

## Obituary

### for Wolfgang Stegemann (1945-2023)

Augustana University mourns the loss of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Stegemann, who passed away on July 12, 2023. With him, New Testament research loses an innovative, nationally and internationally respected theologian.

Wolfgang Stegemann was born on November 8, 1945 in Barkhausen (Porta Westfalica). From 1968 to 1973 he studied Protestant theology in Heidelberg. From 1973 to 1977 he worked as a research assistant at the Chair of New Testament at the University of Mainz. There he met Luise Schottroff and Dorothee Sölle, to whom he felt closely connected theologically. In 1979-1980 Wolfgang Stegemann worked as a research assistant in "Systematic Theology" with Lothar Steiger and then in 1980-1984 in "New Testament" with Gerd Theißen. While still an assistant in Mainz, Wolfgang Stegemann received his doctorate with a systematic-theological dissertation on Rudolf Bultmann. In 1983 he obtained his habilitation at the University of Heidelberg with a thesis on the historical situation of the Christian community represented in Luke's double work ("Zwischen Synagoge und Obrigkeit. Zur historischen Situation der lukanischen Christen").

Together with Luise Schottroff and Gerd Theißen, Wolfgang Stegemann became the renowned founder of a new form of biblical interpretation: social-historical exegesis. Even if the social-historical discourse of New Testament research can be traced back to the 19th century and further important impulses were set in this regard at the beginning of the 20th century, it was Wolfgang Stegemann who, together with Luise Schottroff and Gerd Theißen, helped social-historical exegesis to achieve a breakthrough in Germany and internationally at the end of the 1970s and then in the 1980s. Together with his twin brother Ekkehard Stegemann he published in 1995 a well-received book on the social history of the first Christian ("Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte. Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christusgemeinden in der mediterranen Welt"). The book was published in English in 2001 under the title "The Jesus Movement. A Social History of Its First Century". In the 1990s Wolfgang Stegemann became increasingly involved in the "Context Group". He helped to establish the exegesis of New Testament texts from a cultural anthropological perspective in Germany. Another focus of his work was the Christian-Jewish dialogue. In numerous exegetical contributions as well as in his church commitment he fought against anti-Semitism and unjustified criticism of Israel. Encouraged by his close collaboration with Luise Schottroff, Wolfgang Stegemann also advocated the integration of feminist research in theology and exegesis from the beginning of his academic career.

Wolfgang Stegemann's innovative research and his broad scholarship will be missed. The Augustana University looks back with great gratitude on his fruitful work at the university, in New Testament scholarship and in the church. It will honor his memory.

*Christian Strecker*