

PEP *TO GO*

A Working Instrument
for Cultural Change



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www.bistum-basel.ch/pep-to-go

Introduction

Dear Readers,

With **“PEP to go,”** the Bishop of Basel and the Bishop’s Council hereby present a collection of texts, which are significant for further pastoral developments in the Diocese of Basel. Even though the texts were created under different contexts, they are all well connected and related in their contents. It is for this reason that a unified perspective is essential for their proper understanding.

This collection of texts is intended as a further development to the existing pastoral development plan (pastoraler Entwicklungsplan, PEP) in light of current pastoral situation. The pastoral development—PEP process has already initiated forward-looking changes in many “pastoral areas” (i.e. a cluster of neighboring parishes that support each other and share the collaborative gifts and talents of each parish). The goal of this publication is therefore to continue working on the already existing dialogue about cultural change in the Church and its necessary transformation processes. As such, the individual texts are intended primarily as points to generate conversations and not as unquestionable foundational documents or theological compendia. Those involved with developing these ideas are certainly convinced about their usefulness. By listening to God’s Spirit and to one another, we shall jointly find the ways which are appropriate and which correspond to our Christian and ecclesiastical missions.

What should we expect in the coming years in the Church in the Diocese of Basel? Providing answers to this question was the starting point for the considerations of the Bishop’s Council and the beginning of many years of working processes. Each draft, which described possible key points, was discussed in consultations with different diocesan councils. The second Synodal Assembly of the Diocese of Basel in September 2023 also played a significant role in this process: it provided the basis for this version of the “Pastoral Guidelines.”

All the texts, which are hereby presented—with the exception of the foundational text by Bishop Felix—,were produced through the joint working and deliberations in a synodal process. This approach is to be further developed and is crucial for the necessary cultural change, as defined by Bishop Felix under his Pastoral themes of the five “points of no return.”

1. Bishop Felix presents in a well-thought-out text the **Reflections on the pastoral future leading to cultural change**. According to him, a Cultural change is expressed in the willingness to change attitudes; this attitude change is based on the internal and external commitment to the expected developments and the conclusions in the "points of no return." It will have to become a necessary attitude for everyone: professionals, volunteers, believers. Only in this way can cultural change truly be realized.
2. The text **Foreseeable Developments** records the essential findings from religious sociological research and is a fundamental and indispensable analysis document. An (situational) analysis and engagement with it always marks the beginning of a development process. The published information serves as a starting point and could be amended with specific local/regional circumstances if necessary.
3. Against the backdrop of these expected developments, first the Bishop's Council and then the diocesan councils, and then especially the delegates of the second Synodal Assembly of the Diocese of Basel (Sept. 7–9, 2023, in Bern) reflected on the conclusions. Because of a longer understanding process, the text **Pastoral Guidelines** is presented as a foundational document. These pastoral Guidelines can serve a guiding function in all upcoming developmental steps. However, they are not considered as conclusive in themselves and are therefore open to be further developed.

In order to implement a cultural change in the Diocese of Basel and support corresponding development processes, various measures and additional instruments would be developed for further-training programs by the Chancery Office in collaboration with the relevant Commissions and the diocesan-cantonal specialized departments in the course of time.

The texts compiled in this brochure can also be found on the website www.bistum-basel.ch/pep-to-go, also available as a PDF for download or printing. Additionally, the website offers translations into French, Italian, English, and simple language, an explanatory video, as well as further updates in the course of time.

Reflections on the Pastoral Future Leading to Cultural Change



Ever since the Synod of 1972, some fifty years ago, many people in the Catholic Church in Switzerland have served in various capacities: both women and men have served as pastoral ministers in various capacities offering diverse pastoral services; while countless Church volunteers have also tirelessly dedicated themselves to services in the church, in some cases for so many years.

This way of being and living the Church was quite successful. The success, particularly evident in the first twenty years following the Synod of 72, was characterized by the imprint of a “people’s Church” as a remnant of the Catholic milieu and a pastoral approach where everyone was touched, addressed, and had access to our services, facilities, and communities.

Most of us who are engaged in the Church today were socialized and shaped during this period, after Vatican II and the Synod of 1972. This era has likely contributed to our job satisfaction and professional identity, allowing us to see ourselves as part of this revival and actively participating in shaping it.

Experiences of Erosion

Since at least the 1990s, we have had to face the reality that this era is over. Gradually, everything seemed to diminish. Despite our efforts, indeed despite our increased efforts, the apparent successes increasingly and rapidly faded. The resulting deficiencies in the number of priests, theologians, attendees, devotees, Church members, and now the decline

also in finances are known to all of us.

Faith in the Christian Churches has massively declined. We experience this even in our personal environment, often also in our own families and circles of friends. As part and also as members of the Church, one is now a minority in society, and if care is not taken, the non-denominational persons will make up the largest group under religious statistics in our country in the next couple of years.

What seems even more relevant to me is that believing in God is no longer a given! For more and more people, faith and religion are simply no longer a matter of importance.

The publication of the results of the study on sexual abuse cases in the Catholic Church of Switzerland, made public on September 12, 2023, has further enhanced this unfortunate development of lack of trust, revealing the limits of this seemingly stable structure.

We ask ourselves: How do we move forward? And can we do anything about it at all?

Acceptance of Reality Opens the View to the Future

First and foremost, we must accept this reality and endure it together. We need to share this reality with all our dedicated people on both sides of the dual system; this is essential. However, I reject the notion that all of this was foreseeable and that we simply did nothing. In our respective roles and tasks, we all strive to give our best. We make sincere efforts, try new things, and occasionally take risks.

Over the past three years, we have worked with great efforts at our level on developing Pastoral Guidelines in the Bishop's Council, the diocesan councils, as well as at the Diocesan Synod Assembly in Bern last September. Our goal was to collaboratively decide on our future direction. From this, we have derived good, constructive, and forward-looking ideas and approaches that provide actual guidance for the future.

Upon deeper reflection following the Diocesan Synod Assembly in Bern, it became increasingly clear that these approaches must tend to move forward slowly, cautiously, and step by step, sometimes even taking a step backward. This often results in something more and perhaps something newer of the same fundamental nature. However, it is clear that such a step alone will not automatically translate to making us relevant as Christians, or as a Catholic Church, with the message of Jesus and the Gospel, especially to our present society in contributing to their living life in its fullness.

The Half-Glass Perspective

For years, we have spoken of the Church being in a crisis. A crisis is experienced as a loss. When it persists, it breeds feelings of anxiety and despondency, leading us to see the glass as half empty. In discussions about the Church's crisis, there is an unspoken belief and hope that the crisis could be overcome, implying a return to the way things were. I do not see this happening for the Church. The crisis will not end, and things will

never be as they were before now; the glass will not be full again. The Church is undergoing a massive period of change. This perspective fundamentally ought to change our outlook and passions. We must learn to see the glass as half full and accept it as it is. This is what cultural change entails.

The experiences and developments, especially in recent months, have led us in the Bishop's Council to a deeper confrontation with this reality. Before implementing measures, guides, and processes, we need what I wrote about in my pastoral letter at the beginning of the year: conversion. This may sound merely pious to some ears, but I am convinced that conversion is something very radical. It involves turning away not only from guilt, grievances, and shortcomings but also from cherished things, from what we have always considered good, right, and unchangeable, perhaps even from our beloved professional roles. It is not simply about becoming better; it is about comprehensive change. Only through *our* conversion, by turning around, that we can experience God's favor. Only with this favor, accompanied by His healing and empowering Spirit, can we shape and realize the cultural change we need.

As Bishop of Basel, I am committed to this cultural change, so are my collaborators in the Bishop's Council equally committed to it.

Cultural Change Requires a Foundation of Trust

The essence of cultural change lies in establishing a comprehensive and mutual culture of trust. Achieving this depends on various factors and requires the commitment of everyone involved. A crucial element is to recognize and believe in everyone's intention to do good. This change in attitude would be both a prerequisite and at the same time an already good fruit of the cultural change.

Cultural change must permeate all levels of church life. For trust-building and cultural transformation, the Bishop and the Bishop's Council have identified the following “**points of no return**”:

- 1. Status Quo Cannot Continue.** Uniformed procedures or comprehensive structuring across the Diocese no longer yields the desired outcomes. Traditional parish life, designed and nurtured as a living community, is reaching its natural ends. The era of a professionalized Church is also ending.
- 2. Embracing Larger Structures.** Moving away from minimal structures creates opportunities for closer connections. Pastoral life will evolve in larger, realigned “pastoral areas”, where networks will become more significant. These networks will be structured differently based on regional and local contexts. New spaces for presence will be created through larger, thoughtfully organized collaborations, enabling qualitative closeness. Digital forms of collaboration and pastoral care will gain importance. This shift requires more resources at the interregional and diocesan levels, which shall primarily be directed into local pastoral processes, socially significant venues, and a “digitalized Church”.
- 3. Developing the Church with the People.** The Diocese of Basel initiates and supports developments that are situational and based on needs. Processes would begin in places with those who are passionate about shaping the church's life. The Diocese of Basel will support these processes through consultation and training, promoting innovative approaches.

4. **Synodality is part of the Church's DNA.** Since 2021, the Diocese of Basel has been engaged in a mandatory synodal process. Synodality should increasingly become a defining characteristic of our Church. This requires learning processes from all participants, fostering mutual respect, shared responsibility, and a deepening of spiritual life in following Jesus Christ.
5. **Valuing Diversity.** The Diocese of Basel recognizes and appreciates the post-migrant, cultural, and religious diversity within the Diocese. This diversity, characterized by various social forms, requires suitable environs for dialogue and a lived synodality.

These five "points of no return" outline the essential areas for the foreseen cultural change. While not exhaustive, they provide a solid framework. These concepts will be further refined and developed in the coming steps. Additionally, work must be done to abolish structures that have previously enabled the grievous crimes of sexual abuses in the past.

Let Us Dare This Adventure

All these considerations towards a cultural change can help restore trust in the Church over a period of time because the faithful would notice that their concerns have been heard, taken seriously and well understood. This process of change will not lead us back to past greatness. However, history shows that Christianity often found its greatest strength when it could no longer continue

as before and had to move forward differently.

This is the way I believe we should follow. We have begun this journey. Cultural change is also a venture. However, it promises to be adventurous and will succeed if *we* embark on this process *together*, truly learning from each other, and beginning to trust each other—trusting that we all mean well for one another.

*Bishop Felix Gmür
June 24, 2024*

Foreseeable Developments: Challenges and Opportunities in the Society and in the Church

The foreseeable developments discussed in this section are the result of the Bishop Council's deliberations, based on various studies (such as "Religion Trends in Switzerland", "PEP Evaluation" and the "Ecoplan Study on Church Finances") as well as the Council's own evaluations as well as consultations with the various diocesan councils. These developments serve as working documents for the Synodal Assembly in Bern in 2023. Recent experiences have demonstrated that a realistic view of these anticipated developments is essential for creating viable and concrete future visions. In order to stimulate discussion, some statements have been expressed in a more concise form.

For the continuation of the work on these expected developments, it is crucial to identify where the opportunities for change and continuity lie within the Diocese of Basel, so resources can be strategically allocated. This also means focusing on areas of action within the competence of the particular Church in the Diocese of Basel.

Preliminary Remarks

The Church is an integral part of society. The traditional catholic milieu and its assumed ethical and moral convictions have long since changed or dissolved. Church members, like everyone else, are shaped and influenced by global megatrends. Milieu affiliation and regional asynchronies significantly impact developments within the Church. Furthermore, unforeseen events, such as COVID-19, environmental disasters caused by climate change, or the war in Ukraine, are expected to occur periodically.

1. Relevance of the Church(es) in the Society

Challenges

- The Christian message no longer holds significance for many baptized individuals in their daily lives. Consequently, they practice the Christian faith infrequently or not at all.
- Less than 50 % of people in the Diocese of Basel are still registered church members. Separation of church and state in some diocesan cantons could happen very soon.
- Ecumenism no longer has societal strength. Denominational affiliation is increasingly dividing people who consider denominations insignificant against those who emphasize it more strongly.
- As an institution, the opinion of the Church has lost its appeal.

Opportunities

- The Church has numerous opportunities to reach out to people, guide them in their faith, and strengthen their beliefs. It draws on the liberating message of Jesus and the inspiring power of the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church, which remains the largest Christian denomination in Switzerland, still has many resources at its disposal, including opportunities for encounters, creative initiatives and inspiring experiences.

2. Faith Tradition

Challenges

- Catechesis for children is not sufficiently and sustainably translated into adult church life practices.
- The passing on of faith traditions within families is no longer practiced.
- Adult Christian formation has little impact.
- For most people, baptism has little significance for a Christian life. As a result, knowledge of Christian life practices (including celebrations) and principles of faith (creed) is dwindling. Expectations are often high and individualised.

- Members of the Church have lost confidence in the Church's officials. Clericalism is rejected and the terms required for ordination are incomprehensible to many. Other reasons include instances of sexual abuse and the ethical requirements (sexual morality, social accountability issues).

Opportunities

- The pressure of the public's expectations from the Churches is decreasing, meaning fewer people expect anything from them. Faith transmission is reconceptualized and developed, with resources focused on a few key objectives. Experiential and experience-based approaches are favored.
- In a culture of coexistence, everyone involved learns from each other.

3. Believers, Baptized Individuals, Church Employees

Challenges

- The demand for sacraments and sacramentals is noticeably declining.
- There are fewer theological and catechetical personnel, and they are increasingly torn between the different expectations of reformers and conservatives within the Church, feeling insecure due to changes in professional roles.
- Reform-oriented groups have almost completely withdrawn or become radicalized, a trend also seen among conservative groups.
- Those who remain active tend to be conservative in their celebrations and attitudes, particularly at the local level and especially among conservative groups.

Opportunities

- There is a diverse range of people for whom faith and the Church are important. Christians, equal in dignity through baptism, embody a hopeful diversity of beliefs.
- The Church has many co-workers who actively and purposefully fulfill the mission of all baptized and confirmed individuals.

4. Finances

Challenges

- As finances flounder and fluctuate, money becomes more and more essential. The gap between richer and poorer cantons (parishes) is widening, leading to less solidarity between parishes.
- Working conditions, including special allowances, remuneration and head-hunting, influence the spread of personnel.
- Church membership and church tax revenue are becoming more important than the practice of faith in everyday life.

Opportunities

- If finances are managed in a solidarity-based and impact-oriented manner, there is great potential.

5. Volunteer Engagement

Challenges

- Parish societies and charitable faith-based organizations are increasingly disappearing. Volunteers are mainly involved in social, ecological and self-centered activities, with religious motivation taking a back seat.
- If volunteers replace paid personnel, this leads to the maintenance of the status quo and the overloading of potentially paid volunteers.
- This creates competition with well-trained personnel, which leads to doubts about their professionalism.

Opportunities

- Voluntary work is geared increasingly towards personal interests and preferences.
- The Church, through its rapid decision-making processes, can encourage and support many initiatives.
- Volunteers contribute their unique charisms and skills and share responsibility for church life with personnel. Volunteers are appropriately supported and assigned tasks.

6. Structures and Networks

Challenges

- Proximity to the Church is no longer defined exclusively by a parish, a linguistic mission or a convent, or even just by membership of a parish.
- Vibrant communities are increasingly developing outside the traditional parish structures, based on interests, aesthetics, cultures and other private initiatives.
- Synodal and participatory processes are increasingly expected.

Opportunities

- When initiatives and experiments by believers are seen as opportunities, they are encouraged. These initiatives should be open to all and be understood as part of the wider community. Together with the existing canonical and state church structures, they form the center of the Church network.

7. Intercultural

Challenges

- Among Catholics in Switzerland, around 40 per cent are of immigrant origins. This leads to a diversity of expressions of Catholicism that are influenced by different cultures, as well as their celebration and devotional practices which continue to be highly valued due to these cultural bonds.
- Ensuring the equitable use of infrastructure and the distribution of financial resources remain major challenges.

Opportunities

- The proportion of Catholics with migration experience enriches the Catholic Church. The various faith cultures are a treasure of diversity, vitality, and an opportunity to learn from one another.

8. Digitalization

Challenges

- Our world includes processes that are shaped by digital media, social forms, artificial intelligence, and virtual realities. The Church is part of this and cannot withdraw from it. Church life is influenced by virtual communities as well as real encounters.

Opportunities

- Digitalisation enables new forms of social interaction, which are quite realistic for many people. Digitalisation facilitates access, encounters regardless of location, and brings about the emergence of new networks that can complement the parishes as well as the pastoral areas.

Pastoral Guidelines of the 2023 Diocesan Synod Assembly

1. Social Relevance of the Church

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... we recognize the signs of the times and interpret them in light of the Gospel based on scholarly insights.
- ... we are aware that our efforts are relevant on both a small and a large scale.
- ... therefore, we are committed to engaging with society in collaboration with our sister Churches.
- ... we give a voice to the voiceless.
- ... we engage in dialogue on an equal footing and build responsible relationships.
- ... we speak a language that is understandable for all generations, including our Church communications.
- ... we exclude no one from being part of the Church and do not discriminate against anyone.
- ... we strive to ensure that no one is excluded from (ordained) ministries.

2. Participation Creates a Vibrant Church

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... we are committed to living and celebrating our faith together.
- ... our conviction of faith is expressed through a committed practice of our faith.
- ... we encourage people to participate in church life.
- ... we interact with others with a listening attitude.
- ... we speak joyfully and credibly about our faith.
- ... the proclamation of faith is one of our priorities.

3. Believers, the Baptized, and Church Personnel

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... we live and cooperate together as baptized individuals.
- ... the vocation of all baptized people to follow Jesus is of paramount importance, regardless of origin, lifestyle, gender, or denomination.
- ... we recognize, promote, and strengthen different charisms and individual life experiences.
- ... we ensure the education and training of all those called to a vocation and support them.
- ... we remain open to new "vocational models."

4. Finances

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... all pastoral levels should have access to interregional center of Pastoral Expertise for effective pastoral care in areas such as hospital chaplaincy, religious education, charities, and digital pastoral care.
- ... we rearrange existing resources and utilize them effectively to achieve greater effectiveness and synergies.
- ... we free up scarce financial and human resources for innovative ideas.
- ... we achieve a diocesan-wide financial equalization that offers equal opportunities to financially weaker cantons.
- ... we organize these processes synodally within a two-tier system.

5. Volunteers: Making a Difference Through Participation!

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... many volunteers are committed, making the Church vibrant and diverse.
- ... volunteers who are enthusiastic and committed to a cause are indispensable.
- ... therefore, the search, training, promotion, and ongoing support of volunteers, along with their appreciation, are of crucial importance.
- ... qualified volunteer coordinators are appointed to ensure that volunteers can utilize their skills in the best possible way.

6. Structures and Networks

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... we strive for synodal structures that provide opportunities for shared spiritual experiences and a common search for God's will.
- ... we maintain and create center that enable closeness and trust, thereby promoting strong bonds.
- ... we create simplified and transparent structures in both pastoral ministry and the state church.
- ... we create the flexibility to react more agilely to foreseeable developments.
- ... we promote a network of church life with diverse spaces for experiences and encounters.
- ... we facilitate cooperation with external organizations.
- ... the development of strategic goals between the pastoral and state-church components in accordance with their respective areas of responsibility is becoming common practice.
- ... we share responsibilities collectively within our mixed groups.

7. Diversity—the DNA of Our Church Life

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... the Catholic Church has become multicultural as a result of migration.
- ... the diversity in our country is also reflected in the Church.
- ... we are expanding our cooperation with other-language communities.
- ... we utilize opportunities such as joint liturgical celebrations.
- ... we introduce people from other cultures to the Swiss Church's two-tier system and encourage their inclusion in governing structures.
- ... a sense of belonging to the mission and integration into the local community complement each other.

8. Digitalization

In the Diocese of Basel...

- ... we promote digitalization and supplement existing platforms.
- ... we strengthen our existing networks through the possibilities of digitalization.
- ... we use digital (faith) communication to reach new audiences.
- ... we sensitize and train our employees in the use of new media.
- ... we establish center of expertise and service points to support our employees.



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