

## **Revision of readings for worship services and texts for sermons**

### **Present stage of the work in the Protestant Churches in Germany**

**(EKD – Evangelical Church in Germany, UEK – Union of Evangelical Churches and VELKD – United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany)**

#### **Summary**

The order for the biblical texts for readings and sermons (lectionary) in Germany is being revised at present. In accordance with a joint decision taken in 2011 by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEK) and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), a working group is to submit a revised draft at the beginning of 2014. Information about the basic guidelines was sent out already in 2011. Further information on the present stage of the work and the possibilities for sharing in a test phase during the Trinity period in 2013 can be found on the websites of the EKD and the UEK <http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/84112.html> and of the VELKD <http://www.velkd.de/Perikopenrevision.php> The introduction of the new lectionary can be expected in 2018.

#### **Revision of texts for readings and sermons underway**

Since 2011, the larger Protestant churches in Germany have been involved in a process of revising the lectionary for worship and sermons which has gone unnoticed by many people. After more than 30 years, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEK) and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) decided to undertake a cautious revision of the present lectionary. The “Ordnung der Lesungs- und Predigttexte” (Order of texts for readings and sermons) in use at present for Sundays and festivals throughout the church year came into force in 1978. A minor adaptation was undertaken when the Evangelisches Gottesdienstbuch (Protestant Worship Book) was introduced in 1999<sup>1</sup>. The previous lectionary dated from 1958

#### **Preparation and beginning**

The decision in favour of revision was taken after a period of thorough consultation. However, the preceding empirical investigation<sup>2</sup> had indicated a desire for moderate changes although there was widespread agreement with the existing lectionary. Comprehensive consultation directed attention to many different aspects which were not to be ignored during the revision<sup>3</sup>. The church authorities of the EKD, UEK and VELKD drew up “basic guidelines” for the revision and appointed a group of three female and six male pastors to work on a concrete proposal: the “Arbeitsgruppe Perikopenrevision” (Working group on lectionary revision)<sup>4</sup>. The secretarial work for the process was entrusted to the worship department of the VELKD with the help of a research assistant<sup>5</sup>. For specialised issues it has been possible to find “corresponding members” who offer their particular competence to the working group personally and in written contributions<sup>6</sup>.

## Basic lines of the revision<sup>7</sup>

Four points will be mentioned briefly here.

- 1, Faithfulness to the well-tried lectionary. The diachronic connection with the so-called “early church” gospels and epistles will be preserved as far as possible and the principle of consonance – the thematic link between the texts for each Sunday – will be expressed in a nuanced way.
2. The proportion of Old Testament texts for sermons will be doubled from about one sixth to about one third. In this way, account will be taken of the increased awareness of the significance of that part of the Bible for Christian preaching.
3. It should provide a great variety alternating between books of the Bible, types of texts, subjects and issues. Here, various proposals and suggestions made in the ecumenical context in recent years should also be taken into account.
4. The church year and the festivals and commemorative days included in the previous lectionary, as well as special days and occasions, should be examined and possibly corrected or supplemented.

## First drafts, comprehensive testing and introduction

After a year, the working group on lectionary revision submitted an initial “test booklet” in the autumn of 2012. In mid-May 2013, a second booklet was produced summarising the feedback from the “Advent test” and providing insight into the revision proposals for the period from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> and for the 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity. Reactions on these Sundays have been requested via the internet and will contribute to reworking the proposal as a whole. Both of these booklets can be ordered from the secretariat as long as supplies last or downloaded from the websites of the EKD, UEK and VELKD.

The ambitious timetable anticipates that the complete proposal for revision for the Sundays and festivals of the church year will be submitted to the church authorities in the spring of 2014. They will then decide on the launching of the test process. The plan is for the test period to cover the church year 2014-2015. During that period, the proposal will be tried out and examined in the regional churches.

Then the reactions and statements from the test period will be studied and incorporated. The re-worked version of the new lectionary is to be submitted in November 2017 to the synods of the VELKD and the EKD for adoption. Since some time will be required for the production of the lectionary and the book of readings, the plan foresees their introduction in the following year, namely on the first Sunday in Advent 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be found in the current book of readings on p. 20 f or under [http://www.liturgische-konferenz.de/liturgische\\_konferenz/kalender/perikopenrevision.html](http://www.liturgische-konferenz.de/liturgische_konferenz/kalender/perikopenrevision.html) (27.03.2013).

<sup>2</sup> Empirische Studie zur Perikopenordnung – Abschlussbericht (Empirical Study on the lectionary – final report) epd-Dokumentation No. 44 of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010.

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<sup>3</sup> The conference report “Auf dem Weg zur Perikopenrevision“ (On the way to a revision of the lectionary) contains most of the discussion. It can be ordered for the price of EUR 10.00 from [versand@velkd.de](mailto:versand@velkd.de)

<sup>4</sup> The working group is composed of Prof. Dr. Alexander Deeg (Leipzig), Pastor Marcus Antonioli (Rostock), Pfarrerin i.R. Sylvia Bukowski (Wuppertal), Oberkirchenrat Dr. Thilo Daniel (Dresden), Pastor i.R. Klaus Eulenberger (Hornburg), Pfarrer Dr. Martin Evang (Wuppertal), Pastor Dr. theol. habil. Martin Kumlehn (Buchholz), Studienleiterin Pfarrerin Dr. Ilse Seibt (Berlin).

<sup>5</sup> Oberkirchenrätin Christine Jahn and Rev. Dr. Barbara Zeitler.

<sup>6</sup> They are the following: Pfarrer i.R. Reinhard Brandhorst (Stuttgart); Pfarrerin Adel David, Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE, Vienna); Pfarrerin Kirsti Greier, Theological Officer for Children’s Worship/Church with Children of the Gesamtverband für Kindergottesdienst in the EKD (Münster); Prof. Dr. Gunter Kennel, Regional Church Music Director (Berlin); Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Ulrich Körtner, Institute for Systematic Theology and Comparative Religion of the Evangelical Theological Faculty (Vienna); Pfarrer Christian Lehnert, Manager of the Liturgical Studies Institute of the VELKD, poet (Leipzig); Prof. Dr. Christoph Levin, Professor of Old Testament of the Evangelical Theological Faculty (Munich); Prof. Dr. Michael Wolter, Professor of New Testament of the Evangelical Theological Faculty (Bonn).

<sup>7</sup> The full text of the basic guidelines has been published in the booklet “Arbeit an der Perikopenrevision. Erste Entwürfe. Advent“ (Work on the lectionary revision. First drafts. Advent), p.14. The booklet can be downloaded as a pdf-file from the websites of the EKD, UEK and VELKD.