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Three church bodies discuss their mutual confession regarding Holy Scripture.

# LCMS, LCC AND NALC LEADERS RELEASE JOINT STATEMENT ON SCRIPTURE

**A**S AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD in the ongoing consultation between representatives of the Lutheran Church—Canada, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the North American Lutheran Church, the participants who represented the three church bodies are releasing their joint statement on Holy Scripture, “God’s Word Forever Shall Abide: A Guiding Statement on the Character and Proper Use of the Sacred Scriptures.”

Representatives of the three Lutheran church bodies have been meeting twice a year since late 2011 with conversations focused on similarities and differences, as well as topics of common concern. Discussion regularly addresses the challenges to marriage, sexuality, the sanctity of all human life and the challenge to religious liberty. From the beginning, however, the participants have been engaging in serious, in-depth conversation about the authority of Scripture, which is foundational to the church bodies’ understandings of these other issues.

The two most recent consultations, September 9–10, 2015, in St. Louis, and March 16–17, 2016 in Bradenton, Fla., resulted in the drafting of the common statement, understood as providing guidance to the participants in ongoing, future conversations. The introduction to the document states:

*We confess that the Bible is God’s written Word as part and parcel of our deepest confession — that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God, God incarnate, “very God of very God” and the Savior and Redeemer of all humankind. We confess that the Bible is God’s Word because its entire message is focused on Jesus Christ and His saving work. He is the heart and center of Scripture and the key to its true meaning.*

Topical sections of the statement include: How did the Bible Get Here; What Kind of Book is the Bible;

Suitable Methodology of Interpretation; and Proper Use of the Bible.

The statement is a reflection of the consensus of the participants and not an official document or doctrinal statement approved by any one of the three church bodies. It is intended to serve as a guideline for further joint study by the representatives and by other groups within the three denominations who are seeking to know more about each other. It is also hoped that it may help pastors and congregations seeking to know more about the confessional Lutheran understanding of the truth and authority of Scripture on which the LCMS, LCC and NALC are founded.

The statement concludes:

We rejoice in our consensus in these truths. We pray that our shared understanding will be a sure and solid foundation for us to address future conversations and discussions, both in matters of agreement and areas where we do not share a common teaching or practice.

Participants in the ongoing consultations between leaders of the LCMS, LCC, and the North American Lutheran Church have been the Rev. Dr. Albert Collver III (LCMS), the Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer (LCMS), the Rev. Larry Vogel (LCMS), the Rev. John Pless (LCMS), the Rev. (President) Robert Bugbee (LCC), the Rev. (Bishop) John Bradosky (NALC), the Rev. Mark Chavez (NALC), the Rev. Dr. Jim Nestingen (NALC), the Rev. Paull Spring (NALC), and the Rev. Dr. David Wendel (NALC).