

Ten Theses on the Role of Theology in the LWF¹

1. The life of the LWF is grounded in the hearing of the gospel. The message of justification has a normative and critical function because it focuses the whole doctrine and practice of the church on the center, Jesus Christ. This is expressed in the Lutheran communion by the experience of the liberating Word of God which makes us ready to confess Jesus Christ and Savior in all dimensions of life.
2. Theology in the LWF is as good as the quality of the participation and of the engagement of all its staff and representatives in the life of the communion.
3. All Christians are theologians: in all they do and say there are underlying theological convictions. Theology proper, however, is to make manifest, by critical and committed reflection, the shared insights and convictions of God's activity in the world.
4. Theology manifests itself in various ways, in different contextual expressions and also in different modes of discourse. All these different forms have their value and integrity insofar as they are related to and respect one another.
5. This relationship is grounded in the sharing of a common biblical heritage read in the light of the insights of the Lutheran Reformation and in the diversity with which it is expressed and framed in different times and places. In this diversity, in which the living Word of God expresses itself in concrete ways, we recognize our common Christian identity in its Lutheran affirmation.
6. In the history of the LWF as a communion of diverse churches, the awareness of the tension between the gospel that holds us together, and the diversity with which we express it, grew as a creative challenge for both the self-understanding of the LWF as a communion and its theological practice.
7. This challenge offers new opportunities for the exercise of theology in the LWF through which the communion will be promoted if, and only if, these characteristics of a theological practice are followed : a) the LWF offers itself as a place for different articulations of diverse experiences; b) as a catalyst for innovation within theologies in different contexts; and c) as a guarantor of both the diversity and of the necessity of expressing commonalities.
8. Thus theology serves the church by promoting God's mission as well as in discerning and evaluating how the mission is being carried out by the church.
9. The importance given to theology in the LWF has direct consequences for how the still broken communion becomes an expression of the promised *koinonia*. The LWF's commitment toward this idea and practice of theology is, therefore, the measure of the effectiveness by which the LWF is the expression of the communion.

¹ Formulated by the Program Committee for Theology and Studies at its meeting in 1995. Proceedings, LWF Program Committee for Theology and Studies, Exhibit 3, pp. 2-3.

10. The responsibility for this commitment lies within the Council, its Program Committees, and the staff.