

## Women in office, a never-ending story?

Let us begin with the year 2002, when Chief Apostle Fehr gave an interview to the Friedrich Bischoff publishing house. When asked what his position was on the subject of women in ministry, he was evasive. He saw the topic as "a hot potato," but could imagine returning to where the church already stood. "Women deacons, let's see what the future brings," he said.

In 2005, retired Chief Apostle Leber wrote in a Pentecost brochure that he saw the ordination of women against the background of tradition, as described in the Holy Scriptures. He said that it can be read there that only men were called to office. However, he also raised the question of whether this should remain the case. Also in 2005, at a press conference, he said that such questions must be addressed.

Many years later, in 2012, Chief Apostle Leber was interviewed again by young people in Bad Schwartau. His statement on the ordination of women is now somewhat more complex, but it can be seen that there has been no development on this topic. He now considers it "quite possible" and sees no reason to say that women cannot do it. He again refers to traditions and sees resistance in the congregations worldwide. At the same time, he reminds us that an international church must act sensitively.

If we first look at the development of the years 2002 to 2012, a period of more than 10 years, we can see that this is obviously an unloved and often postponed topic. In 2014, Chief Apostle Jean-Luc Schneider even answered a question posed to him at the ICT by saying that the question of women in ministry had been posed too early!

Those who are more interested in the topic of women's ordination in the New Apostolic Church had been waiting impatiently for the 2012 edition of the Catechism. However, the "women's question" was not answered there. The elaboration of a new understanding of ministry, which followed and was published in 2019, raised new hopes for answers. But even this elaboration, which lasted for years, did not answer the question of women in the ministry. What now? Should we continue to wait?

In March 2016, reports suddenly appeared on nac-today on the subject of equality, on women's rights as human rights, on World Women's Day, as if these were the most normal topics in the world in church circles.

Currently, older articles from the youth magazine Spirit are being reprinted on nac-today. In its 02/2018 issue, the magazine published a number of noteworthy articles on the topic of "Children, Kitchen, Church", which are now being presented again in revised form. They address topics such as "Images of women in changing times" and are well researched. In the most recent teaching letter, the church professes the equal value and equal rights of women and men, and...the reader asks himself, what does that mean? Are the contents not in complete contradiction with lived practice?

What are the consequences of the findings for the Church? What further steps are planned? Where is the explanation? The reader is well informed, but without perspective. The fact that

the church leadership has now taken on the topic of "women in office" is not even mentioned.

Today it is the year 2021. After more than 20 years without any concrete information from the church, women and men are taking the initiative to make a difference. June now sends a statement to the European district apostles and asks for information about the status of the talks, but unfortunately without success. The question of women in office - a never-ending story?

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