



POSITION OF THE GERMAN FEDERAL ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH PEDAGOGY IN 2010

This year the **German Federal Association of Church Pedagogy** celebrates its 10th jubilee.

Two years after its founding, in 2002, the "**Statements on church pedagogy**" were released and have become since the "fundamental law" of this association.

It is now time to open up to present day questions and integrate them into the theses' intentions.

We hold that the term "church pedagogy" has proved to be practical for the work of the association. Other terms such as "**church sanctuary pedagogy**" and "**pedagogy of spiritual rooms**" have also become known.

All these terms refer to the fact that dealing with the contents of a rich church-building-tradition may open up new paths for the Christian belief, for the church and for individual lives and spirituality.

Church pedagogy and education

Within the term "**church pedagogy**" the word "pedagogy" has become difficult to some people, as it is remembered from their own school experience as dualistic way of dealing with subjects: here you have the active, leading people, there the listening and recipient ones.

Yet the term "pedagogy" wants to express the opposite: it stresses the interactive part of dealing with each other while exploring a church. Guides/ teachers as well as guests/ participants/ students are asked to bring in their own biographically inspired perspectives and competences. Within **church pedagogical** work these are consciously integrated into the common experience, in accordance with the stage of development of those participating (adults or children).

Rendering it possible for others to participate on an equal level presupposes that guides/ teachers have reflected their own roles and are conscious of their own authenticity. Consequently the teaching must be didactically structured and the selection of its methods well reflected.

Yet the term "church guide/ tour" will remain indispensable even for *church pedagogically* inspired offers for adults for a long time to come.

Church pedagogy and touristic offers

As places of cultural reminiscence, of identification and as cultural goods church buildings do not belong to the church alone. Thus **church pedagogy** finds itself on a market of touristic offers. Tourism and the "culture of events" contribute to the newborn interest of people in churches. **Church pedagogy** takes this new interest serious and holds its own on the market with a special profile.

It analyses church buildings and design as expressions of certain art-/historical, social and political questions and according to their underlying theological meaning, and it translates this understanding into present day's language and the questions of the participants.

In the realm of written church guides to be found in many churches **church pedagogy** can contribute with its special focus. The task is to add to the mostly art historically minded booklets such with an educational focus, written in an understandable language and addressing the reader as a searcher for meaning and spirituality as well.

New media such as audioguides will be integrated into the **church pedagogical** work and transformed according to the stated criteria for educational quality.

Church pedagogy and mission

Church pedagogical work takes place on the threshold between human every day life experience and experiences of religious faith. It is a significant goal of **church pedagogy** to open up paths to submerged religious experiences and yearnings of the participants and to moderate these processes in an unassuming and gentle way (see "**Statements on church pedagogy/ 2002**", No 3).

The story of success of **Church pedagogy** has its origins not in the least in this goal.

In our society Christian churches have lost their unique and dominant position on the religious market. As a consequence lately the term "mission" has been rediscovered. In this context **church pedagogy** helps to shape the process of opening up our churches in an inviting rather than an infringing way.

Guests/ participants/ students of **church pedagogical** activities are not expected to confess their belief but

Church pedagogics are never the less seen as representatives of the institutional church. This presupposes a conscious reflexion of their own perspective on the church in its three dimensions: the architectural building, the community of believers and the institutional organisation.

Prospects

-Depending on the denomination (catholic, lutheran, reformed tradition,...) church buildings take on a different gestalt. The educational potential of different architectural and liturgical room experiences is to be evaluated and applied to **church pedagogical** didactics.

-The educational success of **church pedagogy** has led other religious communities (i.e. Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus) to copy the idea and open up their sanctuaries in order to let people learn about the community's religious beliefs. **Church pedagogy** is challenged by the ongoing interreligious dialogue and asked on regional levels to participate in developing concepts, educational material and educational courses towards a **pedagogy of sacred rooms**.

-In order for **church pedagogy** to respond reliably and competently to the manifold challenges of nowadays multicultural and secular society it is in need of acknowledgement and of financing by the church officials of all denominations.

Translation from German Inge Hansen, Mai 2011