



Office for Youth Ministry of the  
German Bishops' Conference

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# „MEASURING OURSELVES AGAINST JESUS CHRIST.“

FIELDS OF ACTION IN YOUTH MINISTRY

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Commission for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference (Jugendkommission der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz) invited interested parties to attend the Youth Ministry Forum entitled "Measuring ourselves against Jesus Christ" in November 2015 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Council. At the Forum, it took stock of youth ministry in Germany, and discussed it with the players from the various areas of youth ministry. Networking between players engaged in youth ministry during the Forum aimed to develop an appreciative fundamental attitude by reducing polarisation.

The Arbeitsstelle für Jugendseelsorge der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (Office for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference – afj) drew up the specific details relating to the various fields in the run-up to the event, and presented them as an introduction to the respective profile of the fields, and in order to prepare them for a debate. This led to the conclusion that all areas of youth ministry are of equal value and equally important. The goal pursued by youth ministry is to create a connection for as many juveniles as possible between the Gospel as the Good News and their everyday realities so that life in faith helps them to develop as subjects. Diversity helps reach different target groups of juveniles.

The work of the afj and of the Commission for Youth Ministry does not consist of the Youth Ministry Forum alone, but in fact a seed has germinated which will continue to grow. Youth ministry only develops through networking and if it is free of prejudices and polarisation. This releases energy which can be invested into the work for and with the juveniles.

The results prior to, during and after the Youth Ministry Forum set the stage for the further work in the afj, so that knowledge is passed on regarding the various types of approach. This clarifies the impact of youth ministry – consistently along the lines of the mandate: "Supporting, Networking, Thinking ahead".

Networking with the areas of youth ministry has grown. The Youth Ministry Forum revealed three further areas. The presentation of the now 15 fields is not to be regarded as final or exhaustive. It is intended to create an overview of the situation as a whole, and is a reference work to provide a brief insight into all the areas of youth ministry that are tackled by the afj. As a presentation of the current situation, it encourages a discussion.

We refer to the individual publications enclosed in the list of literature for a more detailed description of the individual areas. They are available via the afj.

Brief descriptions of the areas of youth ministry (in German) can also be found on the homepage [www.jugendpastoral.de](http://www.jugendpastoral.de), which contains links to the various institutions, thus making it easy to quickly find further information and contacts.

## 2 THE FUNDAMENTALS OF YOUTH MINISTRY

The areas of youth ministry are placed on the basis of youth ministry in Germany, and start with its foundations and goals. These originate from the "Goals and tasks of the Church's youth work" from 1975, and from the "Leitlinien zur Jugendpastoral" (Guidelines for Youth Ministry) from 1991 as basic texts which remain valid today, and which will be briefly presented below:

The resolution entitled "Goals and tasks of the Church's youth work" is a document of the 1975 Würzburg Synod. The Joint Synod of the dioceses aimed to implement and make real the resolutions of the II Vatican Council in pastoral work in Germany. The II Vatican Council had set itself as one of its main goals the "aggiornamento" (updating) of the Church – opening Her up to the modern world. Related to youth ministry, the Church being in the world means above all Her being a Church for and with young people. Young people partake of the common priesthood of the faithful and of the Church's mission. The Synod's resolution sets a lasting quality standard in that "after the Synod's resolution in Germany there are no seriously-taken drafts or guidelines of youth work which do not integrate societal and cultural conditions, circumstances and environments of young people and socio-psychological and social educational methods and knowledge as part of their concepts".<sup>1</sup>

The 1991 "Guidelines for Youth Ministry" brought out by the Commission for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference develop and refine these results on the basis of the Synod's resolution for the changed situation in Germany ensuing from Reunification. Above all, becoming human in the image of God is described as a goal of youth ministry, which is nuanced in the light of the aspects of the Christian interpretation of life. As perspectives for action in order "to find our identity in a relationship with God, our neighbours and the Creation, and with ourselves"<sup>2</sup>, examples are stated as to how youth ministry helps us to learn to maintain relationships, find our identities, live in freedom and in responsibility based on solidarity, in a relationship with God, in relationships with partners, helping to shape the world, and with prospects for the future and for hope.

1 Hobelsberger, Zurück in die Zukunft, 62.

2 cf. below: Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference (ed.), Leitlinien zur Jugendpastoral, 13-14.

Youth ministry aims to help young people develop as subjects in the light of the Gospel and in an interaction with the Christian values, so that "they might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10). The lasting quality standard established by the Synod's resolution is to perceive and take seriously conditions within society in which young people are growing up today. This is the only way to recognise their needs and reveal their approach to religious topics.

The Youth Ministry Forum of 2015, marking the 50th anniversary of the Council and the 40th anniversary of the Synod's resolution, re-examined these foundations. The point of reference "Taking Jesus Christ as our measure" was used here as this is put forward in the resolution as a specific point of the Church's youth work: "The Church serves young people by helping them to realise themselves in a manner taking Jesus Christ as its measure (Phil 2:6-11). This distinguishes the Church's youth work from any other kind of youth work."<sup>3</sup>

Prof. Dr Matthias Sellmann used this passage in the hymn of the Letter to the Philippians in his presentation entitled "'One size fits all' – criteria for orientation in youth ministry" to show what the binding goal of youth ministry, and hence of all areas of youth ministry, can be: the development and offering to develop a "personal spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ".<sup>4</sup> Sellmann considers spiritual life skills to be a form of skills for forming life. As such, they are by no means exclusive, so that other secular powers can certainly communicate this goal.<sup>5</sup> Typical of youth ministry is however the addition of "spiritual"; it refers to the wisdom principle of the Christian-Jewish tradition which is unique in this form, which the Church would like to work out in its ministry with (young) people. On the basis of the letter to the Philippians, Sellmann describes four stages, lending precise form in their integral combination to the educational and political goal of spiritual life skills:

3 Ziele und Aufgaben kirchlicher Jugendarbeit, 295.

4 Sellmann, "One size fits all", 2.

5 Not all those attending youth ministry activities are baptised or would refer to themselves as Christians. It is therefore important to show that the Church's youth work is a service provided by the Church, and by the Catholic Church in particular, but that the content can certainly reach all young people and is open to them (cf. e.g. youth welfare work or religious orientation days).

- PHYSIS refers to the verse that He was “found human in appearance”.<sup>6</sup> Spiritual life skills begin by radically taking young people's lives seriously. This is done by youth ministry providing a space in which young people can feel themselves to be self-effective, recognised, talented, useful, important, funny, hopeful and as a valuable individual in all respects.
- KENOSIS refers to the verse: “he emptied himself”. The goal must be to allow young people to grow beyond themselves. This is how to get them out of their comfort zone and to learn to get beyond themselves and to transcend themselves. This takes place for instance on trips, in talent competitions, in fieldwork, in internships and in performances – that is on all occasions when youth ministry settings understand recognition as the promotion and development of potentials.
- DYNAMIS refers to the verse: “Because of this, God greatly exalted him”. Youth ministry can, thirdly, interpret, cultivate and increase such experiences of transcending oneself and learning of one's potential. The Gospel means empowering those who invest their potential in the salvation of others. The promises of spiritual life are promises of dynamisation. Spiritual life trains us to look through things. We experience perspectives which are spectacular. In highly-concrete terms, these are statements such as: We are not completely at the mercy of our past and its patterns; the dead are not gone forever; politics and society are creative areas; strangers are strangers, but they are not enemies; there is a God who has placed a positive sign on my life which can never be removed.

- PHRONESIS relates to the introduction of the Christological hymn: “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus”. This is the origin of spiritual life skills of the three previous stages of experience in the direct relationship with God and discipleship. Life explicitly becomes a believing life. This stage describes a perspective which shows that young people can be encouraged by encountering committed witnesses to faith who show them how they can live their lives as active disciples of Jesus.

Spiritual life skills are what distinguishes the Church's youth work from secular youth work. And they are the way in which youth work is always connected to secular educational theory. Sellmann's proposal is about accents and profile, but not about outdoing anyone.

It is important furthermore to realise that spiritual skills can be learned in each of these stages. They build upon one another, but there is no linear increase in this model – Phronesis is hence not more than Physis or better than Physis: “The decisive point is the desire to advance: Anyone who comes to the movement to progress from one step to the next is already living spiritually in the understanding put forward here. Each field of youth ministry is responsible for supporting this step movement in its own way. The goal of youth ministry can only be to cleverly motivate from one step to the next, to publicise the beauty and the biographical opportunity of each phase, and to define models, initiatives and encouragements for this.”<sup>7</sup>

The important thing about these stages is therefore that it is not always immediately a matter of a religious interpretation, so that it is “real” youth ministry. On the contrary: Each of the stages in itself constitutes youth ministry that is of equal value since each is spiritual in its own way. Even though the stages build on one another, it is not better to be at a higher stage. It is actually a kind of spiral form which can act at each stage, and after the fourth stage one always has to start back at the first one. Phronesis cannot exist without Physis, and Physis is related, in an internal logic, to the wish to become a relationship – ultimately a relationship with God (however anonymous it may indeed be).

<sup>6</sup> Bible passage in the hymn of the Letter to the Philippians

<sup>7</sup> Sellmann, “One size fits all”, 16-17.

### 3 AREAS OF YOUTH MINISTRY: UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The specific details of the 15 fields of youth ministry will be shown below, as will the approaches and the respective target groups. These 15 fields show a multifold image of youth ministry, indicating that, first of all, all of these fields together depict youth ministry and its characteristics. Everyone who is active in youth ministry is active in pastoral work in their different professions – be they theologians, religious educationalists, teachers, etc. These people perform valuable work in the service of the Church by implicitly and explicitly bringing existence and the Gospel into touch with one another.

The fields are presented and described below, as a work of reference.

#### 3.1 Facilities and services of educational assistance<sup>8</sup>

Children and juveniles who are confronted in their lives with a lack of fundamental trust, large numbers of ruptures and painful experiences find positive conditions for life and development in services and facilities of educational assistance and family promotion which guarantee a right to the promotion of their development and to be brought up to become a personality on their own responsibility and able to form part of the community. Accommodation in a home placement institution and the services in accordance with sections 27-35 of the German Child and Juvenile Welfare Act (KJHG) to aid and accompany the family take place outside the family, and aim to lend children and juveniles their own value and resilience, even though they may have the most difficult starting conditions.

The corresponding Catholic institutions are associated in the Bundesverband katholischer Einrichtungen und Dienste der Erziehungshilfen e.V. (National Association of Catholic Institutions and Services of Educational Assistance – BVkE). The Association understands educational assistance as the youth ministry of the Church, the activities of which are determined by the needs, as well as the resources, of the young people and their families.

This field of youth ministry makes it clear how important it is to keep an eye on the juveniles who have the worst starting conditions so that they can shape their lives.

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<sup>8</sup> cf. below [www.bvke.de](http://www.bvke.de).

### 3.2 Voluntary services<sup>9</sup>

Voluntary services are a special form of civil commitment and social learning. Young people opt to perform voluntary service for a specific period (mostly 6-18 months). A distinction is made here between the Voluntary Social Year, the Federal Voluntary Service, the Development Political Voluntary Service, the Voluntary Ecological Year, the International Youth Voluntary Service and the European Voluntary Service.

The more than 60 Catholic organisations which send young people to perform voluntary service in Germany and abroad have come together in the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Katholische Freiwilligendienste (National Catholic Association for Voluntary Services – BAG FWD). They wish to illustrate this service particularly in a solidarity-based commitment and to act on the basis of a Christian position. It is the development of the young people's personalities which is focussed on here.

Volunteers look back positively on their service: They have grown beyond themselves, found their way in a foreign country, come up against their limits and sometimes gone beyond. They have learned that their opinion counts for something, and that they can make a difference with their work. The special thing about voluntary services as an area within youth ministry is the focus on a concentrated period during which young people can develop as a subject and obtain spiritual skills.

<sup>9</sup> cf. below: National Catholic Association for Voluntary Services (BAG FWD) (publisher), Profil von Freiwilligendiensten christlicher Prägung.

### 3.3 International youth work<sup>10</sup>

International youth work provides a space in which young people from different countries can come together for a specific period: This may take place at international meetings and World Youth Days, on trips to Taizé or during an exchange of specialists. The encounter transcends national boundaries.

International youth work enables intercultural learning, as well as promoting young people's personality development and their commitment to social justice. International youth work also has a political dimension. It makes a contribution towards international understanding, peaceful co-existence and reconciliation between people from different nations, cultures and religions, as well as promoting European integration. International youth work enables young people to discover Christianity beyond national borders in our Universal Church and to find a fresh impetus for practicing their own faith.

<sup>10</sup> cf. below: Office for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference (afj) et al. (publisher), Internationale Jugendarbeit. verbindet! gestaltet! wirkt!

### 3.4 Youth educational facilities

Catholic youth educational facilities understand themselves as locations for community living and learning for young people for a limited period. The Christian perception of humanity and the fact of it being a Catholic organisation shape the understanding of hospitality and educational work.

Put in highly concrete terms, young people are to experience in these places that they are welcome and accepted.<sup>11</sup> They are to learn to discover and develop their own goals in life, and to experience personal and spiritual orientation. They are to live and help shape a living Church, and to learn that living together with other people is an enrichment. They are also to learn to follow the basic rules of social co-existence. They are to find time and space for simply being.

Internal or external staff hold seminars for children, juveniles and young adults in political and religious education, social learning and both intercultural and international education.

The youth educational facilities can also be reserved by third parties, and transmit values to visitors, regardless of religion and denomination, because of the radiance of the venue and the atmosphere.

<sup>11</sup> cf. below: [www.altfrid.de/ueber-uns/leitbild/](http://www.altfrid.de/ueber-uns/leitbild/).

### 3.5 Youth churches<sup>12</sup>

It is in youth churches that dealing with God takes place in many ways – through cultural work, through encounter, through religious services, through proclamation, and through projects. The focus is on the attempt to answer the longing for more, the longing for spirituality. Their great strength lies in a liturgy that is accessible to young people, which the juveniles themselves help prepare. All forms of youth church have in common that young people find a space here in which they and their ideas of the Church are contributed and lived out. The concepts have become refined since the first youth church opened in 2000:

#### **Youth churches with a church space concept**

These youth churches have a space available in the Church which they use both for religious services and for activities and projects. In conceptual terms, they are deliberately located in the church space. One optical characteristic is that they are designed by juveniles, which frequently means a different aesthetic in the Church. The church space is hence a space for shaping, taking ownership and resonance, a stage and a place for holding exhibitions.

#### **House churches for young people**

These youth churches take place at a fixed location in which everyday life is shared beyond the liturgy. A house church for young people is a space which is not a church space, but one which is used as a space for young people and “made sacred” by the presence of a meditation/prayer room. This is where community is lived and therefore the Church is experienced, similar to the model of the early Christian house churches.

#### **Mobile youth churches**

These youth churches practice outreach, prepare religious services and celebrate them with juveniles – in a Church or elsewhere. They use church spaces, or other locations, and have primarily been established in rural areas. Mobility is a fixed part of their concept, and is intended to be that way; mobile concepts react to the circumstances on the ground.

<sup>12</sup> cf. below: Office for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference (afj), Jugendkirche gibt jungen Menschen (sakralen) Raum.



### Partly-mobile youth churches

These youth churches have a fixed location, which is also where they hold established, regular services, but they are nonetheless mobile and outreach based when they use other locations for religious services and/or projects. They attempt to make it possible to transcend locations by using formats which deliberately seek out other locations and establish contact with other environments there.

### 3.6 The youth ministry of the religious orders<sup>13</sup>

Religious orders are different, and the youth ministry of the religious orders is characterised by this differentness. Some religious orders offer youth ministry, and thus make their understanding of faith and spirituality open to juveniles. To this end, they use their cloisters, which as special places permit their life reality to come into contact with that of the juveniles. The youth ministry of the religious orders is intended to guide young people on their path all through life, and to offer them the option of a Christian faith by way of a witness. The following dimensions show how this youth ministry is specifically carried out:

#### Prayer

Prayer is typified by the Liturgy of the Hours and Holy Mass, and is part of everyday life and of ways of life. It represents the Church and the world.

#### Personal witness

Religious are different, be it through their different daily routine or as distinguished by their customs. With their way of living by their oaths of poverty, obedience and chastity, they confront young people with the question of meaning and direction, and ultimately of decisive discipleship.

#### The holy spaces (for playing)

The cloisters, which are very old in some cases, and are special premises, are inviting to discover, and suggest a playful approach towards what is Holy. A cloister is not an everyday environment, and thus offers young people the opportunity to develop, take a fresh breath and mature freely.

#### Diversity

The types of religious order range from contemplative Carmelites through to active Salesians, from highly-traditional Benedictines, through to relatively young Schoenstatt Fathers, and from Jesuits working in education, to

<sup>13</sup> The AGJPO intends to observe and promote the development of youth ministry in the religious orders, in the Church and in society, as well as constituting a forum for reflection on specific questions, for contacts and information between the religious orders, and with youth welfare and youth ministry institutions in the Church and in the State, as well as with other institutions that are relevant to young people.  
[www.orden.de/ueber-the-dok/aufgaben-einrichtungen/arbeitsgemeinschaften/agjpo](http://www.orden.de/ueber-the-dok/aufgaben-einrichtungen/arbeitsgemeinschaften/agjpo).

Franciscans looking after the poor. The diversity of founding charismas is exemplary, and can be an invitation to young people to find a place for their desires and ideas.

### 3.7 Youth welfare work<sup>14</sup>

Youth welfare work is intended to enable young people who are at a social disadvantage, who have individual impediments and who require special support to take part in life and social, school and vocational integration in a self-determined manner. Its fundamental presumption is that each person is made in the image of God, regardless of their status, sex, origin or religion, and is hence entitled to a dignified place in society. This manifests itself in youth accommodation institutions, in youth vocational assistance, and in youth migration services.

The Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Katholische Jugendsozialarbeit e.V. (National Association for Catholic Youth Social Work – BAG KJS) therefore acts at national level as an advocate for the interests of juveniles. The Association works to ensure that each young person has access to all areas of life that are necessary for his or her personality development, development as a subject and identity formation. It particularly turns its gaze towards those who are affected by or at risk of individual impairments or social disadvantages. To this end, it works with individuals and institutions from the Church, the State, the political arena, industry and associations. It plays an active role in the scientific and social debate, at the same time as being a cooperative partner towards remedying problems, and hence towards shaping our society in a future-orientated manner.

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<sup>14</sup> cf. below [www.bagkjs.de](http://www.bagkjs.de).

### 3.8 Youth associations<sup>15</sup>

Youth associations are places for forming a community which can be a source of faith for young people. Children, juveniles and young adults find a personal answer here which connects with their circumstances and which makes it possible to accept the Christian message in the context of shared time and shared interests.

The associative principles of the youth associations are democracy, participation, self-organisation, volunteer work, voluntariness, Christian faith and a connection to the everyday world.

The Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (Federation of German Catholic Youth – BDKJ) is the umbrella association of 17 Catholic youth associations. Its most important task consists of lobbying for its members in the political arena, the Church and society. The 17 youth associations represent roughly 660,000 children and juveniles aged from 7 to 28.

As the umbrella association of 17 Catholic youth associations with different priorities, the BDKJ would like to enable and encourage girls and boys to form a critical opinion and act independently, based on Christian responsibility. This includes campaigning for a fair world based on solidarity. The association understands itself as a social power within the Church, and contributes towards the “development of the Church, society, state and international relations”.

<sup>15</sup> cf. below: Federation of German Catholic Youth (BDKJ) (publisher), *Der Anteil der Verbände an der Sendung der Kirche. Beitrag zu einer Theologie der Verbände*. www.bdkj.de.

### 3.9 Young adults<sup>16</sup>

Young adults are a separate target group within youth ministry: “The phase of young adulthood is situated between ‘classical’ youth characterised by school, and reaching full adult status. The chronological beginning and end points of this phase are difficult to identify due to the lack of simultaneity between of developments among different groups of young people. The starting point is marked on leaving the general school system, and the end point as a matter of principle on taking up work and/or starting a partnership or family of their own.”<sup>17</sup> This phase of life begins at an unmistakable boundary, and ends stage by stage, depending on the development tasks that have been completed. With some it may be gainful employment and financial independence, whilst with others it is the establishment of a lasting partnership. The greatest overlapping of young adults takes place in the ages between 18 and 35.

What is characteristic of the young adult age group is being “in transition”, given that young people are “in between” in many ways: between their place of work and the place where they make a home; between time-limited contracts and permanent employment; between becoming (financially) independent from their parents and deciding for a way of life. They are faced by a large number of decisions affecting their future which are existential for their lives, and which may involve crises.

Pastoral work for young adults offers them support and guidance. It does so by planning services which are accessible from their everyday lives, taking as a starting point the reality faced by young adults.

<sup>16</sup> cf. below: Office for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference (afj) (publisher), *Den Menschen im Blick*.

<sup>17</sup> Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), *14. Kinder- und Jugendbericht*, 186.

### 3.10 Liturgical/cultural education

With its approaches to music, film and art, cultural education is orientated towards the aesthetics of juveniles, and often uses them in liturgical contexts in order to open up the message of Jesus for juveniles in their "language".

Music is an established part of World Youth Days, youth pilgrimages, celebrations in the parishes, as well as youth services or song nights. This is where proclamation is brought together with today's life experiences in up-to-date language and images, music and musical structure. This area includes not only the application, but also production in bands or the use of new spiritual songs in youth choirs.

Christian pop music focuses on the modern musical styles of today's youth culture, is professionally performed and often focuses in the area of band music and singer/songwriters.<sup>18</sup>

Film is a contemporary medium playing a major role in young people's lives, and is used and put forward by cultural education.

The Ecumenical Way of the Cross of Youth is also a project which attempts to approach juveniles using an artistic method and to repeatedly bring the dying, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as central elements of His message, into contact with the juveniles' lives.

<sup>18</sup> cf. [www.pastorale-informationen.de/53-Junge-Menschen/1738-Themen/1749-Christliche-Popularmusik/18260,Projektstelle-Christliche-Popularmusik-in-der-Jugendarbeit.html](http://www.pastorale-informationen.de/53-Junge-Menschen/1738-Themen/1749-Christliche-Popularmusik/18260,Projektstelle-Christliche-Popularmusik-in-der-Jugendarbeit.html).

### 3.11 Ministry to altar servers<sup>19</sup>

Altar servers are a permanent part of the liturgy: Their service at the altar characterises youth ministry. They are close to the celebration of the message and secret of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

Most of them carry out their service in the community of altar servers after their first communion until they become young adults and beyond. Roughly 360,000 children, juveniles and young adults are serving as altar servers. The ratio of male and female altar servers, at 47 % to 53 %, is quite well balanced.

Juveniles learn to take responsibility – as part of their altar service, which also explicitly provides them with liturgical training, but also beyond this in time spent in groups with younger altar servers. Events such as diocesan altar servers' days and the regular International Pilgrimage to Rome are also an established part of ministry to altar servers.

<sup>19</sup> cf. below: Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference (publisher): Katholische Kirche in Deutschland. Zahlen und Fakten 2016/2017, 28-31.

### 3.12 New spiritual communities, church movements and initiatives<sup>20</sup>

New spiritual communities, church movements and initiatives are highly diverse. They include the Schoenstatt Movement, the Charismatic renewal, the Emmanuel Community and Nightfever. The communities attract large numbers of juveniles in their way of seeking God and encountering Him. Group times, Eucharistic worship, confirmation, camps, youth weekends and international prayer festivals are part of the established repertoire of new spiritual communities. The following characteristics can be identified:

#### **A personal relationship with Christ**

The focus is on establishing or deepening a personal relationship with Christ, and is repeatedly practiced and intensified by deepening faith, prayer, spiritual guidance, Eucharistic worship and prayer circles.

#### **Proclamation of the faith**

This personal relationship with Christ results in a missionary orientation wishing to pass on this witness of life. This can be seen in highly-concrete terms by the example of street missions, where people are invited into the Church – to stay a while, to light candles, to be still.

#### **Living out the faith in a community**

Living out the faith in a community is realised through community building, which in most cases takes place at international level, going beyond the local church.

<sup>20</sup> cf. below: Office for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference (afj) (publisher), Die Jugendpastoral der Neuen Geistlichen Gemeinschaften.

### 3.13 Open work with children and young people<sup>21</sup>

Open work with children and young people addresses all children and juveniles. The offers made by open work with children and young people, such as youth centres, open houses, children's and youth meetings, play mobiles and adventure playgrounds are not conditional on membership, and can be taken up free of charge.

It becomes clear that these types of activity particularly target socially-disadvantaged and young people who are alienated from education. Open work with children and young people makes a contribution towards integration, and helps avoid marginalisation.

Open meetings, gender-specific group work, clique work and scene work, as well as cultural events and recreation, form part of the repertoire of open children and youth work.

<sup>21</sup> cf. below: [www.lag-kath-okja-nrw.de](http://www.lag-kath-okja-nrw.de).

### 3.14 Political education<sup>22</sup>

Political education aims to show juveniles the possibilities offered for social commitment and participation. Political education refers to democratisation, since this includes freedom of opinion and co-determination in social groups. This requires non-formal educational activities.

The political education work of the Catholic Church is non-partisan, and operates in compliance with the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is against indoctrination and political agitation. The issues discussed at the events are those that are controversial among researchers and policy-makers. All events are voluntary, and are held within the educational approach of subject and action orientation. They tackle the problems and questions facing young people, and these are placed a societal context, together with them.

The aim is to enable young people to participate. To do this, they need both specific knowledge of social and political topics, as well as the ability to form their own judgments and express criticism. Imparting skills for action encourages participation in a free, democratic society. This enables young people to represent their own interests.

<sup>22</sup> cf. below: Office for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference (afj) (publisher), Programmausschreibung Politische Bildung 2017.

### 3.15 Days of religious orientation<sup>23</sup>

Most days of religious orientation are three-day educational events for school pupils which are organised as time off from everyday school life. The main target group relates to 14- to 19-year-old school pupils from all kinds of schools. They form part of school-orientated youth work.

In days of religious orientation, juveniles address the major questions facing them in their lives; they reflect on their beliefs. The topics approached are those which are of greatest interest to school pupils at this age, which in most cases are love, sexuality, partnership, class community, how they see themselves and how they are seen by others. These topics are religious in the sense that they are always dealt with under the premise of delving deep, permitting the juveniles to grow beyond themselves and to reflect on what moves them deep inside. The days are framed by morning and evening prayers in the church, and attempting to bring school pupils' realities into touch with the Gospel. This depth refers to the connection with their own lives, so that it is possible to ask questions as to values in relationships, the important things in life and looking beyond oneself.

This programme offered by the Church addresses young people's needs, questions and concrete everyday realities, and teaches them in both implicit and explicit ways that their opinion counts, that they are a valuable part of the community and of society, and that they are accepted and wanted. The major opportunity lies in cooperation with schools, in that all areas of life are reached – regardless of religious affiliation.

<sup>23</sup> cf. below: Office for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference (afj) (publisher), Tage religiöser Orientierung sind Gemeinden auf Zeit.

The team leaders, most of whom are students, and therefore young adults, take a lot away from the work, and as teams they form congregations for a fixed time: Life and faith are shared in the team, forgiveness is repeatedly given through mutual feedback, and religious services are celebrated together. The team leaders are there for one another; they listen to one another and support one another. These congregations are very independent and self-determined. They define their own structure in which the fundamentals of the Church's koinonia, liturgia, martyria and diakonia are portrayed.

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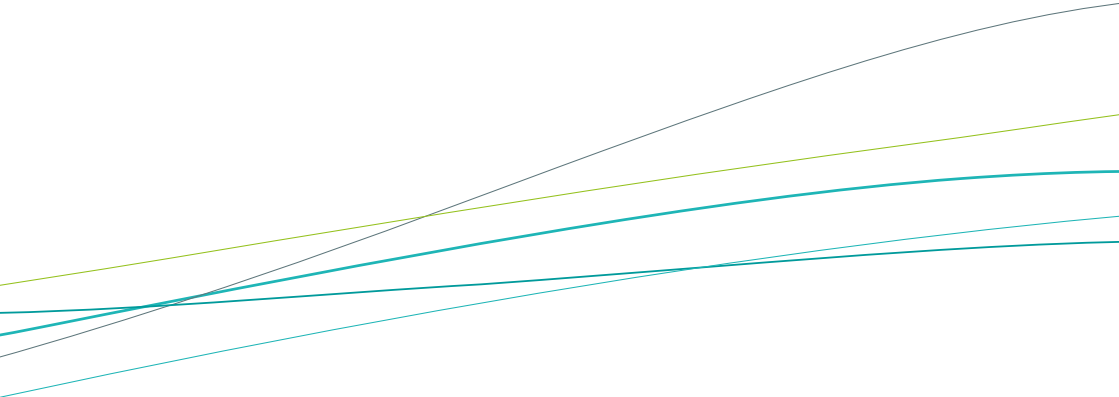
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Youth ministry is highly varied, and only develops through networking and an appreciative fundamental attitude on the part of its players. This volume published by the afj describes 15 areas of youth ministry, detailing what they have to offer to young people.