



# Prospects: The Changing Faces of Lutheran Worship and their empirical evidence

Christian Boerger<sup>1</sup>

The contributions to the symposium from November 2021 compiled here have looked at the “Changing Faces of Lutheran Worship” theologically, sociologically and socio-politically in various ways - and thereby shown how promising the comparison of Lutheran practice within the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) with practice in the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) is. It is no coincidence that our research project started from a fundamental question: namely, the question of the existence and the character of a Lutheran *liturgical identity* together with its transformations (cf. Deeg/Adam). In the course of the joint research activities of the German-Brazilian cooperation, the project focused increasingly on the *Changing Faces* of Lutheran Worship and thus on the investigation of the changing, transforming practice of Lutheran worship services: always considering their identity-forming and -defining function, but at the same time maintaining the necessary openness to the insights that an international cooperation - especially in two such culturally different contexts - can reveal through the alienating external perspectives of the partners involved, and which therefore does its best to avoid *the danger of a single story* (cf. Jahnel). The productive interaction of description and normativity mentioned by Deeg and Adam is hereby demanded and forms the basis for the joint work in the intersubjective exchange between the project partners.

The authors of this volume have given our project their critical and often complex requirements regarding successful research on Lutheran liturgical practice in the 21st century - on this premise, the representatives of the project set off on two research trips to Brazil and Germany in March and May 2023. The German-Brazilian team of ten was able to empirically observe the diverse worship landscape of the IECLB and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) as part of the international collaborative research project funded by the German

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<sup>1</sup> Instituto de Teologia Prática, Universidade de Leipzig, Beethovenstr. 25, 04107 Leipzig, christian.boerger@uni-leipzig.de.



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Research Foundation (DFG) (project 500370982) and is currently in the midst of evaluating the data collected. In addition to visiting church and diaconal institutions and meeting church leaders and theological researchers in the country, which primarily helped us become acquainted with the two contexts, a total of twelve worship services in Brazil and Germany were visited for empirical survey and were observed and documented using the method of participatory observation. In addition, a group interview was conducted with church members in both countries after attending a church service. For the qualitative-empirical observation of the church services, the research team defined special perspectives of observation, which formed the specific focus of the individual documentation by both German and Brazilian partners. The following five perspectives were adopted with varying frequency: (1) core elements of the liturgy and their arrangement (implementation, differences, transformations); (2) general composition and dynamics of the service, music, breaking points, tensions; (3) tradition, contextuality, references to the lived reality as well as political and social developments; (4) roles and interactions of the participants (leaders, congregation, positioning, reactions, language style, direction of speech, implicit addressees); and (5) space (architecture and liturgical space, movements and positions, "atmospheres", objects). The language barriers - not all project members speak both local languages - proved to be a particular enrichment for the individual perspectives from time to time: Where an understanding of the spoken word is difficult, the awareness for the other manifest, multidimensional aesthetic aspects of the worship setting is widened.

By means of the above-mentioned perspectives, it was possible for us to describe the complex impressions gained during worship services in a focused manner and to specifically process them in relation to the respective research questions. Several papers are currently being written in smaller German-Brazilian groups that analyze the “Changing Faces of Lutheran Worship” taking into account the special focal points. These papers will be published in an upcoming issue of *Estudos Teológicos*.