



Seeking common ground for understanding and action amid our diversity.
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Department for Theology and Studies (DTS)

The theological bases, meaning and implications of what we are about as a communion of churches is what makes the LWF far more than just another NGO. Theological reflection ought to be a critical accompaniment to what the church says and does, thereby provoking the ongoing reformation of the church, its structures and practices. DTS seeks to raise and pursue theological questions amid the ongoing life of the LWF, and to further the possibilities for confessing and living out the faith in current contexts around the world.

The Geneva-based theological work is carried out by theologians who staff four desks:

- Theology and the Church
- Worship and Congregational Life
- The Church and People of Other Faiths
- The Church and Social Issues

The director of the department also staffs the desk for the Church and Social Issues.

Since 2001, two of the four staff have also served as content and worship coordinators for the Assembly.

Because of very limited resources, DTS must consider carefully what theological work can most appropriately and strategically be pursued, and what can best occur in other venues. The following criteria are used to decide on what the department will focus:

- What is crucial or timely about this in the Secretariat, member churches and in society today?
- How does this relate to key challenges the Lutheran communion is facing?
- What distinctive Lutheran theological insights can be drawn from and developed in relation to this focus?
- Why is it important that this be done within a global, inter-cultural context?



Through exchange with others, we gain insight into who we are as Lutherans.

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- How is this related to ongoing and anticipated LWF work in other units, and ecumenically? How will this help or challenge member churches in their ministry and mission?
- What resources (human and financial) can be drawn upon for this work?

Lutheran Theology is Ecumenical

Lutheran theology is confessionally rooted and ecumenically engaged. Many of the convictions in Lutheran confessional documents are not distinctively “Lutheran,” but shared with many other Christians. Today theology, worship, social ethics and inter-faith relations are increasingly pursued and carried out ecumenically.

Pursuing theological work in and through the LWF involves engaging with those whose perspectives are different from one’s own. Differences need to be taken seriously, rather than imposing universal categories that presume to speak to all with the same meaning. The challenge is to move beyond only stating the differences, beyond stereotyping those who are from “the South” or “the North,” and actually to pursue theology in the midst of our differences in such a way that common bases of understanding and action emerge.

Through interaction with others we gain new insight into who we are as Lutherans. We may discover that intercultural differences are greater than confessional differences. Theological perspectives of women from around the world and of persons from cultures where Lutheranism is in a distinct minority bring fresh and creative insights into our theological understandings and practices as a communion, and are crucial for the further development of Lutheran theology in the twenty-first century.

Since 2001, DTS and OEA, have undertaken an interdepartmental program on “Lutheran Identity in Ecumenical Relationships.” DTS staff often also participate in and sometimes initiate meetings focused on various ecumenical questions and relationships.

Ecumenical Participation

Lutheran theological work today involves many ecumenical voices. DTS’s study programs typically involve ecumenical participation and collaboration with partner organizations in the Ecumenical Center

and beyond. The “Communion, Community, Society” study began and ended with an ecumenical consultation, and involved many ecumenical participants in its regional consultations. The consultation on church structures was a joint endeavor with WARC. From the beginning, the study program on economic globalization has involved significant ecumenical collaboration. Interfaith dialogues have regularly involved ecumenical participation.

The study secretary for Worship and Congregational Life coordinated the ecumenical worship at the JDDJ signing celebration in 1999, serves as worship coordinator at the Ecumenical Center, and regularly participates in meetings of ecumenical partners. There has been close ecumenical collaboration in planning for the songbook, *AGAPE: Songs of Hope and Reconciliation*, developed for use at the Assembly but also expected to be used ecumenically.

Ecumenical Life and Praxis

Ecumenism advances not only through doctrinal clarification but, especially in our day, through the life and praxis of churches as they work together. Specialized ecumenical research must be complemented by methods that are inductive, empirical and contextual, for the sake of a more comprehensive ecumenism. If ecumenical theology is to be taken seriously in our churches today, it must attend to such factors as how churches actually live out the faith in the world.

The 2001 report of a task force on “Theology and Ecumenism in the LWF” discussed the complementary work of DTS, the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg and OEA. In light of this report, further efforts are needed to develop more fruitful, mutually beneficial ways of working together. As a Lutheran communion, we would not be where we are today if it had not been for the careful ecumenical research and dialogue undertaken in and through current structures. For the emerging horizons of ecumenical work, we must find more effective ways of combining

complementary areas of expertise in order to enrich the theological and ecumenical profile of the Lutheran communion, for the sake of the unity of the whole church.

The Unfinished Agenda of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

The doctrine of justification by grace through faith has long been central for Lutherans, but it can seem alien to people today who are judged by what they do to justify themselves. Furthermore, it cannot be translated into some cultures and languages. In light of the significant hermeneutical challenges this presents, DTS convened a consultation in October 1998 that examined the relevance of justification in the context of today’s world. Over 60 professors and teachers from Lutheran churches worldwide provided interpretations of “justification in context.” They discussed whether or not there is one normative doctrine of justification to be applied in different contexts. It became evident that far more is involved than simply translating the doctrine into contemporary terms. Furthermore, justification has significant consequences for ecclesiology. The book published from this consultation, *Justification in the World’s Context* (LWF Documentation 45/2000), was in great demand and was soon out of print.

The Joint Declaration called for further consideration of the relevance of the doctrine “with reference both to individual and social concerns of our time” (Official Common Statement). But how are the dogmatic insights of the doctrine understandable and linked to the concerns of our time? A key for responding to this is to focus on the critical fields and tension points in justification, because these neuralgic points reveal the strong relation of justification to the life of Christians:

- How is God experienced and understood today?
- How are the self and sin understood in different contexts?

- How is justification related to ethics?
- How should church unity be pursued in light of justification?
- How can justification be more effectively communicated in today's world?

These questions were pursued at a subsequent international ecumenical symposium, "Justification Today: its Meaning and Implications," held in April 2002, in Dubuque, Iowa, USA. This symposium of mostly Lutheran and Roman Catholic, but also Anglican, Reformed and Orthodox theologians, intentionally brought together those involved in official dialogues with those who are pursuing questions of the contemporary relevance of justification in different contexts. For example, the anthropological challenges of interpreting justification within an African worldview were raised, as was the difference it makes for Lutherans and Roman Catholics to pursue social ethical questions together through the lens of justification. Most importantly, there were glimpses of possibilities for new ecumenical openings and breakthroughs. A book of presentations and findings from this symposium is being published.

siderable attention has been given to probing and developing understandings of what it means to be a communion. An ecclesiology study on the historical, theological and ethical aspects of *communio/koinonia* was conducted by DTS in the mid-1990s, and published as *The Church as Communion: Lutheran Contributions to Ecclesiology* (LWF Documentation 42/1997).

Communio can sometimes be inflated in significance or reduced to certain ideological associations. Its many theological meanings are often unknown or unappreciated, especially in how it challenges churches to rethink their role in society. These were some of the major findings of a three-year study program on "Communion, Community, Society" (1997–2000) undertaken by the Theology and the Church desk. This study probed for a realistic sense of what ecclesiology means and how it is lived out in Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe. At consultations in these regions, member churches were asked how they understand themselves as churches in their societies. Some of their responses, plus theological analyses of a core group of theologians who accompanied the entire process, are published in *Between Vision and Reality: Lutheran Churches in Transition* (LWF Documentation 47/2001).

Among the findings are that Lutheran churches realize that they need to participate actively in seeking a more just society, while generally there is no clear and differentiated appreciation of the key role that theological understandings such as *communio* can have in this pursuit. The diaconal role of the church is prominent, but must be kept in tension with more eschatological dimensions of the church. Links to the state and to ethnicity are still far too strong in many churches, often at the cost of the church's catholicity. Mission is stressed as the main goal of the church in many regions, but usually without a vision or sense of how *communio* is related to mission. Overall, the findings pose critical challenges which churches throughout the communion need to address, not only

Participants in the international ecumenical symposium "Justification Today: its Meaning and Implications," at Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, April 2002.
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Communion in Society

Communio is a key concept for the self-understanding of the LWF as a communion of churches. Since the Eighth Assembly, con-

in their own contexts but especially by learning from others in the communion. One such follow-up was the May, 2002 African youth consultation on the future of the church, staffed by DTS and DMD.

Rethinking Church Structures

How are churches of the Reformation changing today? How do they link the challenges of the current global situation to the ongoing restructuring of their churches? What biblical/theological perspectives are necessary? These were the main questions of the joint LWF-WARC consultation on “Crisis as Opportunity: Church Structures in Times of Global Transformation,” held in February 2002, at the Protestant Academy Tutzing near Munich, Germany. Representatives from Lutheran churches in Brazil, Bavaria/Germany and the USA, and from Reformed churches in France, South Africa and South Korea reported on ongoing restructuring processes in their churches.

This consultation explored the structural dynamics that drive an organization to act as it does in a specific situation. Questions of church structures were not reduced to strictly dogmatic or ecclesiological views. Church structures include the sum total of the way the work of the whole is divided among the parts, and how efforts of the different parts are coordinated to achieve actual results. The way oversight (*episkope*) occurs has to be linked to these insights. This is how churches express unity and mutual accountability in a specific context. Church structures ensure the well-being of the church as a social organization and, in theological terms, are how the church participates in the *missio Dei*, rather than only in institutional self-perpetuation. Therefore, the basic question is: What is structurally necessary for effectively carrying out mission in a pluralistic, globalized world, where the role of religion has changed?

Although there are different Lutheran and Reformed approaches and emphases, there are also common insights: the witness of the church today needs good struc-

tural support. Change of structures, however, does not solve the question of faith today. Ecumenical thinking must be attractive in a local situation. The global ecumenical dimension of faith should be better expressed in our globalized world. The contributions and working papers from the consultation are being published.



What are the necessary church structures?
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Worship in Interaction with Culture

An interdisciplinary study of the relationships between Christian worship and cultures concluded soon after the Ninth Assembly. A final international consultation was intended as the starting point for regional studies. Considerable work was undertaken in Europe and North America, and to a lesser extent in Latin America and Asia, with limited follow-up in Africa. The three books resulting from the study were *Worship and Culture in Dialogue* (LWF Studies 3/1994), *Christian Worship: Unity in Cultural Diversity* (LWF Studies/1996), and *Baptism, Rites of Passage, and Culture* (LWF Studies 1/1999). The number of printings, requests and citations indicate that these books have been widely used in member churches and theological institutions.



Spirituality across cultures.
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Spirituality and Community

Whereas the above worship and culture study focused on corporate life with special reference to baptism, the study program “Spiritual Life in Community” (2000–2002) examined the nature of the Christian world-changing, witnessing, communal assembly, and how this is realized in different contexts. Behind this study was the realization that in many contexts today, especially where religion has become a private and individual matter, the corporate life of the church is at stake. There is a fundamental tension between community life and personal life: “I cannot be with others but not alone either.” This study has reflected on this paradox not only as a challenge, but also as a catalyst for life in community.

Spiritual life has been defined according to the classical Lutheran understanding, as a way of life that gives a profound unity to prayer, reflection and love. Its purpose is to call people to participate in the communion with the Triune God, which shapes all other relationships. Theological reflection must be integrated with spiritual life, as was true for the Church Fathers, emphasizing a living knowledge of God in prayer and action. The “Spiritual Life in Community” study has affirmed that Christian community life has a basic shape which is trans-cultural. Yet, in some places, because people are for example unable to read the Bible or have access to Holy Communion, the basic shape is not fully realizable.

Engaging with local churches and communities was a central aspect of the study. The study team visited Lutheran congregations and communities in Germany, Brazil, the USA, India and Tanzania. Based on learnings from these visits, three booklets were written and published in 2003 on

- Community in Christ
- Praying the Word
- Gathered for Worship

In addition, papers from a 2001 consultation on spirituality and community were published in the book, *See How They Love One Another: Rebuilding Community at the Base* (LWF Studies 4/2002).

A Singing Communion

Singing is a central element of Christian worship. It is important to our self-understanding and identity as a Lutheran communion. Singing has great potential for communicating Christian faith across cultural, economic and geographical boundaries.

The task of collecting and selecting songs for the Assembly Songbook, *AGAPE: Songs of Hope and Reconciliation*, began in 1999 when member churches were asked to identify persons to collect songs. Many

more songs were received than could be included in the final selection. Significant challenges also needed to be faced:

- In many non-Western church contexts, only Western music is considered suitable for Christian worship.
- People's musical preferences involve complex combinations of global and local elements.
- Musical styles and notations vary in different cultures—there are many cultures in which music is seldom written down at all.

The emphasis in the Songbook is on liturgical renewal, ecumenism, and the ancient unity of song and prayer. It includes not only songs about healing, but also songs that themselves are healing. When we sing songs of praise and lament from around the world, we can experience healing, reconciliation and unity in body, mind and spirit.

Interfaith Relations and Dialogue with Others

Dialogue among people of different faiths is crucial and at the core of the Christian faith. Our faith in God, who entered into dialogue with humanity through Jesus Christ, is expressed through dialogue with God and with our neighbor.

The desk for the Church and People of Other Faiths has continued developing “Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths” by organizing five international Lutheran working groups—on African Religion, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam. The results of these studies were published in *Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths* (LWF Documentation 41/1997).

Dialogue with people of different faiths began in 1999 within the framework of the “Interfaith Dialogue” study program. Five working groups focused on theological reflection with people of other faiths, primarily

in relation to various life issues. The working group on African Religion, together with representatives of African Religions, explored the dynamics of grief, suffering and caring in African Religion and Christianity. They asked what kinds of resources each of these religious traditions draws upon to deal with life's crises. Material from this dialogue was published in *Crises of Life in African Religion and Christianity* (LWF Studies 2/2002).

The working group on Buddhism had two Christian–Buddhist meetings in 1999 and 2000, and focused on practical issues faced by Christians and Buddhists. The essays and presentations were published in *Explorations in Love and Wisdom: Christians and Buddhists in Conversation*



(LWF Studies 3/2002). Dialogue with Hindus started in 1999 with the three-year interfaith dialogue program of the UELCI.

The study program “Christian Witness in Multi-faith Contexts” provided an opportunity for Lutherans to reflect on their relations with people of different faiths. A consultation entitled “Christianity and Other

Happy in communion.
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Faiths in the Americas” was held in 1999, in Brazil. The presentations were published in *Multi-faith Challenges Facing the Americas ... and Beyond* (LWF Studies 1/2002). Participants in the consultation recommended similar consultations, especially on traditional indigenous religions and New Age spiritualistic groups.

Spiritualistic Movements

All around the world many Christians are attracted to old and new spiritualistic beliefs. Some of them stay in the church, others leave. The study program “Spiritualistic Movements as a Global Challenge for the Church” has been studying this multifaceted phenomenon and its implications. The purpose is to help churches understand the spiritualistic movements operating in their respective contexts and to examine why they have such appeal; to question them from Lutheran and other theological perspectives; to probe the implications for Lutheran identity and mission to-

day; and to develop guidelines and material for churches. Considerable interest has been expressed in this topic, although some churches overlook or deny the presence of such movements even in those very contexts where they are most active.

Christian–Muslim Dialogue

Papers from the Working Group on Islam were published in *Christian–Muslim Dialogue: Theological and Practical Issues* (LWF Studies 3/1998). Since then, three Christian–Muslim consultations have been held in areas of conflict: Bethlehem (1999), Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (2000), and Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2002). A book of material from these three meetings is being published.

In late 2001, with the upsurge of interest in Islam, member churches were reminded of relevant LWF publications. Many have requested copies and asked particularly about interfaith prayer with Muslims. Resources and reports of experiences in dialogue and prayer with Muslims have been

Dialogue among people of different faiths is crucial.
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collected for sharing with member churches upon request. Early in 2002 a workshop was held to begin planning for Christian–Muslim dialogue in Latin America.

Peacemaking is an especially urgent topic for Muslims and Christians today, especially when they live in the same area with tensions and sometimes conflicts. Some member churches have formed relationships of trust with Muslims through dialogue at many levels. Such dialogue is essential for interfaith cooperation and peace in society. Thus, the LWF must work to encourage peacemaking efforts in multi-faith contexts. A new DTS study program, “Interfaith Dialogue: Conflict and Peace,” seeks to promote common Lutheran–Muslim theological studies in different conflict situations, clarify key issues in interfaith cross-cultural encounters, and encourage those who work for peaceful coexistence.

Assisting member churches to achieve peace and justice through dialogue with people of other faiths will continue to be an urgent task. The LWF seeks to work collaboratively with other Christian world and regional communions, the WCC and with a growing number of religious and non-religious organizations and institutions engaged in interfaith dialogue.

Jewish–Lutheran Relations

As Lutherans, we do not consider Jews to be people of an “other” faith. Because of our common roots and so much Scripture, history and tradition that we share, the relationship between Jews and Christians is unique and special. This was especially appreciated by the Jewish participants at the Seventh Assembly. At that Assembly, the Lutheran churches took the decisive step of disassociating themselves from Luther’s anti-Jewish views and to develop dialogue with Jewish people.

In close cooperation with other offices, especially OIAHR, DTS sent a letter in November 1998 to all member churches, inquiring about their involvement in Jewish–Lutheran relations. Eventually it was de-

cidated to hold a major consultation with Jewish dialogue partners. This took place in September 2001 with the theme of “Antisemitism and Anti-Judaism Today: A Contribution to the Jewish–Christian Dialogue.” More than 60 participants from Australia, South Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe gathered to assess the status of dialogue and explore responses to antisemitism and anti-Judaism.

The consultation was an example of a significant shift in Jewish–Christian relations, in the spirit of a mutually respectful and enriching interfaith encounter. The dramatic shift is revealed in the message sent to all LWF member churches, which says: “What we affirm is the validity of God’s covenant with the Jewish people, which has never been superseded.” Christians should no longer view Judaism as an incomplete or unfulfilled religion, nor hold up the church as the new and true people of God in place of Israel. The door is open to new levels of theological dialogue. However, what now is a kind of differentiated consensus on “God’s covenant” needs a fuller discussion and reception process in the member churches. Furthermore, antisemitism and anti-Judaism continue to be disturbing realities needing to be redressed in many societies and churches.

The Christian Church and Theology in China

The LWF recognized the increasing importance of China and the church in China when in 1994 it inaugurated the China Study Program, based at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. Its purpose was to promote understanding of the church in mainland China, to learn from its faith and experiences, to express solidarity, and to anticipate the Ninth Assembly. The program sought to involve the officially recognized China Christian Council (CCC) in its activities. The delicate social and political context in which the CCC operates understandably created certain constraints and limitations.

Several conferences were held between 1994 and 2000, convening writers who



wrote for six books: *An Overview of Contemporary Chinese Churches* (1997); *The Situation of Women in the Church in China* (1997); *The Role and Interpretation of the Bible in the Life of the Church in China* (1997); *Faith and Practice: Liturgical Renewal in Chinese Churches* (1998); *A Brief History of the Chinese Lutheran Church* (1999); and *The Development of the Chinese Christian Church* (2001). With this work having been completed, the Council ended this phase of the program in 2000.

A new chapter in the China Study Program began in August 2001 when Dr Choong Chee Pang of the Lutheran Church in Singapore began serving as academic consultant for Christian studies in China, under the auspices of DTS. The purpose of this work is to strengthen the understanding and significance of Christian studies in relation to Chinese intellectual thought today. He teaches courses in Christian theology at the universities of Beijing and Shanghai, writes, consults, develops contacts and interprets the challenges facing theology and the church in changing Chinese contexts. Given the frequent tensions between China and the West on such matters as human rights, democracy and religious freedom, this kind of work is likely to grow in strategic importance.

Approaching Ethical Questions Interculturally

In a communion of churches as culturally diverse as the LWF there is often considerable reluctance to discuss ethical issues about which there are likely to be significant differences (for example, those related to human sexuality). Although God's Spirit holds us together as a communion, we sometimes fear that this power is not sufficient to hold us together in the midst of our differences. Furthermore, some Lutheran churches tend to avoid addressing ethical issues which are considered private, or because they simply go along with the ethical values of their culture, or because of a sense that it is faith not works that matter. Some even doubt that there can be common Lutheran perspectives on ethics.

What approaches to ethical questions are consistent with Lutheran theology and ethos? If ethics is a way of life, more than a set of rules to follow, how is this embodied or lived out in particular societies or cultures? How does a theologically-based ethic critique rather than only endorse or tolerate cultural practices, especially those that harm oneself or others? How can those from outside a culture help to see and critique

what those inside cannot? What is the role of Scripture, reason, emotions and tradition in ethical method? What is the relation between ethics and culture? How might we as a communion approach intercultural deliberation on ethical questions? Questions such as these underlie the Church and Social Issues' study program, "Intercultural Deliberation on Ethical Issues."

The Assembly itself provides a unique opportunity for this kind of deliberation, through which persons with vastly different life experiences can talk and discern together. The next stage of the study program will involve a team of theologians/ethicists who will explore these challenges further and develop a publication for use in theological teaching.

Economic Globalization

How can economic globalization be engaged in ways that reflect who we are as a communion throughout the world, some of whom benefit while others are devastated by its effects? That is the underlying challenge in the Church and Social Issues study program, "Holding Economic Globalization Accountable: Challenges and Possibilities through the Communion," initiated in 2000. A small group worked with staff to compile an interactive working paper entitled "Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion," which was published and widely distributed in at least six languages in 2001. Although it draws upon some identifiably Lutheran theological understandings, it has also been developed in collaborative ways with especially the WCC and the WARC, including by cosponsoring regional consultations. It is also linked to work on human rights and economic globalization undertaken by OIAHR.

The paper was intended to stimulate discussion and collaboration among churches in different parts of the communion and cooperation with other ecumenical partners. One example of how this occurred is through the member churches in Argentina. In the midst of the massive financial crisis their

country was facing in 2001, they took seriously the working paper's call to test what communion really might mean as a counterforce to economic globalization: "*Communio* is lived out as those in member churches of this communion advocate and act out of this sense of relatedness, responsibility, accountability to others in the communion, and through them, to the rest of the created world." The Argentine churches called on their partner churches in places such as the USA, Sweden and Germany to stand in solidarity with them in their suffering, and to work for needed policy changes in international financial institutions.

On the basis of responses to the working paper, a staff team worked on the development of "A Call to Participate in Transforming Economic Globalization," which was widely distributed in late 2002, as a means of motivating churches' reflections and actions prior to the Assembly. As part of this call, further theological and ethical reflection is occurring through DTS in three areas:



- Communion provides an ecclesial/theological basis for challenging the neo-liberal logic at the heart of economic globalization, and for holding others in the communion more accountable. How can this ecclesial basis be further developed as the spiritual core of the overall strategy?
- How should Christians be formed to live out their baptismal vocation in re-

The communion—a counterforce to economic globalization?
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sponsible ways that can transform some of the assumptions, practices and outcomes of economic globalization?

- How should we understand theologically the role of government amid the realities prevailing today under economic globalization? How can churches better prepare members to participate as citizens in political life, to hold governments more accountable, and to engage in public policy advocacy with and on behalf of our global neighbors?

Other Social, Economic, and Political Challenges

The study secretary for the Church and Social Issues often collaborates with OIAHR to conceptualize the theological and ethical substance of the various statements, documents and action plans of the LWF—on such topics as armed intervention for humanitarian purposes, sustainable development, HIV/AIDS. Attempts are also made to highlight the emerging social, economic and political issues that require the urgent attention of the LWF.

The challenges raised by people with disabilities have been on the LWF's agenda for many years. On behalf of the LWF staff working team on disabilities, the study secretary for Theology and the Church contributed to a WCC consultation to develop an interim statement on theological and empirical understandings of disabilities.

Strengthening, Communicating, Networking

There are quite different theological assumptions, understandings and capacities in the various parts of the Lutheran communion. These differences are part of the overall challenge facing DTS, as it seeks to monitor emerging theological developments, develop cooperative relationships in study and research, and exchange questions and

insights with member churches. More direct access to and ongoing communication with theological faculties around the world is needed in order to pursue solid, contextually-relevant theological work on behalf of the whole communion. Identifying, encouraging and supporting emerging theologians is crucial. Thus DTS is committed to do whatever it can to support and affirm emerging theological voices and perspectives throughout the world, especially those in developing countries and churches.

Theological work must communicate if it is to serve its intended purposes. DTS is assessing how its work can be more effectively and accessibly communicated. The working paper on economic globalization and the booklets on spiritual life are fresh attempts to do this. It is hoped that more theological work and discussion can be made accessible and interactive through the LWF web site. In addition to more creative uses of communication technologies, attention must be given to effective educational pedagogies. Systematic study of local reception and application (the responsibility of DMD) should also be undertaken in order to make the theological work of the LWF more relevant in different settings.

Theological work in local contexts needs to be done with a wider sense of what it means to be a communion. DTS seeks to encourage theological work in different parts of the communion, and is heartened when initiatives are taken in different regions. However, DTS needs to be kept informed so that staff can network and build upon work in other venues. With computer-based networking there are many ways in which theological work can be done together without depending on face-to-face meetings.

The theological work pursued through DTS serves as a catalyst for theological discussions in and among diverse churches. This work is essential for the life and identity of the LWF. Theology that reflects on the Christian faith helps the church to be church. It provokes reflection, deliberation and critique, challenging the church to new horizons of faithfulness in light of the shared biblical and confessional heritage we share.