's collective history in *The Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture* of 1987.

I find it concerning that a "covenant" is being elicited, which in practice fosters a loose confederation of those who oppose the ordination of women, and seeks to promote the ordination of men only as the only position one could possibly hold if one adheres to the Lutheran Confessions. This undermines the unity of the LCA, and calls into question the theological integrity of many in the LCA. Ironically, unity is a feature of our church that appears to be highly valued by the proponent of this initiative, Dr Greg Lockwood.

My response to the appeal to subscribe to this *Covenant* is to affirm what is already the public teaching of the church, namely, *The Book of Concord*, *Theses of Agreement* and *The Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture (1987)*— (as found on the LCA Website in the *Commission on Theology and Inter Church Relations* section in the collection of documents entitled *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions* of the LCA). As a church we have wrestled with the question of the authority and inerrancy of Holy Scripture and have together agreed on how we understand terms like Word of God, inerrancy and the divine and human nature of the Scriptures. It is a worthwhile document to read and understand as we approach biblical study individually and together.

The question must be asked, "Do the formulators and proponents of *A Covenant to Promote Biblical Renewal within the Lutheran Church of Australia* still support the public teaching of the LCA on the matter of Scripture?" Interestingly, the *Covenant* document makes no reference to *The Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture*. I wonder why that is. Perhaps it is not viewed as relevant, or valuable to the discussion at hand. Yet it remains part of our public teaching on Holy Scripture.

If the position of the writers and signatories of the *Covenant* is that they reject our current public teaching, then be honest about that, and let us have a discussion (again) in the church on the matter of Scripture.

A discussion on Holy Scripture ought to move through the appropriate channels that we have in place to deal with such matters of our public teaching (CTICR, Pastor's Conference, Synod). Until that process is worked through to its conclusion, the public teaching of the LCA remains as it currently stands based largely on the documents cited previously. A separate *Covenant* makes no sense in this context, particularly if its intent is to express dissatisfaction with the public teaching of the LCA.

We currently have a publicly attested to and agreed position on Scripture (unpacked in *The Book of Concord*, *Theses of Agreement* and *The Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture*), and this is the basis

from which we can operate as Synod. It follows that there is nothing to prevent us from engaging with the current process of decision making in relation to the ordination of both men and women.

I encourage the Pastors and members of the LCA to ignore the document *A Covenant to Promote Biblical Renewal within the Lutheran Church of Australia* as an unnecessary and irrelevant distraction. If there are real concerns about how we deal with Scripture in our circles, then those concerns can be dealt with properly through established processes within the church. A divisive appeal to sign up to a “covenant” is not the way.

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