



**5th International Conference of NIT (Network Intercultural Theology)
30th September – 1st October 2026 at Begegnungszentrum of Mission
Eine Welt in Neuendettelsau**

***Theme:* Intercultural and Linguistic Communication Competence in
Mission, Theology, and Religious Studies**

**Pre-Conference to the Annual DGMW Conference in
Begegnungszentrum of Mission Eine Welt in Neuendettelsau**

The NIT 2026 conference envisions communication as more than the exchange of words; it is an encounter with the other that calls for openness, humility, and responsibility. In this spirit, the conference invites participants to reflect on how linguistic and intercultural communication competence can contribute to deeper understanding, justice, and the renewal of church and society in our time.

Keynote Speech: „A Learning Church in the Age of Global Christianity: Challenges and Practices of Intercultural Communication"

Speaker: Dr Anton Knuth

Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Northern Church since 2019, managing director of studies at the academy. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the German Society for Missiology (DGMW) and the editorial board of Intercultural Theology (ZMiss). He was previously a parish pastor in Rellingen and Rissen, Asia-Pacific consultant of the EMW and lecturer at the Pacific Theological College (PTC) in Fiji

Antony Knuth will present his paper on „A Learning Church in the Age of Global Christianity: Challenges and Practices of Intercultural Communication"

Christianity is undergoing a profound global transformation. The centre of gravity has shifted decisively toward the Global South, and this shift is no longer a distant theological observation — it is reshaping the religious landscape of German cities in concrete and daily ways. Migrant congregations from Africa, Asia, and Latin America now worship in buildings leased from Lutheran and Reformed parishes, bringing with them different liturgical styles, theological emphases, and ecclesial cultures. The question this paper addresses is deceptively simple: how do communities formed by vastly different cultural and confessional histories actually communicate with one another — and what kind of church does that communication require?

The paper begins from the theological conviction that the Church was, from its very origins, a transcultural community of difference. The witness of Pentecost (Acts 2) affirms that the Gospel requires no single privileged language or culture; Paul's declaration in Galatians 3:28 that there is "neither Jew nor Greek" articulates an inclusive theology of belonging that remains foundational and unsettled. Yet the institutional church in Germany is territorially organised and historically shaped by a confessional identity that increasingly struggles to relate to free-church and Pentecostal migrant communities on equal terms. This asymmetry, spatial, financial, and cultural, is the starting point for genuine intercultural communication, not an obstacle to it.

Drawing on field experience and theological reflection, the paper maps four models of encounter between established parishes and migrant congregations: the rental model (functional but distancing), the cooperation model (project-based and episodic), the integration model (absorptive, with risk of identity loss), and the partnership model (autonomy-preserving but requiring sustained mutual commitment). Each model embodies distinct communicative assumptions — about power, recognition, and the willingness to be changed by the other. The paper argues that only the partnership model creates the conditions for genuinely mutual learning, in which German churches allow migrant congregations to reshape their own self-understanding rather than simply welcoming difference on majority terms.

Intercultural communication in this ecclesial context is not merely a cross-cultural management challenge. It is a theological practice that requires hospitality to vulnerability (Philippians 2), the

renunciation of inherited privilege, and the active contestation of power asymmetries. The paper identifies concrete structural implications: diocesan funding for equitable use of shared spaces, ecumenical formation programmes attentive to Pentecostal and free-church traditions and facilitated dialogue formats that include the secular and religiously unaffiliated, who constitute the single largest "religious" group in the Hamburg metropolitan region at 36%.

The simultaneous presence of multiple Christianities within a single society is a genuinely new historical situation. Navigating it well calls for a learning church — one that treats newly arrived communities not as objects of pastoral care but as subjects of theological insight

Conference overview:

The NIT 2026 International Conference invites students and emerging scholars from the fields of Mission Studies, Intercultural Theology, and Religious Studies to submit papers that engage the theme of linguistic and intercultural communication competence in a globalised and religiously diverse world. In contexts shaped by migration, cultural plurality, and post-Christendom realities, communication across languages and cultures is no longer optional. It has become central to theological reflection, mission practice, and the life of faith communities. This conference seeks to explore how communication can become a space of encounter, transformation, and mutual understanding.

We particularly encourage contributions that approach communication not merely as a technical skill, but as an ethical, theological, and relational practice. Questions of language, power, identity, and belonging are deeply embedded in how people communicate across cultures. Therefore, we welcome papers that critically reflect on intercultural communication in mission and church contexts, the role of language and translation in global Christianity, and the dynamics of communication in postcolonial and decolonial perspectives. Contributions may also explore multilingual worship practices, migration and identity in religious communities, interreligious dialogue, digital communication in global faith networks, and the role of storytelling and testimony in shaping intercultural encounters.

The conference aims to create a dialogical and intercultural space where diverse voices can meet, share insights, and learn from one another. We especially value contributions that are rooted in lived experience, empirical research, or practice-based theological reflection.

Participation: NIT promotes international and interdisciplinary debate and invites early-career academics to participate in vivid discussions and networking. Participation is open to all early-career scholars (M.A., PhD, Postdoc) in Intercultural Theology, Mission Studies, Religious Studies and related disciplines. Presenting a paper is not mandatory for participation. Papers (ENG) may address the NIT conference topic or focus on ongoing or future research projects. Each presenter has a 30-minute time slot to use as they see fit, either by drafting a short problem to discuss in depth or by giving a longer paper presentation with a brief Q&A session. We offer online panels, but in-person participation provides a better networking experience. We, therefore, encourage everyone to attend in person whenever possible. The 5th conference of the NIT is a pre-conference of the annual conference of the German Society for Missions Studies, DGMW; hence, participating in both conferences is highly recommended.

Registration: Please submit your paper abstract by describing your topic or research question (max. 300 words) by 30th July 2026 via **Google Forms** (**Registration link:** https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfdmcDDzmIvW1JxWY0ZWdSFvc_ny4E9r4IK4Us28m8T8TI6lg/viewform?usp=dialog or the attached QR code. Participation is free (incl. meals and accommodation). Due to planning issues, a fee will be charged for any last-minute cancellation. DGMW funds the conference. Each individual is responsible for covering their travel expenses.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft (DGMW)

Please register separately for the DGMW conference (30th September — 1st October 2026). For more information, visit the DGMW website or contact Birgit Wolter at birgit.wolter@evlka.de. Every young scholar enrolled in a university receives a discount on the participation fee. NIT participants pay half the conference fee (230 Euros) if they present during the Friday junior panel; travel expenses will be covered in this case. NIT attendants who participate in the conference without contributing bear the full costs.

Organisation: Network Intercultural Theology (NIT)

Organizational Team: Dr. Leita Ngoy (Ruhr-Universität), Sandra Langhop (Uni. Oldenburg), Ihtsham Ravi (Protestantse Theologische Universität, Utrecht) Dr. Jayabalan Murthy (KiHo Wuppertal)

Location: Begegnungszentrum of Mission Eine Welt in Neuendettelsau

Zentrum in der Nähe von Nürnberg > BegegnungsCentrum Neuendettelsau

Registration QR

